

Rail industry launches Air Quality Strategy Framework

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GB rail recognises the importance of the air quality agenda. As a result the Air Quality Strategy Framework has been launched with industry-wide endorsement of key recommendations.

Air quality has always been high on rail's agenda. This issue has been brought into even sharper focus by the Covid-19 lockdown which has led to reduced emissions and cleaner air as a result. Industry wants to secure more of the benefits of cleaner air for the long term, even when economic activities resume. Following work carried out in this area over the last year, the GB rail industry has come together to launch the [Air Quality Strategy Framework](#).

Air pollution is a significant challenge across the UK as exposure to harmful gases and particulates can cause long term health problems. Overall emissions from rail are small (2% of Nitrogen Oxides and 1% of Particulate Matter), however, at specific locations higher emissions may increase health risks.

As a sustainable mode, GB Rail acknowledges that it has a responsibility to manage any risks to the health and safety of passengers and staff. This led the industry, through RSSB, to establish the Air Quality Steering Group with the aim of developing a collaborative approach to better understand and mitigate air

quality risks.

The resulting framework is based on a robust, risk based approach to reducing air quality impacts. The framework details a series of recommendations based around three key themes:

- Modelling: improving our ability to understand risks at a local level
- Mitigating: ensuring appropriate and effective measures are taken to reduce emissions
- Monitoring: establishing a programme to measure emissions and ensure improvements.

The industry has committed to report on progress annually.

Speaking on the Framework, Anthony Perret, Head of the Sustainable Development programme said: “The Air Quality Strategy Framework is a truly collaborative effort within industry to identify and address the risks that Air Quality poses to passengers, staff and the environment. There is still a great deal that remains unclear; however, the Air Quality Strategy Framework is a transparent step in the right direction for industry and I am excited to see what results we will be able to share in just over a year.”

Maggie Simpson, Director General of Rail Freight Group said: “The public’s appetite for improving air quality is only likely to increase following the reduction in air pollution during the coronavirus crisis. The Rail Freight Group has been pleased to be involved in the timely development of this new strategic framework to help the sector improve air quality. This will give rail freight customers confidence in choosing a mode of transport which not only takes lorries off the roads and out of the hearts of communities but is serious about further improving its own air quality.”

Steve Enright, Director of Safety Sustainability and Security at Abellio said: “The Air Quality Strategy Framework sets the future path for rail to significantly reduce harmful pollutant emissions that could affect passengers, staff and the general public. Underpinned by a collaborative research programme, the framework will ensure that rail remains as one of the cleanest forms of transport in the UK.”

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