

## WRS Board: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2017

### Information Report – Air Quality Update 2017

#### Recommendation

That the Board notes the Report and that Members use the contents of the information provided in their own reporting back to fellow Members of the partner authorities.

#### Background

District Council's have a duty to review and assess local air quality within their districts against a set of health based objectives. Under EU Directives the UK was required to comply with those objectives by 2015 and Defra has published the National Action Plan to demonstrate to the EU how it intends to comply.

#### Contribution to Priorities

Board Members requested an update on air quality following recent national developments such as Defra's Air Quality Action Plan.

#### Report

##### **Local Air Quality Management**

The Local Air Quality Management process (LAQM) is the Local Authority role with air quality. That is set out in Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 and subsequent Technical Guidance and Policy documents. There are a number of health based objectives for pollutants but for Worcestershire it is nitrogen dioxide which is the pollutant of concern. The objectives for that pollutant are an annual average of 40 microgrammes per metre cubed for a residential property or school and a one-hour average of 200 microgrammes per metre cubed for a property where someone would realistically spend an hour, such as outdoor seating of a café or a playground. WRS reports annually to Defra on behalf of all Districts on the current situation.

Where a breach of the objective is identified there is a requirement for the Local Authority to declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). WRS monitors air quality around the district and were an area of concern is identified an assessment is carried out. Following declaration, there is a requirement to produce an action plan and update that plan with progress and report to Defra annually.

There are currently 10 AQMAs in Worcestershire and a Countywide Air Quality Action Plan covering all except one of these. The focus of recent Defra Guidance to Local Authorities has been aimed at delivering the



measures to improve air quality included in their local Action Plans.

## **DEFRA's Action Plan & legal challenge by ClientEarth**

In 2015 Defra produced a national Action Plan aimed at showing how the UK was to comply with the European Directive in as short as possible timeframe. In that Plan six areas were required to put in place Clean Air Zones (CAZ); these were London, Birmingham, Leeds, Southampton, Derby and Nottingham. Some will be aware of ClientEarth's successful challenge of the Government's plans due to their failure to implement them. The current version of the Action Plan was published in July by the Government.

The current Action Plan focuses on implementation of CAZs in an additional 29 other authorities (not including Worcestershire authorities). It requires all local authorities to ensure compliance of air quality standards as quickly as possible with a suggestion that this should be 3-4 years. When a local authority introduces a CAZ (whether because it is required to or decides to) the Action Plan is clear that any other measures should be considered in preference, followed by considering non-charging CAZ prior to considering a charging CAZs. When introducing a CAZ, the minimum number of groups to restrict should be considered in the following order; restricting buses, then taxis, HGVs, LGVs and diesel cars. Funding streams available for implementation of CAZs and other measures are referred to in the Action Plan but are likely to be awarded in preference to local authorities specified in the Action Plans or where Low Emission Strategies are in place.

It is difficult to predict when the Worcestershire authorities may meet compliance with the National Objective (such that there is no longer a requirement for an Air Quality Management Area). For some AQMAs the trend is downwards but for other areas the situation is deteriorating and compliance is unlikely in the next 5 years without intervention.

## **Local Update**

Annual monitoring data for 2016 has been published on the WRS website but the following summaries the results and current situation.

Bromsgrove: In Worcester Road and Lickey End AQMAs the levels of Nitrogen Dioxide remain consistently high. For Redditch Road AQMA results are consistent, with two monitoring locations just above the National Objective for the last two years. This is believed to represent only two properties at risk. Little progress has been made with Action Plan measures to date although discussions continue with implementation of enhancements along the A38 corridor.

In Hagley we have had over three years with no exceedance of the National Objective and as a consequence WRS have commenced a detailed study which will form the supporting technical information for



presentation to the Council for revocation of the AQMA.

Malvern Hills: The levels of nitrogen dioxide in the District remain very low. Upton upon Severn High Street was the only area that previously gave us concern but that has remained low.

Redditch: The levels of nitrogen dioxide in Redditch remain very low as a result of the foresight of well planned housing and road layouts. Other Road is the only area of concern but is consistently just beneath the National Objective.

Worcester City: The City currently has three AQMAs (Dolday, Lowesmoor/Rainbow Hill and St John's). Assessments this year have confirmed exceedance of the National Objective on London Road and Foregate Street/The Butts/The Tything. The City Council have an opportunity to consider whether to incorporate all the existing AQMAs into one or declare two new ones alongside those in existence. WRS hope to have a selection of options for Committee in December 2017.

Little or no progress has been made with the current measures identified in the Local Action Plan and WRS are to assist a Member led Task & Finish Group in identifying what measures may be suitable to consider further. Following this and Committee consideration it is hoped WRS will be able to redraft the Worcester City Action Plan section to incorporate St Johns, any new areas and include a range of measures that the City wish to progress.

Wychavon: There are two very different trends occurring in opposite ends of the District. In the Port Street AQMA there has not been an exceedance of the National Objective since 2013 and with three years of data confirming this, WRS are working on a detailed study which will form the supporting technical information for presentation to the Council for revocation of the AQMA. It is hoped this will be ready for Executive Board on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2017.

A detailed assessment has been completed in Wychbold, including dispersion modelling to establish the extent of the exceedance spatially to establish the minimum extent required to be declared as an AQMA. Measurements of nitrogen dioxide have been monitored for a number of years and sufficient evidence now exists to make recommendations to the Executive Board in November on the AQMA boundary options available. Whilst the M5 carriageway and slip road are influencing factors in terms of background levels they are not the main source of pollution along Worcester Road. As reported previously discussions continue to ensure any enhancements along the A38 corridor to the north benefit this location as well.

Wyre Forest: Little progress has been possible with the action plan measures for Welchgate, Bewdley AQMA. However significant assistance has been given to Development Control in ensuring they have sufficient advice to support decisions around significant



proposals to ensure they do not have a detrimental effect on air quality in this location.

The situation is similar for Horsefair AQMA, Kidderminster with support provided in progression of the Churchfields Masterplan measure from the action plan. As part of this a source apportionment exercise was undertaken for a section of the AQMA to establish the source of the pollution that causes it to exceed the National Objective.

Stourport High Street has previously been considered an area of concern, however following regression of monitoring results back to relevant receptors we are confident there are no exceedances here. Where monitoring locations are on lampposts or on the façade of non-residential properties at ground floor a calculation is made to adjust the measurement (in line with Defra guidance) to establish the likely exposure at a residential dwelling's window, be that either a horizontal regression from the road or vertically to a first floor residential receptor.

The situation in Comberton Hill, Kidderminster is continuing to be monitored closely however as several locations have exceeded the National Objective in 2 out of the last 4 years.

## Reporting

WRS hope to complete the 2017 reporting requirements before the end of the financial year with focus then on updating and progression of the Action Plan measures.

## Contact Points

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## Background Papers

Defra & DfT 'UK Plan for tackling Roadside nitrogen dioxide Concentrations: An Overview' July 2017.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-quality-plan-for-nitrogen-dioxide-no2-in-uk-2017>

WRS 2016 Air Quality Action Plan Update  
<http://www.worcsregservices.gov.uk/media/2294583/WRS-AQAP-Progress-Report-2015-16.pdf>

