

SEPA response to flaring at Mossmorran: Air quality data summary

Thursday 15 August 2019

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We call this **One Planet Prosperity**



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Executive Summary

SEPA deployed three particulate monitors during the flaring at ExxonMobil Chemical Ltd. that began on Monday, 12 August 2019. This report provides detail about the monitoring SEPA carried out and a summary of the findings is below:

- PM₁₀ levels were within the daily (UK) Air Quality Standard of 50 µg/m³ (micrometres per cubic metre).
- PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} would be classified as “low” using the (UK) Daily Air Quality Index bandings.
- More information on particulate matter and Daily Air Quality Index bandings is available in the Supplementary information section at the end of this report.

1. Introduction

SEPA received notification from ExxonMobil Chemical Ltd. on Monday, 12 August 2019 of unplanned flaring at the Mossmorran Fife Ethylene Plant the duration of which is, as yet, unknown.

In order to assess long-term air quality conditions, SEPA have had a particulate monitor deployed at a location in Lochgelly since Thursday, 4 July 2019. SEPA also deployed monitoring equipment in Auchtertool and Donibristle on Wednesday, 14 August 2019. SEPA maintain the Airborne Hazard Emergency Response (AHER) service and this was deployed overnight on Tuesday, 13 August 2019 and Thursday, 15 August 2019 in anticipation of a change in conditions.

2. Monitoring

As part of a long-term strategy, SEPA deployed a real-time particulate monitoring unit in Lochgelly. Following the unplanned flaring starting Monday, 12 August 2019, SEPA deployed a further two particulate monitors locations which were forecast to be predominantly downwind of the Fife Ethylene Plant (FEP) over the next week (Auchtertool and Donibristle). Data is collected from these analysers at regular intervals or once the flaring has ceased, dependent on the equipment deployed.

SEPA maintain the AHER service and in anticipation of a change in flaring conditions, the AHER service was deployed on Tuesday, 13 August 2019 and Thursday, 15 August 2019. Data from the Thursday, 15 August 2019 deployment is not available at time of writing. This will be reported in due course.

3. Results

The graphs below show the measured data over the monitoring period for PM₁₀ particles and PM_{2.5} particles (Figures 1 – 4). These are compared against the relevant UK Daily Air Quality Index (DAQI) and the daily Air Quality Standard (AQS). All measurements are within the 'Low' banding. The average values for the monitoring periods are outlined in Table 1. The PM₁₀ daily AQS of 50 µg/m³ (which cannot be breached > 7 times in a year) was not breached at any location. There is no daily AQS for PM_{2.5}. Annual AQSs exist for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} and these are set at 18 µg/m³ and 10 µg/m³ respectively.

Table 1: A summary of the particulate data collected at Locations A and B. * Averages based on less than 24 hours of data collection.

Location	Data Collection Period	Daily Average ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)			Overall Average ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)	
		Date	PM ₁₀	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	PM _{2.5}
Lochgelly	11:45 04 July 2019 – Ongoing	12 August 2019	5.19	2.28	8.42	4.71
		13 August 2019	8.67	4.10		
		14 August 2019	6.12	3.28		
Auchtertool	09:30 14 August 2019 – Ongoing	14 August 2019*	6.28	1.90	10.16	3.04
Donibristle	12:00 14 August 2019 – Ongoing	14 August 2019*	6.40	1.70	9.01	2.72

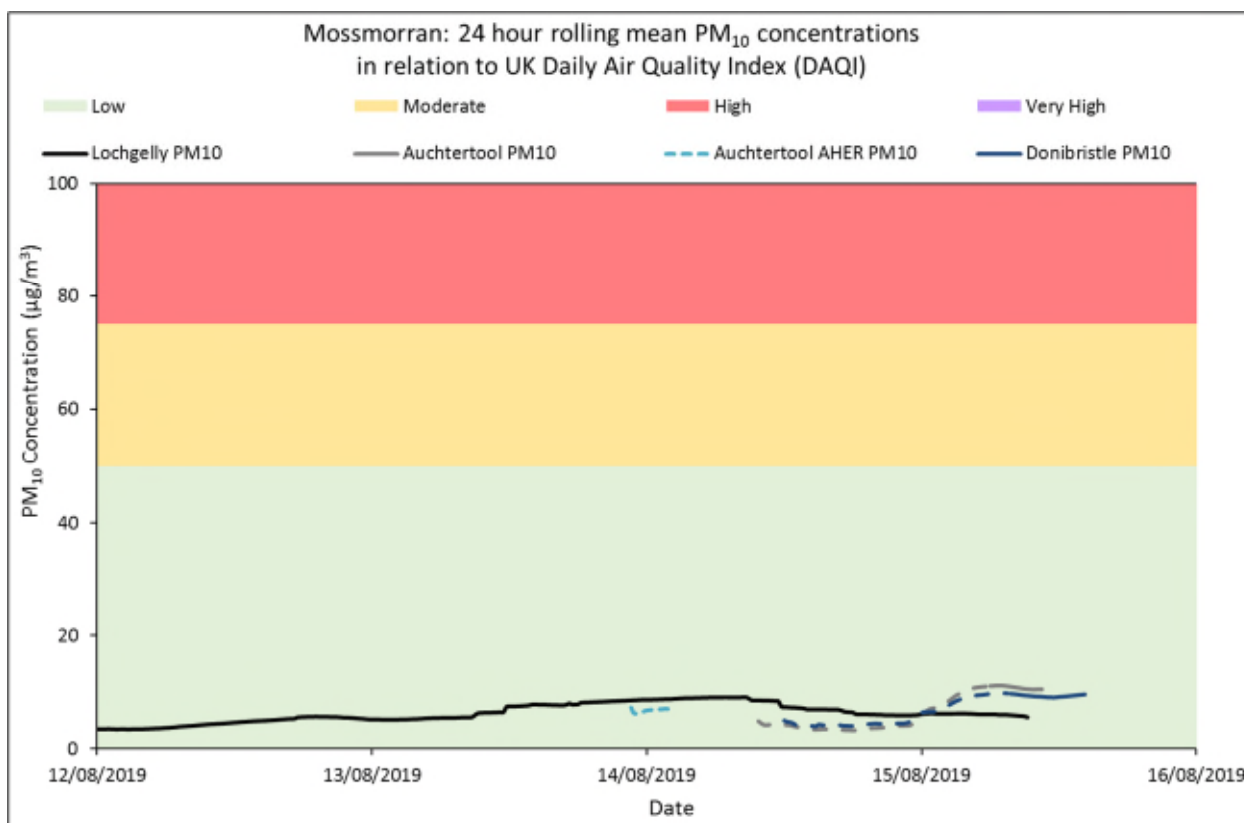


Figure 2: 24 hour rolling means for PM₁₀ at Lochgelly, Auchtertool, Donibristle and the first AHER deployment. Line graphs with dotted lines represent mean values based on less than 24 hours of data collection.

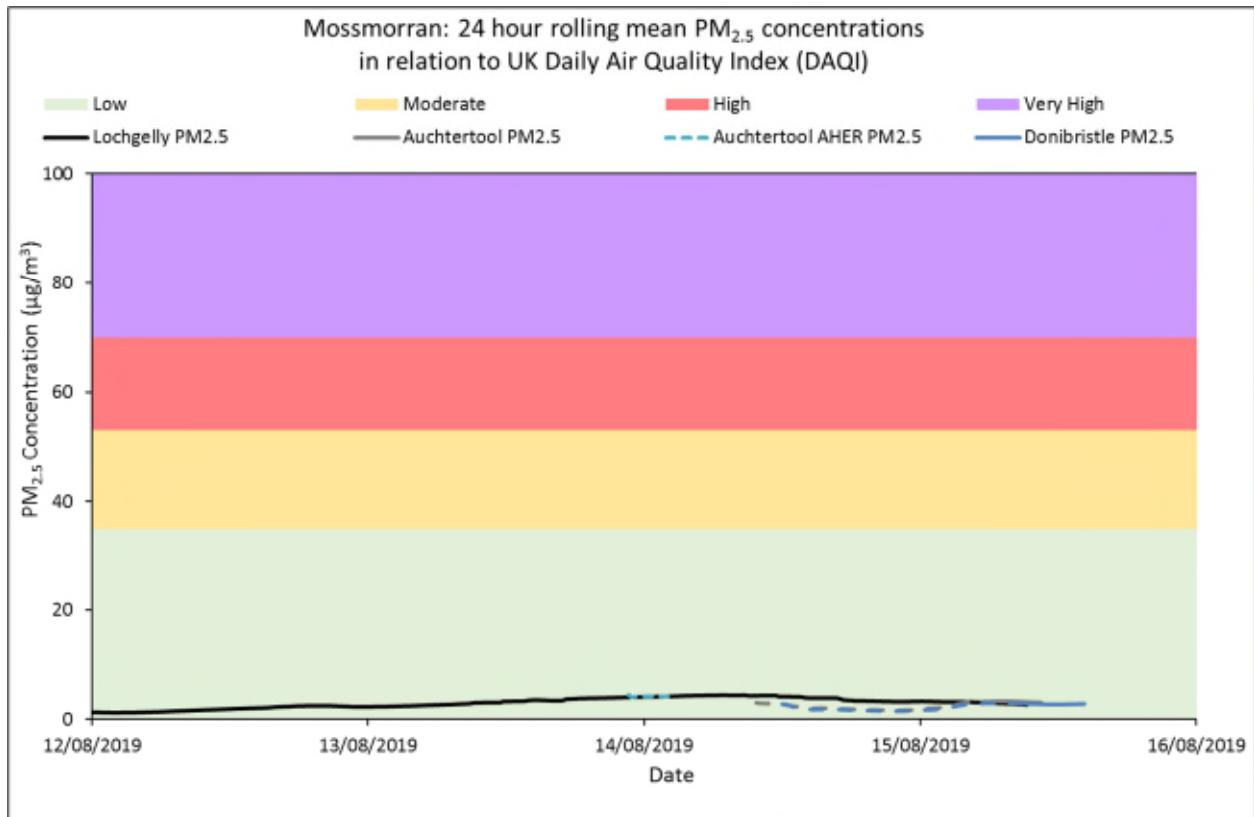


Figure 3: 24 hour rolling means for PM_{2.5} at Lochgelly, Auchtertool, Donibristle and the first AHER deployment. Line graphs with dotted lines represent mean values based on less than 24 hours of data collection.

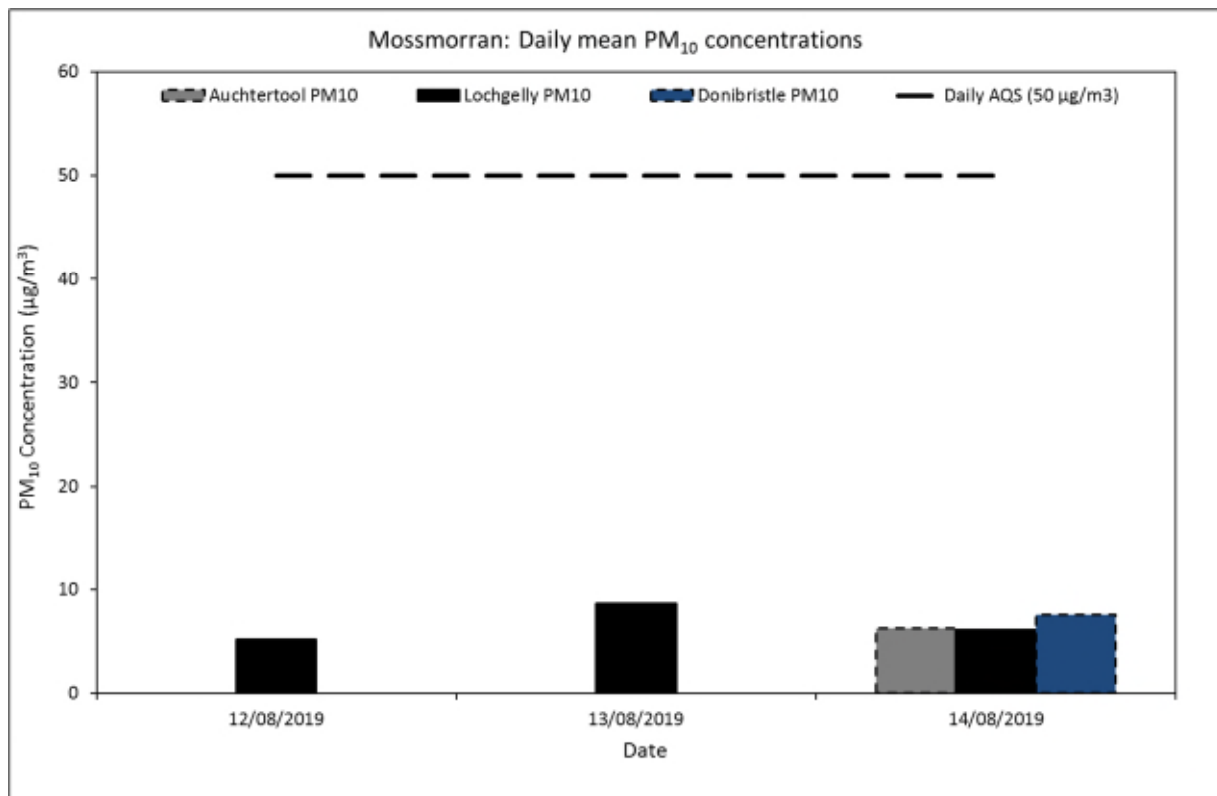


Figure 4: Daily rolling means for PM₁₀ at Lochgelly, Auchtertool and Donibristle. Columns with dotted lines represent mean values based on less than 24 hours of data collection.

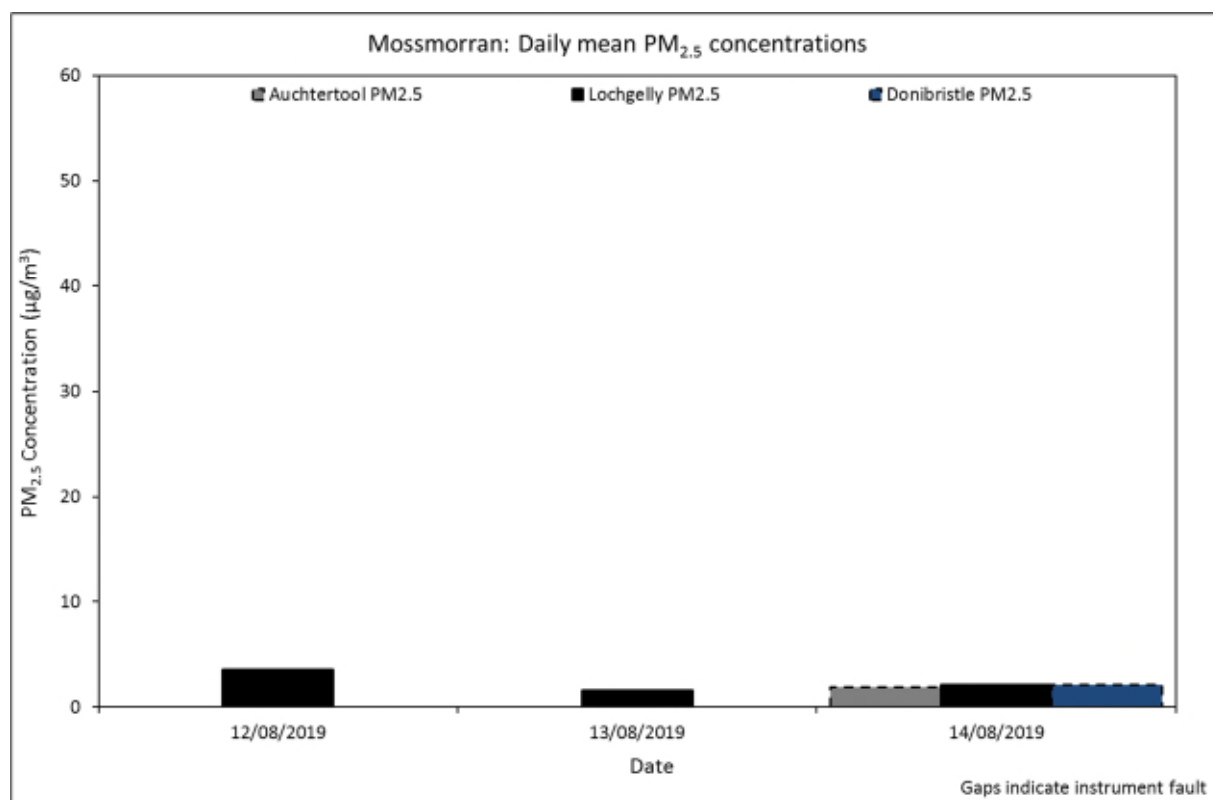


Figure 5: Daily rolling means PM_{2.5} at Lochgelly, Auchtertool and Donibristle. Columns with dotted lines represent mean values based on less than 24 hours of data collection.

4. Conclusion

PM₁₀ levels were within the daily (UK) Air Quality Standard of 50 µg/m³ (micrometres per cubic metre) and the values recorded for both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} would be classified as “low” using the (UK) Daily Air Quality Index (DAQI) bandings.

Appendix 1 – Supplementary Information

Particulate Matter

Particulate matter is made up of a number of components, including chemical substances, and soil and dust particles and comes from both human-made and natural sources. It consists of substances, which are released directly from the source into the atmosphere, and secondary components, which are formed in the atmosphere by chemical reactions.

Particulate matter is not made up of one type of substance; it is a classification of particles by size. It is measured in micrometres (μm). A human hair is approximately 100 μm wide.

Larger particles are generally filtered in the nose and throat, but particulate matter smaller than about 10 micrometres (μm) can be inhaled, which is why these are the ones measured for air quality monitoring.

- PM₁₀ means the particles are 10 μm or smaller. The measurement of this figure includes PM_{2.5}.
- PM_{2.5} means the particles are 2.5 μm or smaller.

Particulate levels can vary for a variety of reasons, such as rush hour traffic, building work, elevated pollen levels and emissions from industrial activities. Changes in wind direction can also have an impact on the measurements at a monitoring site.

What does the UK Daily Air Quality Index mean?

The following information is taken from the Air Quality in Scotland website at

<http://www.scottishairquality.scot/air-quality/daqj>.

In the UK most air pollution information services use the index and banding system approved by the [Committee on Medical Effects of Air Pollution Episodes](#) (COMEAP).

The overall Daily Air Quality Index (DAQI) looks at five substances, not just PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}. These tables are included to help put the levels detected by SEPA into context.

PM₁₀ Particles - Based on the daily mean concentration for historical data, latest 24 hour running mean (24 hour average) for the current day.

Index	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Band	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	High	Very High
µg/m ³	0-16	17-33	34-50	51-58	59-66	67-75	76-83	84-91	91-100	101 or more

PM_{2.5} Particles - Based on the daily mean concentration for historical data, latest 24 hour running mean (24 hour average) for the current day.

Index	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Band	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	High	Very High
µg/m ³	0-11	12-23	24-35	36-41	42-47	48-53	54-58	59-64	65-70	71 or more

Air Pollution Banding	Value	Accompanying health messages for at-risk individuals*	Accompanying health messages for the general population
Low	1-3	Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.	Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.
Moderate	4-6	Adults and children with lung problems, and adults with heart problems, who experience symptoms , should consider reducing strenuous physical activity, particularly outdoors.	Enjoy your usual outdoor activities.
High	7-9	Adults and children with lung problems, and adults with heart problems, should reduce strenuous physical exertion, particularly outdoors, and particularly if they experience symptoms. People with asthma may find they need to use their reliever inhaler more often. Older people should also reduce physical exertion.	Anyone experiencing discomfort such as sore eyes, cough or sore throat should consider reducing activity, particularly outdoors.
Very High	10	Adults and children with lung problems, adults with heart problems, and older people, should avoid strenuous physical activity. People with asthma may find they need to use their reliever inhaler more often.	Reduce physical exertion, particularly outdoors, especially if you experience symptoms such as cough or sore throat.

* Adults and children with heart or lung problems are at greater risk of symptoms. Follow your doctor's usual advice about exercising and managing your condition. It is possible that very sensitive individuals may experience health effects even on Low air pollution days. Anyone experiencing symptoms should follow the guidance provided on the [Defra UK-AIR](https://www.defra.gov.uk/uk-air) website.