

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 07 APRIL 2021

QUESTIONS and STATEMENT from Mr Peter Dobbs, a resident of Ashbourne, on the declaration of an Air Quality Management Area in Ashbourne.

*I would like to make the following comments and ask some questions ref **Item 6, AQMA Ashbourne**. (I do not wish to join the meeting on Zoom).*

- 1. I welcome the recommendations of the report and trust that the order to declare an Air Quality Management Area will be approved by this committee. The area for the AQMA suggested by RSK is commendably extensive.*
- 2. I first wrote to the DDDC Environmental Health Dept in September 2017 to suggest that monitoring NOx levels on Buxton Road Ashbourne would be prudent. Although it was obvious within 3 months that the pattern of results from that sample point were clearly indicative of an exceedance of the Air Quality Objective, it has taken another 3 years for the problem to be officially recognised. Without that official recognition, effective measures to address the problem cannot be introduced, so years have been lost when mitigation measures might have been in place and the damaging effects of air pollution on health reduced.*

***Qn** Is the council going to take this opportunity to review its approach to air quality monitoring so that other areas of the Dales do not have to wait so long before action is taken?*

RESPONSE to Question

Thank you for your question. The Council reviews its approach to air local air quality management at least annually, with the annual reports providing that opportunity. Where potential problems are identified it will continue to work with the DEFRA Air Quality helpdesk to ensure that the correct actions are taken, as it has done in the case of Buxton Road.

- 3. The officer recommendation is that authority to formulate an Action Plan in relation to the Air Quality Management Area is delegated to the Environmental Health Team. The recommended composition of a 'Steering Group' for developing an AQAP is quite tightly defined in TG16;*

***Qn a)** Can Council give assurance that the guidance in TG16 will be followed in convening the Steering Group? and*

***Qn b)** Could the composition of the Steering Group be made public as soon as possible?*

RESPONSE to Question a)

In relation to the composition of an Air Quality Action Plan Steering Group, TG16 suggests the following:

‘A local steering group of lead officers (and members) may be appropriate to develop a range of measures for further consideration, across relevant policy areas (see para 2.26), and to ensure that there is sufficient political engagement’. Para 2.26 lists a range of policy areas that may be relevant for consideration.

TG16 goes on to note that it is particularly important that transport planners are engaged in the development of the Action Plan.

It will be for this Committee to determine how the Action Plan is developed, but it may be that it will be seen as most appropriate for District Council officers to develop a draft Action Plan with DCC Highways, taking into account the views of the local community, before submitting that Action Plan to a future meeting of this Committee for consideration.

RESPONSE to Question b)

Yes, the composition of the Action Plan Steering Group can be made public as soon as possible

- 4. Of course declaring the AQMA does not solve the problem – it just names the condition. However this Council is to be applauded on its previous commitment in its Corporate Plan to ‘where necessary commence appropriate mitigation measures and create an action plan by March 2021’ some possible measures have been suggested by the Traffic Group of the Ashbourne Town Team. Their Discussion Paper was circulated to several members of this Committee last year.*

Qn. Will this Council work via an appropriately convened Steering Group to make use of these ATT suggestions in the short term to ‘test out’ what mitigation measures actually achieve a significant reduction in NOx levels in the AQMA? In this way the Steering Group might achieve rather more than just a ‘paper plan’ by March 2022.

RESPONSE to Question

The District Council is happy to work with Ashbourne Town Team and made this offer to them in November 2020. That offer has recently been reiterated by the Leader of the Council.