
Director General for Regulation

Ken Roy
Head of Profession for Statistics
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
(by email)

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Dear Ken

ASSESSMENT OF STATISTICS ON AIR QUALITY AND EMISSIONS OF AIR POLLUTANTS

We have today published our assessment report covering these statistics. I am grateful for the positive contribution of your staff and for their engagement throughout the assessment process.

Air pollution is one of the most high-profile and important environmental issues. These air quality and emissions data and statistics are therefore vital to supporting public understanding of the problem and informing public debate, and for the development and evaluation of policies that aim to reduce emissions of air pollutants and improve air quality. Both sets of data and statistics have a wide range of uses and users, and users told us how valuable they are.

Our report identifies many areas of good practice, particularly around quality. These include: the use of the most appropriate data sources with rigorous and robust quality assurance procedures; a close working relationship between Defra and Ricardo, and their effective engagement with data providers, other contractors, stakeholders, and topic experts, to ensure high data quality; and an ambition to further improve the emissions estimates.

Our report identifies some important ways in which the value of these data and statistics should be enhanced. The two sets of statistics form a package and are closely linked, but the statistics bulletins do not help users understand this relationship. To provide a coherent view of these connected topics and generate greater insight for users, both sets of statistics should be integrated as far as possible. As part of achieving this, the air quality and emissions statistics team needs to engage more directly and proactively with users of the statistics to develop a better understanding of the needs of different types of users. We also consider that users' needs for data would be better served through better access to more granular, disaggregated air quality data and existing local air quality data.

We judge that these statistics can continue to be designated as National Statistics once you have met all six Requirements of this report. This will demonstrate that your statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value and comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics. We have agreed that you will report back to us by May 2020 outlining how you have addressed the Requirements. Aspects of some Requirements will take longer to implement, such as the user engagement work and the improvements to the UK-AIR website; for these, we expect you to send us a detailed update on progress towards meeting the Requirements by May 2020.

Please feel free to discuss any aspect of this with me or my team at any time.

Yours sincerely



Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation