
**Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and
Advisory Panel**

26th July 2006

Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services

AIR QUALITY UPDATE

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to update the executive member and advisory panel on the outcome of the recent Air Quality Support Grant (AQSG) applications made to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Three AQSG bids were made in relation to the council's ongoing Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) work. The report provides an overview of the planned expenditure of the AQSG and requires a decision to be taken on the amount of AQSG to be accepted from DEFRA.

Background

2. The government supports local authorities capital expenditure on LAQM. This was initially through Supplementary Credit Approval (SCA), and in the last two years has been through Supported Capital Expenditure (Revenue) (SCE(R)). In both these cases the awards were taken into account in the annual Revenue Support Grant (RSG) settlements, which then provided the funds to the relevant authority over a period of years. Following recent changes to the RSG settlement process, air quality SCE(R)s have been abolished and replaced with a direct grant scheme known as the Air Quality Support Grant Programme.
3. Previous air quality funding from DEFRA has allowed the establishment of a comprehensive air quality monitoring network in York and the in-house operation of an air quality computer model. The scope of the monitoring network has recently been reviewed and streamlined with the main emphasis now on nitrogen dioxide and particulate monitoring. Two new nitrogen dioxide analysers were purchased in 2005/06 using SCE(R) funding. These are located in St Sampson's Square and Heworth Green. Sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide monitoring in the city has now ceased as several years of monitoring has shown that concentrations of these pollutants are well within the health based objective levels set down in the Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended).
4. The council has just published its second Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP2), which sets out the long term strategy for improving air quality in York. It has

been developed in conjunction with the city's second Local Transport Plan (LTP2) and builds on the measures included in the first AQAP. AQAP2 focuses on promoting sustainable transport in the city, reducing emissions from existing vehicles, improving public transport and reducing congestion through improved traffic management.

5. During the next five years the council will undertake some congestion reduction improvement measures on the outer ring road and further improve Park & Ride provision. The council will also further improve opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport use, making journeys by these modes quicker, safer and more attractive. LTP2 commits to investigating the feasibility of introducing a low emission zone into the city and considers the building of a trans-shipment centre, where goods can be transferred from heavy goods vehicles to smaller electric powered vehicles before entering the heart of the city. We will also encourage individuals to re-think their options for car ownership by providing incentives for smaller, cleaner cars and encourage sharing of vehicles through the creation of car clubs.
6. In March 2006 officers submitted three AQSG bids to DEFRA to support the council's air quality work during 2006/2007. The amounts bid for were:

Air quality monitoring = £25,000
Air quality modelling = £43,000
Air quality action planning = £59,000

Due to a national shortfall in the amount of grant available, York has been provisionally allocated the following amounts of AQSG for 2005/2006:

Air quality monitoring = £10,000
Air quality modelling = £15,000
Air quality action planning = £30,000

This report presents proposals for defraying the allocated amounts of AQSG and requires a decision to be taken on the amount of AQSG to be accepted.

Consultation

7. The main consultations in relation to LAQM in York have taken place during the declaration of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and the drawing up of the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). The AQAP has recently been updated and incorporated into the second Local Transport Plan (LTP2). LTP2 was the subject of a city wide consultation. If accepted the AQSG will be used to support measures arising from the consultations on the AQAP and LTP2.

Proposed expenditure

Air quality monitoring

8. The £25,000 bid for air quality monitoring was submitted for the purpose of re-housing a particulate monitor from a redundant monitoring site, and covering its running costs for five years. A potential new monitoring site on Boroughbridge Road (at the junction with Plantation Drive) will monitor existing air quality and provide baseline air quality information for the York Central project.
9. Following the £15,000 short fall in AQSG received for this project, a trade-in agreement on some redundant monitoring equipment has been negotiated with the supplier. On this basis the project can proceed within the limits of the £10,000 AQSG received.

Air quality modelling

10. The £43,000 bid for air quality modelling work was submitted for the following:
 - a) Purchase of additional years of software licences and technical support
 - b) Replacement of three outdated modelling computers
 - c) Support of staffing costs within the air quality section.
11. There was a £28,000 shortfall in the amount of AQSG received for modelling. It is intended to proceed with the purchase of two new computers and to renew the software licences and technical support contracts, the latter will be for a shorter period than initially planned. Any remaining AQSG will be put towards staffing costs.

Air quality action planning

12. The £59,000 air quality action planning bid was submitted with the intention of carrying out two separate projects:
 - a) £29,000 for Low Emission Zone (LEZ) feasibility study
 - b) £30,000 for an air quality information dissemination project

The amount of provisional AQSG obtained for each of these projects is:

- c) £22,000 for Low Emission Zone (LEZ) feasibility study
- d) £8,000 for an air quality information dissemination project

LEZ feasibility study

13. In June 2005 the executive member (Environment and Sustainability) requested that a LEZ feasibility study should be commissioned for the city. Following this request additional SCE(R) funding of £11,000 was obtained from DEFRA to support the first phase of this study. The results of a preliminary

study based on the Fishergate area of the city were reported to the executive member in December 2005.

14. Since undertaking the preliminary study, suitable consultants for the undertaking of the traffic modelling work have been identified and a method statement drawn up. Progress with the LEZ study has been slowed due to ongoing issues with the council's current traffic model (this has meant that £6000 of SCE(R) funding from 2005/2006 has been carried forward into the current financial year). However, all these issues have now been resolved and the project is ready to be taken forward.
15. The 2006/2007 bid for an additional £29,000 to support the LEZ study was made to cover the following costs:
 - Improvements to the way in which public transport is represented in the council's transport model
 - Inclusion of an LEZ scenario targeted at improving air quality across a larger part of the AQMA. The initial proposal was to only look at the area around Ouse Bridge.
 - Undertaking of more detailed traffic counting to improve level of data held on age and fuel type of vehicles in York
 - Undertaking of a project to measure the in-situ exhaust emissions from vehicles using York's roads in conjunction with the Institute of Transport Studies in Leeds (ITS). This will involve the use of a new type of analyser which can measure emissions from individual vehicles without having to stop them. The project will allow the drawing up of an emissions profile for different types and ages of vehicles that will be useful in determining which vehicles should be excluded from any future LEZ.

The total cost of these projects was estimated at £35,000, to be made up of £29,000 from the 2006/07 AQSG and £6,000 of SCE(R) funding carried through from 2005/06. Due to the shortfall in the 2006/07 AQSG only £28,000 is now available. This will be accounted for by reducing the amount of input by ITS into the emissions monitoring project and the undertaking of the required traffic counting in-house. On this basis further progress with the LEZ study should be achieved during 2006/07.

Air Quality Information Dissemination Project

16. The second air quality action planning AQSG bid was aimed at supporting the development of air quality promotion /education work in York. Some of the ideas being considered for this project included:
 - Re-linking of all real time monitoring sites to the council's air quality web page to allow members of the public direct access to all data. Currently links only exist to four of the nine sites.

- Redevelopment of the council air quality web-page to place more emphasis on education and make it more attractive to younger people
- Establishment of air quality information kiosks in public places
- Provision of air quality information via mobile phone text messaging
- Development of an air quality newsletter
- Undertaking of a high profile poster campaign linking travel choices to air quality
- Provision of information boards on the air pollution monitoring stations

As only £8,000 was obtained out of the £30,000 bid it is intended only to proceed with re-establishing the web-page links to all the real time air pollution stations and the placing of information boards at the air pollution monitoring stations. Any remaining funding will be used to try and improve the appeal of the air quality web-page to younger people.

Options

17. (a) To accept air quality grants from DEFRA totalling £55,000 and allow the air quality projects outlined above to proceed.
- (b) To reject some or all of the air quality grants from DEFRA and revise the planned air quality projects for 2006/2007 accordingly.

Analysis

18. Option (a) will allow the council to continue to meet it's air pollution monitoring obligations and to operate the ADMS-Urban air pollution model in-house. The LEZ feasibility study will be able to progress and some improvements will be made to the existing air quality web-page.

Option (b) would limit the ability of the environmental protection unit to undertake further air quality monitoring work and may jeopardise the future of valuable particulate monitoring equipment. Loss of in-house ADMS-Urban modelling capabilities could result in a need to contract out more transport planning and city development related work. A comprehensive LEZ feasibility study will not be possible and web-page links to real time monitoring equipment will not be re-established.

Corporate Priorities

19. Monitoring air quality, providing information to the public about air quality, and developing strategies to improve air quality contribute towards delivering the corporate priorities on improving the health of residents and encouraging the use of public, and other environmentally friendly modes, of transport.

Financial Implications

20. No other source of funding exists for the projects outlined in this report. If the AQSGs are not accepted alternative sources of funding will have to be identified in order to further LAQM in the city.

Human Resources

21. There are no human resource implications.

Equalities

22. There are no equalities implications.

Legal Implications

23. The council has a statutory duty to periodically review and assess local air quality against national air quality objectives and report it's findings to DEFRA. As the council has declared an AQMA and produced an AQAP it is also obliged to submit regular AQAP progress reports to DEFRA demonstrating that it has a continued commitment to improving air quality in the city. Under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 air quality data must be made freely available to members of the public on request.

Crime and Disorder

24. There are no crime and disorder implications.

Information Technology (IT)

25. There are no IT implications.

Risk Management

26. There is some financial risk associated with purchasing multiple years of equipment maintenance contracts and software licences up front but this is currently the only way these items can be justifiably purchased with AQSG. As the companies involved are well established within the air quality field the financial risk is considered relatively small and is considered proportional to the costs which would have to be incurred by the council in future years if AQSGs are not used in this way. There are always public liability risks associated the placing of monitoring equipment in the field. These will be minimised by consulting the highways team on the best location for the equipment, using reputable electrical contractors and ensuring all equipment is covered by the council's insurance policies.

Recommendations

27. That the advisory panel advise the executive member that:

1. Option (a) should be accepted

Reason: It represents the most appropriate way of funding the continuation of LAQM in the city. This is a statutory undertaking that contributes towards the corporate priorities on improving the health of residents and encouraging the use of public, and other environmentally friendly, modes of transport.

2. Option (b) should be refused

Reason: No other source of funding for LAQM has been identified. Refusal to accept all, or part of, the provisional grant would limit progress on corporate priorities relating to health and transport.

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Specialist Implications Officer(s) *List information for all* No additional Officers
Implication ie Financial *Implication ie Legal* consulted.
Name *Name*
Title *Title*
Tel No. *Tel No.*

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

The Development of an Interim Air Quality Action Plan for York, Report to EMAP (Sustainability and Environment), 14th April 2004

Proposed approach to considering a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) for York, Report to EMAP (Sustainability and Environment) 14th December 2005