

NEWSLETTER

Coronavirus Times

At the end of 2019 when we reported on the demanding times ahead, little did we foresee what was actually about to transpire. The situation is evolving spectacularly right now and so events planned and promoted here previously are unlikely to take place in the medium term. Watch this space and we will bring you up to date as we work through the corona virus health crisis. We do aim to come out stronger on the other side!

News in Brief

Environment Act

The Environment Act has been going through its second reading but disappointingly with little acceptance of the amendments that environmental groups have sought. The Environment Bill Committee agreed that proceedings on the Environment Bill will be postponed until 28th April at the earliest. They have not yet clarified if they intend to amend the Bill Committee's deadline of 5th May. See below for an update by Client Earth.

Policy Committees

Air Quality Committee has already run a Skype Meeting. Land and Noise will need to do likewise under the current distancing restrictions. We will keep members informed of their progress as and when these take place. There is still much to consider even though meetings can't take place in person so please continue your valuable work for EPUK during this time.

AQC Chair Change,

After a highly effective and energetic term of office as Chair of Air Quality Committee, Sarah Legge is to step down from her duties. She leaves the post in the capable hands of current Vice-Chair, Dr David Muir. More positive news is that we won't be losing Sarah. She will remain a member of AQC. Chair of Trustees, Christopher Fry has expressed his ...'wholehearted gratitude for what Sarah has done for EPUK in a voluntary capacity, not only with AQC, but also on the Board of Trustees, Executive sub-Committee and with significant input to our Annual Conferences'.

UPDATE ON THE ENVIRONMENT ACT

On Thursday 19th March the passage of the Environment Bill was delayed. The Environment Bill Committee agreed that proceedings on the Environment Bill will be postponed until 28th April at the earliest. They have not yet clarified if they intend to amend the Bill Committee's deadline of 5 May.



Katie Nield from ClientEarth has updated us on where the PB Committee had got to so far,

“On Tuesday they debated amendments to clauses 1-6. Unfortunately, this included a vote against the amendments tabled (23 and 185). that would have committed government to setting the PM2.5 target at least in line with WHO guidelines, to be achieved by 2030 at the latest. Members voted against the amendments 9 votes to 5.

A written record of the debate is available here:

[https://www.theyworkforyou.com/psc/2019-21/Environment Bill/06-0 2020-03-17a.197.9?s=PM2.5#g197.10/](https://www.theyworkforyou.com/psc/2019-21/Environment%20Bill/06-0%202020-03-17a.197.9?s=PM2.5#g197.10/)

Here you will see that the Minister continued to stress the claimed uncertainties involved with achieving WHO by 2030. It is frustrating, but not hugely surprising, to see this push back. You will also see that a number of our other priority amendments to clauses 1-6 were discussed during the session, for example, strengthening the role of expert advice, and setting a minimum scope of AQ targets. Unfortunately, these were also withdrawn or voted against.

During the debate, the Minister did at least confirm regarding setting the PM2.5 target: "When developing the detail of the target, we will seek evidence from a wide range of sources and **ensure we give due consideration to the health benefits of reducing pollution**"

Regarding the significant improvement test, he said: "It is very much a holistic approach and it encompasses **the impacts of air pollution on the natural environment and the associated effects on human health**"

He added that expert advice to support the setting of AQ targets "**will include ... how targets will reduce the harmful impacts of air pollution on human health. We will rely hugely on that expert advice.**"

On the area of consultation on the setting of targets: "The Government **will, as a matter of course, conduct a wide range of consultations** for the first set of long-term targets."

It is positive to have this on the record, as the Bill is worryingly silent on these points. There may be further useful comments made, but I am yet to go through the full record. If anyone else has already done so, then please do also share your insights!

TOXIC TOWN: THE CORBY POISONINGS

The unknown story of the worst child-poisoning case since thalidomide, featuring a landmark legal battle by a group of mothers determined to uncover the truth.

EPUK thought this extreme case of air pollution should be highlighted in this month's newsletter. The documentary can be viewed using BBC iPlayer, 'Toxic Town-the Corby Poisonings' broadcast on BBC Horizon on 23rd March 2020, or simply use this link:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000gp8s/>

The programme refers to a High Court Case (Technology & Construction Division) where pregnant mothers gave birth to children with hand deformities after exposure to airborne dust from the demolition of the former Corby Steelworks. The dust contained cadmium which is



known to affect unborn

children. Roger Braithwaite who is one of our Members and a Land Remediation Expert was asked to join a team of Environmental Health & Medical Consultants to investigate the link between the widespread distribution of dust and the deformities in Corby children. The case was proved in the High

Court and Corby Council had to pay legal fees of £15 million and undisclosed compensation to 18 children.

THE ROAD TO NET ZERO CARBON CEMENT AND CONCRETE

The Environment SIG invites you to join them at their webinar on 6th May 2020 with speaker Iain Walpole from Hanson UK.

EPUK members have been offered the opportunity to join this important webinar by Clive Hadfield of The Environment Special Interest Group.

The webinar will be of interest to anyone interested in carbon reduction who is currently working on or thinking about a 2050 net zero road map, consumers of concrete who want to learn about opportunities to reduce the embodied carbon in projects and those with a general interest in carbon reduction.

If you wish to attend this webinar you can register [here](#).

UPDATE ON EVENTS FOR THE DIARY

Air Quality Seminar Birmingham

The Air Quality Seminar at Birmingham University planned for May has been postponed because the University is closed to all external events on account of COVID-19.

Land Contamination Seminar

The Land Contamination Seminar planned at the British Geological Survey HQ Keyworth Nottingham on 1st June will be reviewed in early May, with consideration to the Government's ongoing infection control rules.

South West Divisional AGM

The South West Division's AGM due to be held at Bridgwater on 23rd April is postponed. More news of this when we have it.

COP26

The Air Quality and Climate Change event (COP26) scheduled for November in Glasgow has been postponed for a year. This is due to the venue being requisitioned for a field hospital for Covid-19 patients.

General Events

For now, members should take it that other planned live events for the next 3 months will not take place due to the Government's Guidance on gatherings and distancing. Where these meetings are re-scheduled as Webinars, and/or Skype seminars, we will inform you via this Newsletter just as soon as possible.

If we see it as necessary, please rest assured that we will release a special Newsletter within our normal monthly period.

MEMBERSHIP

We are always looking for new members. Please recommend EPUK and its services to your colleagues and any organisation you feel would benefit from membership. Follow the link below for more information regarding types of membership and associated cost.

<https://www.environmental-protection.org.uk/membership/>

Or ask us for a Membership Booklet by emailing
info@environmental-protection.org.uk;

Like Us, Love Us, and Visit Us on:Twitter: <https://twitter.com/epuk5>,Linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8448926/>Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/envprotectionuk/>**AND FINALLY, FROM THE PRESS****AIR QUALITY**
BULLETIN

Jack Pease reports in the Air Quality Bulletin March issue that the loss of one species during road development is now deemed acceptable.

As details emerge of the update to the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), it appears that habitats and species may be expendable. Calculations suggest that the loss of one species is not significant when assessing new highways schemes or developments.

For more details please contact: jackpease@empublishing.co.uk;

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Phone: 0752284860

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