

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board

Date: October 5th 2016

Title: Local Air Quality (an update for District Councils)

Recommendations

The Board is recommended to note the update for each District.

Contribution to Priorities

Improving Health & Wellbeing

Summary

WRS undertakes the District Council work relating to Local Air Quality Management which includes the monitoring and reporting on air quality. This report provides a summary of the current situation for each district.

Monitoring of Nitrogen Dioxide is undertaken using diffusion tubes to establish an annual average in many locations across the County. In areas of particular concern where it is suspected national objectives are being breached, a more accurate but expensive method, using a continuous analyser is put in place. A continuous Analyser is currently in place on Foregate Street, Worcester and Worcester Road, (A38) Wychbold.

Report

General:

The purpose of Local Air Quality Management is to establish whether there are breaches of National Objectives for specified pollutants and declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) if identified. Recent Defra guidance has shifted emphasis from monitoring and identification to resolution of air quality concerns. WRS has identified priority actions for all established AQMAs and is working to resolve those issues with steering group members.

WRS has produced Air Quality Action Plan Update for 2016 on work undertaken which published this on our website.

The Action Plan Update forms part of each District Council's reporting requirements on air quality and provides an update on progress made with actions to address poor air quality in Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). Redditch Borough Council and Malvern Hills District Council are not required to produce this as they do not currently contain AQMAs in their areas.



Defra changed the format of the wider annual reporting last year which WRS trialled in Worcester City. WRS are currently drafting the Annual Status Reports (ASR) for each of the Districts which will incorporate the Action Plan Update report and complete the reporting for this year.

The following comprises a summary of our findings this year which will be included in either the ASR or is already included in the Action Plan Update 2016.

Bromsgrove District Council

In the **Kidderminster Road, Hagley AQMA** here have been no exceedences of nitrogen dioxide levels (above the National Objective) since 2014 and with the completion of the two most significant priority actions (alteration to phasing of traffic light system and introduction of signals at the roundabout), subject to this winter being one of average meteorological conditions, WRS are confident that 2016's monitoring results will produce lower levels. Should this be the case, with three year's worth of results below the objective, WRS will be recommending BDC revoke the AQMA due to improved conditions next year.

For **Redditch Road AQMA**, nitrogen dioxide levels are slightly down but **Worcester Road AQMA** and **Lickey End AQMA** remain stable above the National Objective. The LTP4 A38 Bromsgrove Eastern Bypass Enhancement Scheme and the LTP4 Lickey End (M42 Junction 1) Major Enhancement Scheme will have a significant impact on the Bromsgrove AQMAs and WRS are liaising with the County to ensure air quality is integral to the delivery of these business cases. Little progress has been made on other priority actions.

Malvern Hills District Council

Only one area along *Upton High Street* has any air quality concerns and this related to an exceedence of nitrogen dioxide levels above the National Objective in 2013. No exceedences have been reported since and whilst levels are elevated we are confident that there is no requirement to declare an AQMA. WRS will continue to liaise with Planning Officers so that new development does not detrimentally impact this situation.

Redditch Borough Council

Only one area, which is *Other Road* has any air quality concerns. There are elevated levels but they are below the National Objective. The Town Centre Regeneration proposals will resolve Other Road being used as a thoroughfare and therefore address the concerns of creeping nitrogen dioxide levels at the terrace houses here. This will negate the requirement for AQMA to be declared in the future. WRS will continue to liaise with Planning Officers so that any new development does not detrimentally impact this situation.

Worcester City Council

Work continues with source apportionment (establishing traffic make up and the air pollution percentage that each vehicle type is responsible for) in the new **St John's AQMA** and a draft Action Plan is being finalised.

This work is to be completed before the end of 2016.

Following concerns about pollution level creep along *London Road*, Worcester, additional diffusion tube monitoring was put up and the results received to date suggest that there is a significant issue with possible breaches of nitrogen dioxide national objective levels. It is proposed that additional options are considered to establish whether an AQMA is required to be declared.

In 2015 levels of nitrogen dioxide in the Lowesmoor part of the **Lowesmoor/Rainbow Hill AQMA** were for the first time (since declaration as an AQMA) below the national objective. This looks likely to continue with the 2016 average and could be directly attributable to the traffic restriction enforcement announcement and use of the bus gate in Lowesmoor. Average levels in Rainbow Hill similarly appear to be below the national objective for the last two years and if this continues as a trend it would suggest possible revocation after 2017's results.

However, the nitrogen dioxide levels remain high in **Dolday AQMA** and exceed the national objective in various locations. A continuous analyser has been monitoring levels in *Foregate Street* for over six months and this monitoring period is to be extended. Results to date suggest levels are close to the National Objective at residential properties so a full year's worth of data is preferable to include the winter weather period. The results here will be used to determine levels further afield, along *The Butts*, *The Tything* and *Sansome Street* which appear to be exceeding the national objective from the diffusion tube monitoring. Once the enhanced monitoring period is concluded, the results will be used to undertake detailed modelling of conditions. The purpose is to establish whether levels exceed national objectives. Should they exceed, options may include extension of the Dolday AQMA or declaration of a new AQMA.

Little progress has been possible with the priority actions for the Dolday AQMA and surrounding areas and it is recognised that individually they will not resolve the complex issues associated with Worcester City Centre. A more holistic approach is the only option to resolving the air quality issues that considers the volume of traffic and access by buses and HGVs on affected roads. WRS are ensuring that these elements are considered in the County Council's Worcester City Centre Transport Model, construction of which is to be commenced during 2016/17.

Not forsaking the above the on-going and proposed Worcester A4440 improvement works are hoped to bring some improvement to the air quality in the city centre over the coming years.

Wychavon District Council

Progress appeared to be imminent for **Port Street, Evesham AQMA** with changes to traffic controls with proposed rephrasing or removal of traffic lights which benefited from local Member & WRS Board Member support. The nitrogen dioxide levels in Port Street have fallen such that since 2014 there have been no exceedences of the National Objective and should this trend continue it may be possible to revoke the AQMA in 2017.



However, the proposed traffic control changes have now been halted by the County Council whilst a new transport model is developed for the town which will incorporate considerations for the AQMA. Until the impact of any changes are known it would be premature to revoke the AQMA. WRS will be involved with the Evesham Transport Strategy Steering Group in order to promote the air quality agenda and ensure that resolution of the Port Street AQMA remains a key focus in the development of the wider transport strategy for Evesham.

WRS arranged a continuous analyser to be installed for six months at *Worcester Road, Wychbold* to supplement the existing diffusion tube monitoring at three locations which had shown exceedences of the national objective for nitrogen dioxide for the last two years. The analyser is now being decommissioned as it has clearly demonstrated an exceedence of the national objective. Detailed dispersion modelling will now need to be undertaken to establish the extent of elevated levels along Worcester Road in relation to residential properties and the cause (in terms of vehicle type and location conditions). Once the extent of the area exceeding the objective is known, Wychavon District Council will be required to declare an AQMA and WRS will produce an action plan to resolve the air quality concerns in the locality.

Wyre Forest District Council

Levels of nitrogen dioxide at the **Horsefair AQMA** remain high (the highest in Worcestershire) and appear to be increasing along Comberton Road which is currently outside the existing AQMA boundary. Little movement with the Churchfields Masterplan redevelopment proposals means many of the priority actions can not be completed. WRS are working with the WRS Board Member to gain local Member support in progressing all the priority actions.

Other areas of Kidderminster and Stourport High Street have been the subject of concerns relating to elevated levels of nitrogen dioxide historically but there are no current concerns in these localities.

The levels of exceedence at the **Welchgate AQMA** are small but persistent and difficult to resolve. The WRS Board Member has facilitated the involvement of local Members in progressing and developing the priority actions for Welchgate recently. This has provided a number of additional options to explore which local Members support. WRS are currently liaising with the County Council and Wyre Forest traffic control team to implement these proposals.

Financial Implications

The majority of the on-going work and proposals are to be met within existing partner contributions to the WRS budget.

The options for London Road will be explored with Worcester City Council.

Legal Implications

Local Air Quality Management is a service undertaken by WRS within the existing Shared Service arrangements with declaration and revocation of AQMAs retained as reserved matters by the partner authorities.

Risk

District Councils have a duty to undertake Local Air Quality Management under Part VI of the Environment Act 1995. The monitoring, annual reporting and work to progress priority actions by WRS on behalf of the District Councils addresses that duty.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

The Air Quality Action Plan Update 2016 – available on the WRS website:
<http://www.worcesterservices.gov.uk/environmental-health/pollution/air-quality/air-quality-action-plan.aspx>

