



ALEHM Position Statement on the future funding of the London Air Quality Monitoring Network

There is overwhelming evidence that air quality is an important public health issue. Long-term exposure to PM_{2.5} is estimated to impact on mortality equivalent to over 4,000 deaths in London in 2008⁽¹⁾ and this will provide a new context to London-wide monitoring as the public health agenda develops.

The Association of London Environmental Health Managers (ALEHM) members recognise the value and importance of the London Air Quality Monitoring Network (LAQN). We consider it essential that the London Boroughs and the Mayor work together to maintain the cohesion and London-wide coverage of the LAQN. The network provides high quality air quality data and information to support borough level local air quality management, the Mayor's strategies, and importantly, public information on local air quality to Londoners.

ALEHM members also appreciate the valuable partnership work with King's College in London who not only co-ordinate the LAQN but undertake research that informs and shapes policy and strategy at local and regional levels and is recognised at national and international level.

The LAQN developed principally to assess local air quality and has evolved, rather than being strategically developed. This has led to the current uncoordinated funding arrangements, the main financial burden of which is placed on London local authorities. However, the LAQN is clearly of strategic importance to the Mayor in ensuring London complies with its statutory obligations for national & European air quality objectives. Consequently in these financially challenging times, ALEHM members would seek to work with the Mayor to develop a more strategic approach to the LAQN, in particular for financial support for the operation and maintenance of monitoring stations and the co-ordination of data. This will help protect the LAQN and the benefits it brings the London boroughs, the Mayor and Londoners into the future.

A recent GLA funded independent assessment of the LAQN concluded that the majority of monitoring sites were found to be critical to the network's role with less than 8% of monitoring sites identified as having a limited role.⁽²⁾ Although the current network was found to have good coverage, the assessment also identified several areas where additional monitoring sites would be beneficial. Given the current financial pressures on local authorities, we would like to see the Mayor consider how these additional sites can be supported financially to ensure the network is able to provide the maximum coverage. ALEHM members will continue to support & promote the LAQN and ensure its London-wide coverage wherever possible but it is possible that the LAQN may be limited in the future.

ALEHM members therefore support a representation to the Mayor requesting greater partnership between the Mayor and the London Boroughs on the LAQN in the future with long term financial commitment for the LAQN.

References

- (1) Miller, B., 2010. Report on estimation of mortality impacts of particulate air pollution in London. Institute of Occupational Medicine, Edinburgh. Available at www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Air%20Quality%20Review%20Final%20Report.pdf
- (2) Moorcroft, S. and Marner, B., 2011. Review of the air quality monitoring network in London: Ref: GLA 80090. Air Quality Consultants, Bristol. Available at www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Health_Study_%20Report.pdf