Thank you for your letter, dated 21 January 2015, in which you raise concerns about Defra’s latest consultation on local air quality management (LAQM), particularly in relation to monitoring.

This latest consultation contains a number of proposals to reduce regulatory and administrative burdens in line with commitments made under the Red Tape Challenge in order to improve the overall effectiveness of LAQM in dealing with current air quality challenges. As you are aware, the consultation is split into two parts: Part 1 is a regulatory consultation on a statutory instrument to enable the removal of four redundant pollutants (Benzene; 1, 3 Butadiene; Carbon Monoxide; and Lead) for local authority reporting purposes; and Part 2 provides an overview of non-regulatory changes such as streamlining of reporting processes and providing local authorities with a role to tackle PM_{2.5} (fine particulates), to be set out in statutory guidance.

With respect to the removal of objectives for four pollutants from LAQM (England) regulations, these pollutants have been met for many years and Local Authorities should not be required to use their limited resources on reviewing, assessing and reporting on pollutants for which there are no problems when we know there are other pollutants (e.g. NO_{2}, PM_{10}) on which they need to focus their actions to improve air quality. In any event, we will retain objectives for these four pollutants at the national and European level, enabling Government to take action if necessary.

A core focus of the review is to reduce the administrative burden placed on councils from reporting their monitoring to Defra by streamlining council reporting into one annual report which would be more publicly accessible, while still containing the same quality of information. The consultation is not recommending any outcome that would see a
reduction in monitoring of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) or Particulate Matter (PM₁₀). However, any decisions on local air quality monitoring are for Local Authorities to take.

I welcome your support for our proposal to include a role for local authorities to address PM₂.₅. The evidence is clear that the presence of fine particulates is widely recognised as presenting a significant risk to public health. We believe it is time for such a role to be included in statutory guidance, allowing local authorities the necessary flexibility in line with the localism agenda and supporting better linkages with the Public Health Outcomes Framework.

In furtherance of Part 2 of the consultation, we will revise policy and technical guidance (to be consulted on in late 2015) which will take into account any PM₂.₅ role and include an update on good practice together with further examples and case studies on effective actions. It will also be an opportunity to further clarify roles and responsibilities in relation to local air quality management. The overall aim being to help local authorities take effective action on the ground.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Yours,

[Signature]

DAN ROGERSON MP