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Edward Mountain MSP
Convener of Net Zero, Energy and Transport
Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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22 April 2025

Dear Edward,

Petition 2123 – Update air quality standards in Scotland to align with 2021 World Health Organisation guidelines

Thank you for your letter of 10 April 2025 requesting an update on the review of the Scottish Government's Cleaner Air for Scotland 2 (CAFS 2) strategy. I have provided responses to your questions below.

Review objectives and scope

The main objective of the review is to develop and implement a long term policy framework for air quality to succeed the CAFS 2 strategy when it expires in 2026. The review will cover existing air quality policies and objectives, air quality monitoring and the role of local authorities and other partners in delivering further air quality improvements.

Alignment with WHO guidelines

The Scottish Government is committed to continuous improvement in air quality, as there is increasing evidence that even very low concentrations of certain pollutants can have impacts on human health and the natural environment. The review of current objectives is a key part of this process.

The review of current Scottish statutory air quality objectives will take into account the 2021 WHO guidelines. It is important to bear in mind that the guidelines are set at the lowest level of exposure above which there is at least moderate certainty evidence for adverse health effects. They are not legally binding and do not take into account the economic, practical or technological feasibility of adoption as policy objectives or in legislation.

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Timeline and implementation

The Scottish Government will work closely with partner organisations during the remainder of 2025 to develop the scope of the review in more detail. A formal public consultation on proposals will follow in 2026, with the new framework anticipated to be published before the end of next year.

Integration with other policies

Effective co-ordination of policies can deliver co-benefits for both greenhouse gas and air pollutant reduction. The CAFS 2 review and the new framework will be closely aligned with the draft Climate Change Plan and also with other Scottish Government plans and strategies that have implications for air quality, notably in policy areas such as transport, health, agriculture and energy.

EU alignment

As with the WHO guidelines, the review will take into account the updated EU Ambient Air Quality Directive.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

GILLIAN MARTIN

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