

March 2011

Air Quality

Air quality has a significant impact on our health and on the environment. Air pollution in 2008 is estimated to reduce the life expectancy of every person in the UK by 6 months¹, and it is estimated that over half of the world's habitable areas are exposed to levels of pollution which could lead to 'significant harmful effects' on the environment.

A wide range of decisions are likely to impact on air quality. Some key areas where air quality should be considered are on:

- Transport, including infrastructure development, modal changes and changes in volume;
- Electricity generation, including changes in sources, location and energy efficiency;
- Industrial processes, such as combustion plants and waste incineration; and
- Domestic policy, including heating, building standards, planning and energy efficiency.

The Interdepartmental Group on Costs and Benefits – air quality subject group (IGCB(A)) has the remit to develop, maintain and disseminate best practice economic methodologies to value air quality. In doing so the IGCB(A) aim to allow the provision of evidence to evaluate the impacts on air quality from policies, projects and programmes. For more information on the IGCB(A) its methodologies please visit:

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/air/air-quality/economic/

To support the reflection of air quality impacts in appraisal the IGCB(A) have developed a range of methodologies and tools which should be used depending upon the specific circumstances. Broadly the methodologies can be separated into two groups:

- I. Impact-Pathway Approach (IPA) - places values on policies, programmes or projects by estimating how changes in the ambient concentrations of air pollutants cause a range of health and environmental impacts
- II. Abatement Cost Approach (ACA) – where a legally binding objective would be breached estimates the cost to restore compliance.

Guidance on the selection between these methodologies is available from:

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/air/air-quality/economic/

Where the IPA is appropriate guidance on its application is available from:

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/air/air-quality/economic/impact/

Where the ACA is appropriate guidance on its application is available from

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/air/air-quality/economic/abatement/

¹ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/air/airquality/strategy/documents/air-pollution.PDF>