



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Rebecca Pow MP
Minister for Environmental Quality and Resilience

2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

T: +44 (0) 3459 335577
E: correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk
W: gov.uk/defra

Ciaran Donaghy
Senior Policy and Public Affairs Executive
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
Chadwick Court, 15 Hatfields
London, SE1 8DJ
c.donaghy@cieh.org

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Dear Ciaran,

Thank you for your letter of 19 April to the Secretary of State about the Air Quality Strategy Consultation. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

The Government takes its commitment to improving air quality very seriously. Since the start of 2023 alone, we have set new, legally-binding targets for fine particulate matter (PM2.5), published our delivery plan for those targets in our Environmental Improvement Plan, and published our National Air Pollution Control Programme, setting out further actions under consideration to reduce pollutant emissions.

Local authorities are key delivery partners in this endeavour, and it is important that they take responsibility, effectively use the powers available to them and improve air quality for their residents. However, we recognise that the local air quality policy framework is complex, and some local authorities are unclear on their responsibilities. This is why the draft Air Quality Strategy is a short and concise framework for local authority action. We are not adding new duties for local authorities but clarifying their existing duties. The document also reflects the feedback we have received through regular engagement we have had with local authorities and other bodies throughout the drafting process.

Given this, the reduced consultation window is proportionate and allows us to meet our statutory deadline of 1 May 2023 to publish a revised Air Quality Strategy. We recognise the time pressure this may put on local authorities and our other interested stakeholders. Within Defra we are committed to meeting our statutory deadlines and will be analysing the responses received to the consultation to ensure the Air Quality Strategy is both a useful and functional document for improving the air we breathe. Officials began analysis of the responses prior to the consultation closing, and we are confident there is sufficient time available to consider the responses and make any necessary changes to the Strategy.

We published the consultation on the draft Air Quality Strategy shortly after the national delivery pathways towards our targets were set out in the Environmental Improvement Plan at the end of January, our new PM2.5 targets were set in law at the end of January and the National Air Pollution Control Programme was published in February. I was pleased to see that the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health was able to submit a comprehensive 19-page response to our consultation within the period it was open.

We intend to use the Air Quality Strategy as a platform for increased local authority action in this important area. My officials would be pleased to meet with you or your colleagues to discuss this further in the coming months.

Thank you once again for taking the time to contact us about this important issue.



REBECCA POW MP