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Dear Edward,

Thank you for your letter to the former Secretary of State dated 5 September concerning the Regulations relating to the National Air Pollution Control Programme (NAPCP).

I can reassure you that we remain fully committed to reducing emissions of the five key air pollutants and achieving the ambitious emission reduction targets set out in the National Emission Ceilings Regulations (NECR). The targets in the NECR are unchanged by the REUL Act. I respond to each of your questions below in turn:

**Your view on why the National Air Pollution Control Programme (NAPCP) in its current form is no longer required and what practical effect this will have on delivery of pollutant reduction?**

It is important to note that we are maintaining all NECR provisions regarding the publication of emissions inventories and projections to ensure transparency and scrutiny of the UK's progress towards achieving its emission targets. This will continue to show whether the UK has achieved its current emissions targets and whether it is on track to achieve future targets on the basis of firm and funded policy measures.

Our intent in revoking regulations 9 and 10 of the National Emission Ceilings Regulations 2018 (NECR) is to reduce administrative burdens and aid transparency with regard to air quality emissions policy. The NAPCP is an administrative process, and its substantive policy content is a duplication of material contained, in a more accessible format, in national policy statements. The current format of the NAPCP only requires the setting out of policies and measures *being considered*, not a detailed delivery plan for ensuring the emissions ceilings are met. The format is long, complicated and resource intensive, and by repealing this item we can better focus on what will actually help clean up our air.

The emissions targets and the delivery plan of policies and measures to achieve those targets are set out, for each of the four nations, in their own respective policy documents, namely the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 for England, the Cleaner Air for Scotland 2 Plan, the Clean Air for Wales Plan and the forthcoming Northern Ireland Clean Air Strategy.

Repealing the provisions relating to the NAPCP will have no practical effect on delivery of pollutant reduction, and we are retaining all other NECR provisions. We remain committed to reducing emissions of the 5 key air pollutants and achieving the emission reduction targets set out in the NECR, which remain unchanged.

**Whether the UK Government intends to create a replacement for the National Air Pollution Control Programme? If so, to what timescales?**

As set out in question 1 we are maintaining all NECR provisions regarding the publication of emissions inventories and projections to ensure transparency and scrutiny of the UK's progress towards achieving its emission targets.

We will also continue to monitor and review whether the UK has sufficient policies under consideration/development in order to achieve the emission reduction commitments. We are working with all Governments of the UK to agree a process for doing this. Part of those discussions will include how information regarding policies under consideration/development is communicated to the public. A first meeting of the group to consider these issues is scheduled for Dec 2023 and we anticipate having a new UK process up and running early in 2024.

**In what way this will differ from and improve upon the NAPCP including in particular how requirements for public participation will operate?**

As set out in question 1 we are maintaining all NECR provisions.

In practice the NAPCP consultation does not engage significant numbers of interested parties. Defra carried out a full UK public consultation on the NAPCP last year requiring the use of official and ministerial time. The consultation only received 55 responses. 32 of these responses were from England, 2 from England and Wales, 5 from Wales, 1 from Northern Ireland, 14 UK wide and 1 from Spain.

However, as noted above, we will continue to monitor and review whether the UK has sufficient policies under consideration/development in order to achieve the emission reduction commitments. We are working with all Governments of the UK to agree a process for monitoring and reviewing whether the UK has sufficient policies under consideration. As part of this we will consider how information regarding policies under consideration/development is communicated to the public in a straightforward and proportionate way. In the most recent NAPCP consultation, of those who expressed an opinion, a majority agreed that the format of the NAPCP could be improved, with a consensus that the format was too lengthy and too technical.

**Its views on whether a UK wide assessment and reporting scheme is required to satisfy UK wide reporting as a signatory to the Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP)?**

A UK--wide assessment and reporting scheme on emission reductions achieved and projections of future emission reductions based on firm and funded measures is needed to satisfy the CLRTAP. As above, we are maintaining the reporting provisions contained in the NECR to ensure transparency and scrutiny of the UK's progress in achieving its emissions targets.

**What discussions have taken place with counterparts around the UK on how reporting on the Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution will be achieved?**

As above, we are maintaining the reporting provisions contained in the NECR to ensure transparency and scrutiny of the UK's progress in achieving its emissions targets. This will ensure that levels of environmental protection are maintained, that action to reduce emissions to achieve the targets is sustained and that there is transparency about the progress the UK is making to meet its emissions targets.

**Your view on the operation of the Common Framework on Air Quality and how actions in this area meet the requirements of that framework (including whether the provisional Common Framework would need to be amended in light of changes to the NAPCP system)?**

Section 3 of the Air Quality Common Framework (AQCF) sets out the proposed operational elements. The governance structure, decision making fora and escalation procedures have worked effectively as a mechanism for the Parties to the Framework to discuss policy/evidence issues as appropriate and to keep colleagues regularly informed of implications that policy will have across Parties. This is the mechanism through which the revised NAPCP published earlier in 2023 was prepared and reviewed, and through which the Parties have engaged on HMG's proposals to replace it.

With regard to amending the AQCF to reflect changes to the NAPCP system, section 3, para 4.2 Breadth of the Framework does include the NAPCP. This would need to be updated to reflect the new approach. This could be done at the first period review (section 3, sub section 12 of the Framework) which takes place every three years from the date of publication of the Framework.

I do hope the above addresses your points raised and I do thank you for your correspondence on this important issue.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

**ROBBIE MOORE MP**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs