

News story: Government to fund local authority plans to tackle air pollution

Further action to tackle air pollution in the UK has been set out today as the government publishes a [supplement to its plan](#) to improve air quality. It details how thirty-three local authorities will now take action to reduce harmful NO2 emissions.

Ten local authorities will now take forward new measures, developed with and funded by central government, to reduce pollution levels. These are;

- Dudley
- Leicester
- Newcastle-under Lyme
- Portsmouth
- Reading
- Wolverhampton
- Sandwell
- Solihull
- Basingstoke and Deane
- South Gloucestershire

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

While air quality has improved significantly in recent years, we know urgent action is still required to tackle roadside air pollution in our towns and cities.

This is why through our £3.5 billion national air quality plan, we are working with local authorities across the UK and I am pleased ten local authorities will now implement new measures to drive down pollution.

The Roads Minister Jesse Norman and I have written to the leaders of all the authorities that have submitted feasibility studies to thank them for their hard work and underline that Defra will continue to support them to improve air quality in their areas.

While Nitrogen Dioxide (NO2) levels have fallen significantly in recent decades, including a 27% drop since 2010, the UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations outlines how councils with the worst levels of air pollution at busy road junctions and hot-spots must take robust action.

Ministerial directions

Earlier this year, Ministerial Directions were issued to 33 local authorities, requiring them to submit studies on the steps they can take to comply with roadside NO₂ limits in the shortest amount of time.

Today, the government published a supplement to this plan setting out work carried out with those 33 local authorities and the further action which will now be taken.

Action being taken

The ten local authorities will now take forward new measures to tackle air pollution, including;

- The retrofitting of approximately 400 buses with technology to reduce emissions
- Traffic management measures such as adjustments to signalling to reduce congestion
- Behavioural change campaigns to encourage individuals to take action and reduce their contribution to air pollution

Eight local authorities will now carry out a more detailed study outlining in detail how they will tackle the more persistent air quality problems they have identified. These studies will be presented to government by 31 October 2019 at the latest.

The local authorities include;

- Bolsover
- Bradford
- Portsmouth
- Broxbourne
- Newcastle-under-Lyme
- Stoke-on-Trent
- Leicester
- Liverpool

Portsmouth, Leicester and Newcastle-under-Lyme are being directed to carry out more detailed studies, but have also identified measures that can bring forward compliance quicker.

Eighteen other local authorities are already operating within legal limits or have not found any measures to bring compliance sooner. These will be expected to maintain their work to reduce pollution levels and improve the quality of the air.

The government will ensure sufficient funding is in place to support all the activities set out in this supplement to the national plan.

Funding

Also announced today is the Air Quality Grant for 2018-19 which will provide support to local authorities across England to deliver projects to improve air quality. Applicants in previous years have been awarded funding to install electric vehicle charging points, improve cycling infrastructure and develop local online air quality resources.

This year's grant of £3million is the largest air quality grant to date.

The full Supplement to the [N02 Plan](#) is available online.

[Press release: Natascha Engel appointed as Commissioner for Shale Gas](#)

Former MP Natascha Engel was today (5 October 2018) announced as the new independent Commissioner for Shale Gas.

The government understands the development of shale gas exploration and production sites is an issue which directly affects local communities and recognises the need to provide those communities with impartial, fact-based information.

Taking up her post this week, Natascha Engel will be a direct communication link between local communities, the shale gas industry and the industry regulators. The commissioner will be a contact point for residents, to listen to their concerns, refer them to relevant and factual research and help improve communication with regulators and industry.

Natascha Engel, Commissioner for Shale Gas, said:

If extracted safely, shale gas has the potential to be a new, domestic source of energy for the UK. But there is a need for clear, impartial information to be provided to all parties and in particular those local communities most affected by shale gas development.

As the Commissioner for Shale Gas, I look forward to working closely with communities, regulators and industry to ensure facts are easily accessible as the process of shale exploration continues to develop.

Energy and Clean Growth Minister Claire Perry said

It's important we get the facts straight on shale gas and that communities can access the best scientific information when engaging with the developers and regulators.

This new role will provide a single point of contact for local residents to get the information they need and have their questions answered.

As the UK makes progress towards shale gas production, providing a streamlined way for developers to engage with our robust regulators will increase efficiency and help to continually improve our already world-leading regulations in this area.

The UK regulatory regime for shale gas is considered among the most robust and stringent in the world. Regulators ensure the shale gas industry meets the relevant environmental criteria to operate responsibly in the UK and that these regulations keep pace with the development of shale gas exploration.

The commissioner will work closely with the shale gas regulators, although will be distinct from them, as it is not a regulatory role and has no powers of enforcement or investigation. To preserve the independence of the regulators, the commissioner will not comment on any specific regulatory decisions.

The appointment comes as the government announced the set up of a Shale Environmental Regulator Group, which will bring the regulators (Oil and Gas Authority, Health and Safety Executive and Environment Agency) together as a virtual body. The Shale Environmental Regulator Group will act as one, coherent, single face for local authorities and industry, helping to resolve regulatory issues on sites and sharing best practice with local authorities considering shale gas applications.

Natascha Engel was Member of Parliament for North East Derbyshire from 2005 to 2017.

She has first-hand experience of the local impact of shale gas developments and also has experience of working closely with industry, regulators and government on how to best engage local communities on this important topic.

An email address for the Shale Commissioner will be made available shortly.

[Press release: Natascha Engel appointed as Commissioner for Shale](#)

Gas

Former MP Natascha Engel was today (5 October 2018) announced as the new independent Commissioner for Shale Gas.

The government understands the development of shale gas exploration and production sites is an issue which directly affects local communities and recognises the need to provide those communities with impartial, fact-based information.

Taking up her post this week, Natascha Engel will be a direct communication link between local communities, the shale gas industry and the industry regulators. The commissioner will be a contact point for residents, to listen to their concerns, refer them to relevant and factual research and help improve communication with regulators and industry.

Natascha Engel, Commissioner for Shale Gas, said:

If extracted safely, shale gas has the potential to be a new, domestic source of energy for the UK. But there is a need for clear, impartial information to be provided to all parties and in particular those local communities most affected by shale gas development.

As the Commissioner for Shale Gas, I look forward to working closely with communities, regulators and industry to ensure facts are easily accessible as the process of shale exploration continues to develop.

Energy and Clean Growth Minister Claire Perry said

It's important we get the facts straight on shale gas and that communities can access the best scientific information when engaging with the developers and regulators.

This new role will provide a single point of contact for local residents to get the information they need and have their questions answered.

As the UK makes progress towards shale gas production, proving a streamlined way for developers to engage with our robust regulators will increase efficiency and help to continually improve our already world-leading regulations in this area.

The UK regulatory regime for shale gas is considered among the most robust and stringent in the world.

Regulators ensure the shale gas industry meets the relevant environmental

criteria to operate responsibly in the UK and that these regulations keep pace with the development of shale gas exploration.

The commissioner will work closely with the shale gas regulators, although will be distinct from them, as it is not a regulatory role and has no powers of enforcement or investigation. To preserve the independence of the regulators, the commissioner will not comment on any specific regulatory decisions.

The appointment comes as the government announced the set up of a Shale Environmental Regulator Group, which will bring the regulators (Oil and Gas Authority, Health and Safety Executive and Environment Agency) together as a virtual body. The Shale Environmental Regulator Group will act as one, coherent, single face for local authorities and industry, helping to resolve regulatory issues on sites and sharing best practice with local authorities considering shale gas applications.

Natascha Engel

Natascha Engel was Member of Parliament for North East Derbyshire from 2005 to 2017.

She has first-hand experience of the local impact of shale gas developments and also has experience of working closely with industry, regulators and government on how to best engage local communities on this important topic.

An email address for the Shale Commissioner will be made available shortly.

[Speech: Head of DFID Rwanda writes a blog on World Teacher's Day](#)

In October 2008, Rwanda switched from the use of French to English as a medium of instruction at all levels of education. This presented challenges, as many learners in primary level and beyond did not have sufficient ability in English to achieve grade appropriate subject knowledge, restricting learners' access to effective classroom practice and thus, the curriculum.

Building Learning Foundations aims to address this challenge and is the main technical assistance component of the UK Aid-funded Learning for All (LFA) programme in Rwanda.

The three- and half-year programme aims to improve learning outcomes in English and Mathematics in lower primary grades in all of Rwanda's government schools including those learners with special education needs. The programme is set up as follows:

- Foundation 1: Improving learning outcomes by enhancing the quality of teaching of English and Mathematics at lower primary level (P1 to P3).
- Foundation 2: Leadership for learning strengthens learning by transforming head teachers' practice through a system of coaching and academically-accredited work place-based continuous Professional Development courses.
- Foundation 3: Improving and consolidating of National, District, Sector and school-level management systems.

Jo Lomas, British High Commissioner to Rwanda, presents an English toolkit to the head teacher of Kagugu Primary school at the BLF launch.

In only 12 months, BLF has reached over 20,000 English and Mathematics teachers from 20 districts out of 30, and provided them each with self-study toolkits. The toolkits consist of printed books with supporting audio-visual materials on removable media cards for use on teachers' own mobile phones, and two smartphones for each school so that teachers can watch the instructional videos and film their own classes for self-reflection and peer discussion.

Elie Masengesho a P2 English teacher at Kibara Primary school said:

Through BLF I have managed to gain solid skills of making my English class quite interesting and fun. These days, pupils do not miss my class because they learn something different in each lesson.

The programme was officially launched in March this year by Jo Lomas, the British High Commissioner to Rwanda, alongside the State Minister for Primary and Secondary Education Dr Isaac Munyakazi.

Zacharie Nkundimfura, Head Teacher of GS Shyorongi said:

Being a national leader of learning is rewarding. I have been able to work with my fellow head teachers in my district and for the first time we all have developed school direction plans. I learn something new from my colleagues each time we meet in a Professional Learning Community. I feel I am making positive change in my community.

Building Learning Foundations programme targets 2.6 million children in lower primary grades, 25,000 English and Mathematics teachers in P1-P3, 2,500 Head Teachers, 2,500 Chairpersons of School General Assembly Committees, 830 mentor trainers as well as all Education officials at sector and district levels.

This innovative programme costs £25 million and is implemented by a consortium of British not-for-profit organisation ie, Education Development Trust, British Council and VSO.

[News story: Members of LLWR workforce collect prestigious health and safety accolade](#)

Members of the LLWR workforce were on hand to collect the organisation's fourth President's Award for its exceptional performance in 2017, in a RoSPA ceremony in Glasgow.

Accolades are based on an organisation's individual occupational health and safety performance and the President's Award was conferred in recognition of LLWR receiving a 13th consecutive Gold Award.

Elaine Burrage, LLWR's Health & Safety (H&S) Manager, said: "In order to achieve a Gold Award we have to declare our safety statistics to RoSPA, but that is only part of the judging criteria.

"RoSPA also want to understand and assess our H&S management system, how we are continuously improving the health and safety of all those involved in our activities, ensuring that we provide adequate training to the correct standards, ensuring that our contractors and others affected by our work are kept safe at all times and how we monitor our performance and the health of our workforce.

"These are only a few of the criteria they assess us on."

Russell Beckwith, Low Level Waste Operations Manager, one of those chosen to attend the ceremony, said: "Being asked to represent LLWR and accepting the President's Award for 13 years of outstanding performance was a proud moment.

"For us to be associated with companies that seek to achieve excellence in health and safety performance and keep that standard going for this considerable length of time just goes to prove the high standards we set ourselves, not just ensuring that we all go home safely to our families, but also that what we are doing is being recognised on the national stage."