

DELIVERING IMPROVED AIR QUALITY THROUGH THE LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN PROCESS IN ENGLISH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

By

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Abstract

The second round of Local Transport Plan (LTP2) process covering the period 2006-2011 included the delivery of better air quality as one of its four shared priorities. While this presents opportunities for enabling political will and funding for improving local air quality, integrating both policies is often challenged with, amongst other things, the low priority given to air quality within the local transport planning process. This thesis utilised the triangulation of three research methodology involving two rounds of questionnaire surveys, content appraisal of selected LTP2 documents and in-depth case study interviews with environmental health officers (EHOs) and transport planners from a sample of English authorities, to investigate the feasibility of achieving the air quality objectives through the LTP process. Using local authority perspectives, it evaluates their experiences in relation to four major themes: *integration* of air quality into the transport planning framework; *prioritisation* of air quality as a major agenda within local transport policy; the impact of air quality *targets* and use of air quality *monitoring* data to inform transport planning schemes and; the impact of existing and potential *inter-professional engagement* between the stakeholders.

This research identifies the opportunities, barriers and enablers for managing local air quality through the LTP process. Whilst the results demonstrated wide-ranging capabilities and experience of integration within English local governments it also showed that there is a clear and, in most cases, consistent commitment to air quality management within the LTP2 process. The findings further showed that policy integration can be facilitated through the existence of a collaborative platform across departments and authorities, in which the communication between the EHOs and transport planners is promoted to a level acceptable and accessible to both groups. Implicit in these findings is the need for a shared paradigm of continuous engagement by all the policy actors and stakeholders if proper integration is to be achieved. Inter-professional working practice therefore offers the promise of embedding the functions of air quality diagnosis and solutions. However, in spite of this optimism, the capabilities of the local government for achieving the UK air quality objectives cannot necessarily be expected. Other endogenous and exogenous factors such as the political importance given to air quality, institutional changes within the local government structure and meteorological conditions often shape the effect of technical and managerial measures proposed through within the LTP process. The research concludes with a theoretical model through which future integration between local air quality and transport planning policies can be theorised, evaluated and implemented.