

SEPA response to flaring at Mossmorran: Air quality data summary

Tuesday 25 February 2020

Every day SEPA works to protect and enhance Scotland's environment, helping communities and businesses thrive within the resources of our planet.

We call this **One Planet Prosperity**



For information on accessing this document in an alternative format or language please either contact SEPA by telephone on 03000 99 66 99 or by email to equalities@sepa.org.uk

If you are a user of British Sign Language (BSL) the Contact Scotland BSL service gives you access to an online interpreter enabling you to communicate with us using sign language.

<http://contactscotland-bsl.org/>

www.sepa.org.uk

03000 99 66 99

Strathallan House, Castle Business Park, Stirling, FK9 4TZ

Executive Summary

SEPA deployed three particulate monitors during the flaring at ExxonMobil Chemical Limited that began on Monday, 12 August 2019. These monitors were in place during the plant shut down and remain in place following the start-up process. This report provides detail of the monitoring SEPA carried out.

A summary of the latest findings are below:

- PM₁₀ levels were within the daily (UK) Air Quality Standard of 50 µg/m³ (micrograms 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

ExxonMobil Chemical Limited began unplanned elevated flaring at the Mossmorran Fife Ethylene Plant (FEP) on 12 August 2019 and continued until 15 August 2019 at which point the FEP shutdown. In late January 2020 the FEP entered the start-up process with ground flaring and intermittent elevated flaring taking place. Throughout the shutdown/start-up period Shell U.K. Limited's Natural Gas Liquids (NGL) Plant utilised ground flaring of excess gas.

On 21 February 2020 ExxonMobil Chemical Limited announced that the start-up was complete and the plant had returned to normal production.

Reports have been issued weekly that cover all data from Monday, 12 August 2019.

Reporting occurred out of sequence in response to unplanned elevated flaring during the site start-up and in advance of the Mossmorran Action Group meeting (21 February 2020). This report reflects a return to the intended weekly reporting schedule.

2. Monitoring

SEPA has had a particulate monitor deployed at a location in Lochgelly since Thursday, 4 July 2019 to assess long-term air quality conditions and this remains in place gathering data.

SEPA also deployed semi-permanent monitoring equipment in Auchtertool and Donibristle (Cowdenbeath) on Wednesday, 14 August 2019 to cover a wider area and ensure there are monitors downwind of the prevailing wind conditions. It also means we have comparable data from upwind of the Mossmorran Complex.

3. Results

The particulate data measurements 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 graphs on the following pages show the measured data since 20 February 2020 for PM₁₀ particles and PM_{2.5} particles (Figures 1 – 4).

The PM₁₀ daily AQS of 50 µg/m³ (which cannot be breached more than seven times in a year) was not breached at any location. There is no daily AQS for PM_{2.5}.

Annual Air Quality Standards exist for PM₁₀ (18 µg/m³) and PM_{2.5} (10 µg/m³) – which is why we have also shown the overall average (Table 1).

Table 1: A summary of the particulate data collected at Lochgelly, Auchtertool and Donibristle.

Location	Data Collection Period	Daily Average (µg/m ³)			Overall Average (µg/m ³)*	
		Dates	PM ₁₀	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	PM _{2.5}
Lochgelly	11:45 04 July 2019 – Ongoing	20 February 2020	3.54	2.17	7.20	4.45
		21 February 2020	3.22	2.08		
		22 February 2020	7.09	4.34		
		23 February 2020	5.87	3.84		
Auchtertool	09:30 14 August 2019 – Ongoing	20 February 2020	4.79	4.34	6.46	5.02
		21 February 2020	4.14	3.96		
		22 February 2020	9.52	9.00		
		23 February 2020	6.35	5.72		
Donibristle	12:00 14 August 2019 – ongoing	20 February 2020	4.04	3.72	6.74	5.21
		21 February 2020	3.35	3.26		
		22 February 2020	6.31	6.24		
		23 February 2020	6.15	5.46		

* The overall average is a calculation of the average since monitoring began.

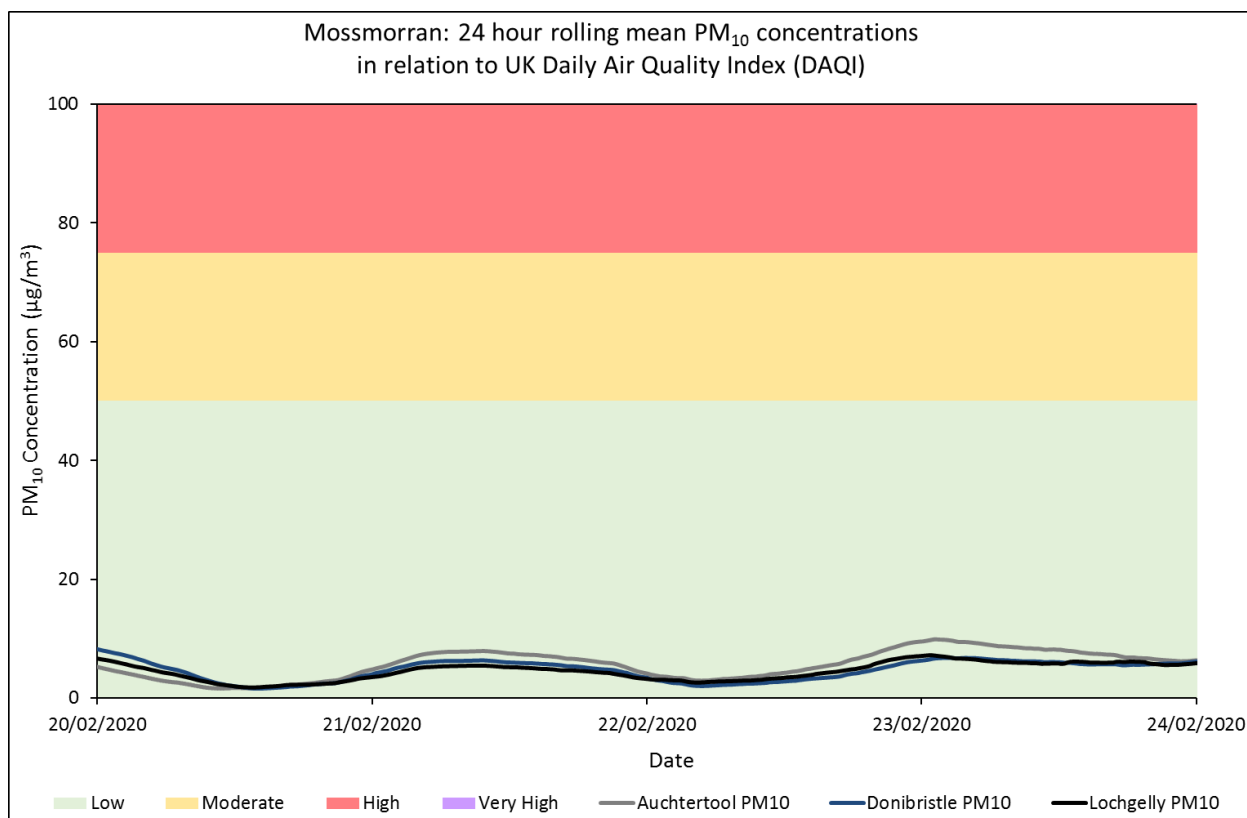


Figure 1: 24 hour rolling means for PM₁₀ at Lochgelly, Auchtertool and Donibristle. Dotted lines represent mean values based on less than 24 hours of data collection.

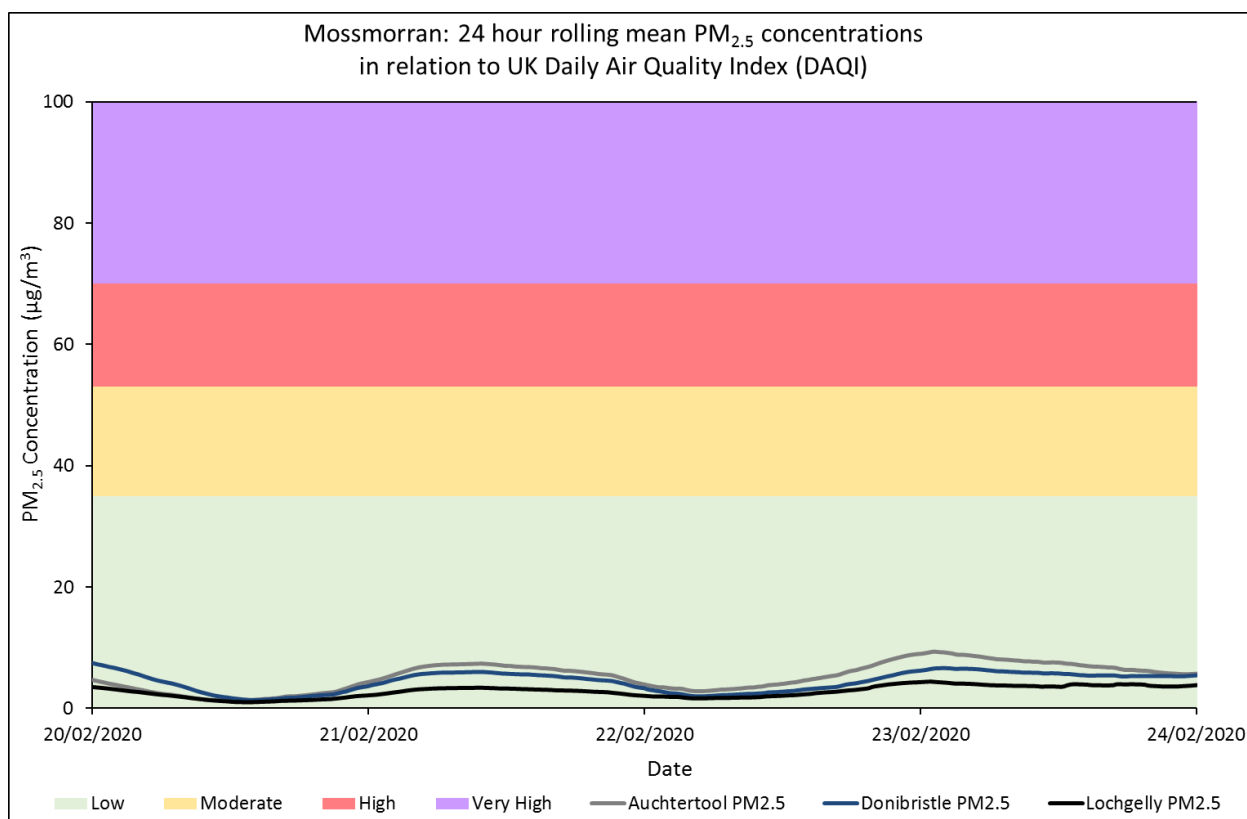


Figure 2: 24 hour rolling means for PM_{2.5} at Lochgelly, Auchtertool and Donibristle. Dotted lines represent mean values based on less than 24 hours of data collection.

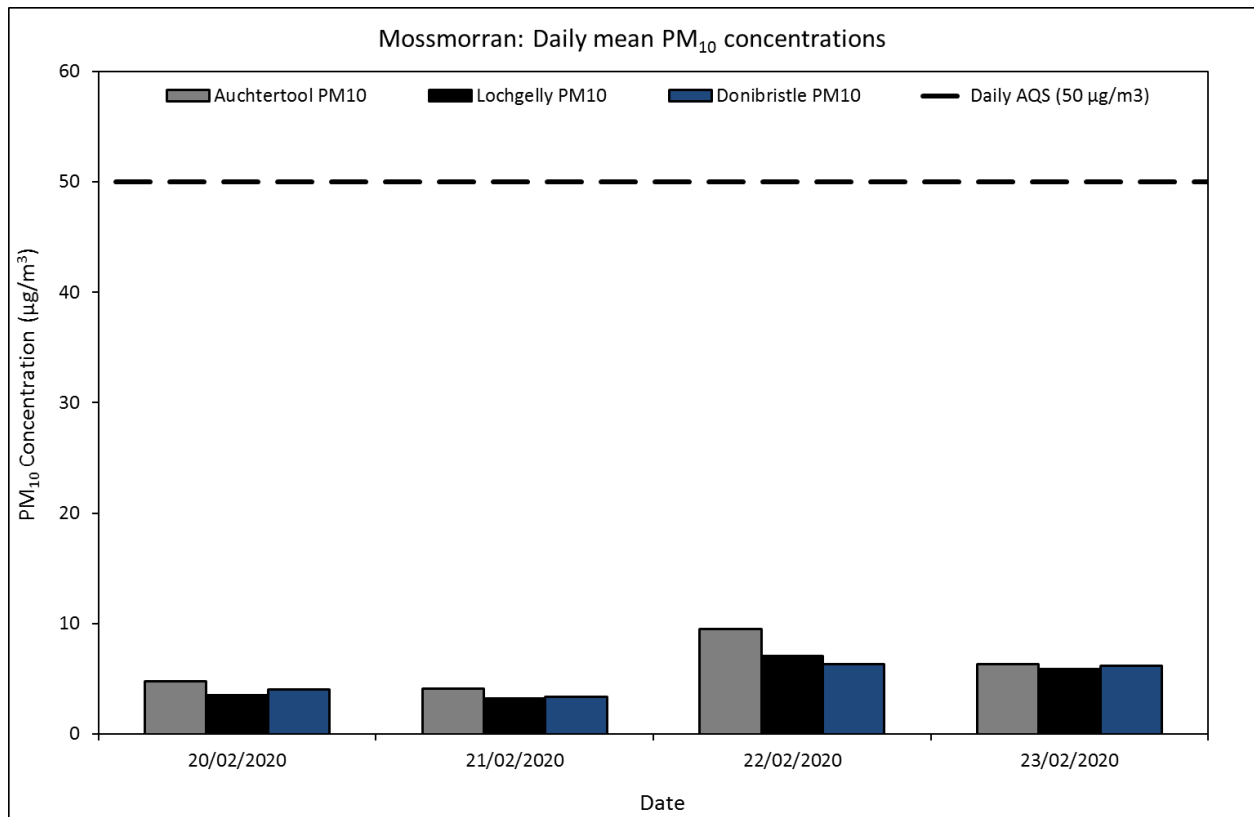


Figure 3: Daily rolling means for PM₁₀ at Lochgelly, Auchtertool and Donibristle. Dotted lines represent mean values based on less than 24 hours of data collection.

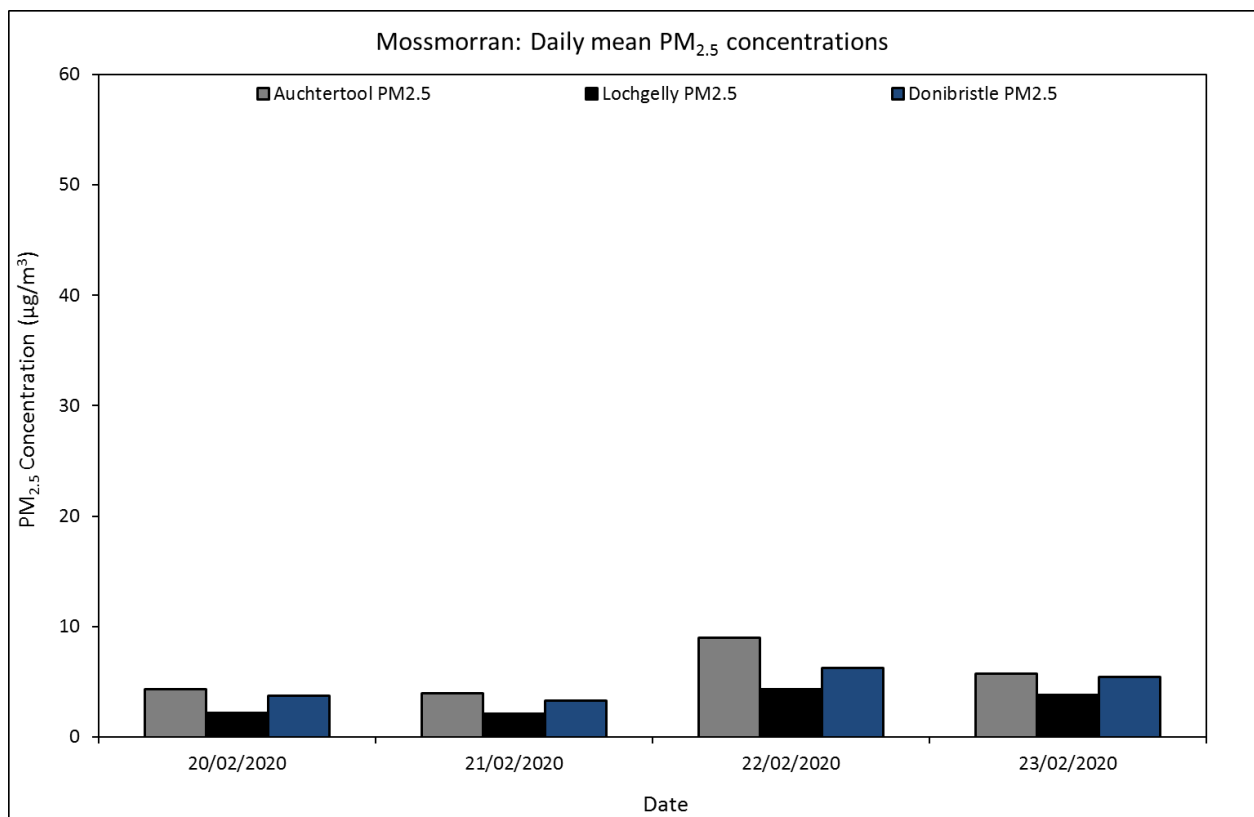


Figure 4: Daily rolling means for PM_{2.5} at Lochgelly, Auchtertool and Donibristle. Dotted lines represent mean values based on less than 24 hours of data collection.

4. Conclusion

PM₁₀ levels were within the daily (UK) Air Quality Standard of 50 µg/m³ (micrograms 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.