

**Report of:** Environmental Health Business Manager

**To:** Executive Board

**Date:** 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006

**Item No:**

**Title of Report:** Air Quality Management - Low Emission Zone Feasibility Study

### Summary and Recommendations

**Purpose of report** To Update the Executive Board on the progress with the Low Emission Zone feasibility study for the city centre.

**Key decision:** No

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Jean Fooks (Cleaner City)

**Scrutiny Responsibility:** Environment Scrutiny

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report Approved by**

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Jean Fooks

**Legal:** Jeremy Thomas

**Finance:** Andy Collett

**Strategic Director:** Michael Lawrence

**Policy Framework:** This work reflects the Council's Vision of improving performance and working with others to deliver shared goals. It specifically contributes to the strategic priority to improve the local environment, economy and quality of life, and the Community Strategy theme of working to create a better living environment.

**Recommendation(s):**

1. The Executive Board is recommended to: -
  - i) Note the progress with the Low Emission Zone feasibility study.
  - ii) Note the five scenarios agreed by the Steering Group for further assessment in Stage 1 of the Low Emission Zone feasibility study.

## Background

2. The Executive Board agreed an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for the Central Oxford Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) at its meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2006. Council adopted the AQAP on the 24<sup>th</sup> April 2006.
3. The main action proposed in the AQAP was that a feasibility study should be carried out for the introduction of a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) for certain streets in the AQMA. This would ensure that only vehicles meeting minimum emission standards would be allowed to enter designated parts of the city centre.

## LEZ Feasibility Study

4. Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council agreed to jointly fund the cost of the LEZ feasibility study, and AEA Technology have been engaged to undertake the work.
5. The study has been split into two stages:
  - **Stage 1 – Scoping phase** will include information gathering, defining the problem and agreeing a number of scenarios for further limited assessment, which will include the costs and benefits of the schemes tested.
  - **Stage 2 – Detailed assessment phase** will involve a more detailed assessment of a number of the preferred scenarios agreed from stage 1 of the study.

## Steering Group

6. A Steering Group, made up of Lead Members and Officers from Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council, has been set up to consider the work on the feasibility study as it progresses. The Members on the Steering Group are; Councillor Jean Fooks, Cleaner City Portfolio Holder, for the City Council, and Councillor David Robertson Cabinet Member for Transport for the County Council.
7. The Steering Group held its first meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2006 and agreed five scenarios, summarised in the table below, for further assessment in Stage 1 of the LEZ study.

| No. | Scenario   |
|-----|--|
| 1   | Business as usual, which will assess the benefits without a LEZ in place.  |
| 2   | LEZ regulates bus emissions on the current bus priority route by 2008.   |
| 3   | LEZ regulates bus emissions on an amended future bus priority route in 2011. This will include the effects of the Westgate/West End development. |
| 4   | LEZ regulates bus and HGV emissions on most roads within the AQMA plus Oxpens Road and Thames Street by 2011                                     |
| 5   | LEZ regulates all vehicle types on most roads within the AQMA plus Oxpens Road and Thames Street by 2011   |

8. This report has been agreed with the Officers from Oxfordshire County Council on the Steering Group.

### **Timetable**

9. Stage 1 of the LEZ study will be complete by the end of January 2007 and a report will be presented to the Steering Group at its next meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2007. A decision will then have to be made on the preferred options for more detailed assessment in Stage 2 of study.
10. The aim is to complete Stage 2 of the LEZ study by June/July 2007. Stage 2 will include consultation with members, stakeholders and the public as well as a website to keep people informed on progress.
11. Oxford City Council has a statutory duty to review and assess air quality. The next stage of this process is the submission of a Detailed Assessment report to the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) by the end of April 2007, which must include an assessment on progress with the AQAP. Although Stage 2 of the LEZ study will not be complete until June/July 2007 a draft report on Stage 2 will be required by April 2007 for the Detailed Assessment.

### **Recommendations**

12. The Executive Board is recommended to: -
  - i) Note the progress with the LEZ feasibility study.
  - ii) Note the five scenarios agreed by the Steering Group for further assessment in Stage 1 of the LEZ feasibility study.

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**Background papers:** None

### **Glossary**

**AQAP:** Air Quality Action Plan.

**AQMA:** Air Quality Management Area.

**LEZ:** Low Emission Zone

**DEFRA:** Department for Food and Rural Affairs