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ASSESSING THE CONTRIBUTION OF LAQM TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN ENGLAND AND WALES

ABSTRACT

This research project considers the UK Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) framework in the context of Environmental Justice (EJ). EJ is defined as the equitable treatment of all people regardless of their race, income and social class in the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental policies. It examines the formulation, structure and implementation of the LAQM system in terms of its possible impacts on social equity. Under LAQM Local Authorities (LAs) are required to identify areas, known as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), where government defined air quality objectives can not be met. Subsequently Air Quality Action Plans (AQAPs) are produced that detail mitigations strategies to be adopted by the LA.

The social attributes of the population living in AQMAs was examined through the use of Geographical Information System, to establish any presence of inequalities to exposure to air pollution. AQAPs were appraised to investigate LA management practices and the level of consideration of social impact. This appraisal process was complemented by a questionnaire survey of LAs and followed by a more detailed analysis of the LAQM process and its contribution to EJ through case study interviews with LAs.

The results establish the existence of a link between high deprivation and the presence of AQMAs; the intensity of this relationship varies according to the type of AQMA and region. The AQAP appraisals and the case studies provided evidence that social impacts are not considered in a comprehensive and prescribed manner in AQAPs. This enabled the assessment of LAQM contribution to EJ which concluded that such contributions are evident but not quantifiable. The potential uses and applications of social data were explored in the different stages of LAQM. The outcomes of the various research methods were integrated to develop a conceptual model enhancing the use of social considerations in AQAPs and LAQM framework in general.