

What next for Clean Air?

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Odense, Denmark

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With the lockdown easing slowly and traffic levels (at least on the DfT network) back at over 90% plus, in particular the back-to-school impact things are looking promising for the recovery? There is, however, a slightly different picture coming from the local network, with many cities, particularly in the north of the country reporting very low traffic and parking statistics, and very positive roadside pollution figures.

In Scotland things are much the same with Transport Scotland pausing the low emission zone programs in the big cities. However over in Europe things seem a little different. During the height of the lock down the Danish Environment Protection Agency launched low emission zones in five cities.

These have similarities and differences to the emission based schemes we have here in the UK. They are based on air quality data led boundaries in the most polluted areas and are enforced using ANPR cameras backed up with penalty charge deterrent. They are similar to the Scottish LEZ's as one cannot pay to drive in the zones in a polluting vehicle (unlike the English CAZ's)

however they are designed to address particulates rather than NOx. With the impact of particulates on CV 19 starting to be understood (AQ news article 14.9.20) now may be the time to consider the impact of the wider range of pollutants?

Marston Holdings have been working with the cities across Denmark on the scheme including educating drivers and fleet operators as to their options to retrofit filters. Given the new environment bill sets out a new (yet to be defined) target for particulates, we can learn from our colleagues in Europe and possibly look at future proofing our own CAZ and LEZ schemes to allow a transition to addressing different and equally dangerous, pollutants.

Brexit and its uncertainty, still looms on the horizon and in particular the regulatory framework for air pollution. JAQU are the governments joint air quality unit who are responsible for the central CAZ services including DVLA emission lookups and payment portal. They are working with all CAZ cities across the country and transport and enforcement organisations, such as Marston Holdings to ensure the CAZ schemes meet all current requirements including encouraging foreign vehicles are not exempt. Like the Danish case study foreign vehicles are subject to the same emission standards as domestic vehicles and action will be taken to ensure these vehicles

are identified, assessed and enforced against in line with the local rules.

What we do next is the million-dollar question and in particular how to get the best public value out of the extensive network of ANPR cameras installed across our most polluted cities. Is it time to look at a national CAZ, LEZ or mileage-based road user charging solution? Do we use these tools to drive particulate or carbon reduction in line with our existing net zero commitments and new environmental targets?

Marston Holdings is hosting a webinar on 21st of October 2020 to discuss all things CAZ and LEZ in a post CV 19 world. We will be joined by technical transport and air quality experts, JAQU and our Danish clients and will be looking at what are the current challenges in developing and implementing and maintaining air quality solutions in an uncertain world.



Nick Ruxton-Boyle, Director of Environment, Marston Holdings

For more information please visit:
www.marstonholdings.co.uk/airquality