

REPORT FROM: HEAD OF HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

TO: EXECUTIVE

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AIR QUALITY STATUS REPORTS FOR 2023 AND 2024

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an update to Members on Air Quality Management in Pendle covering the years 2023 and 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) The Executive is asked to note progress and approve the Air Quality Status Report for 2023 and 2024, with progress made against the Air Quality Action Plan.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) In 2019 the Pendle Borough Council officially recognised climate change as an emergency.
- (2) To provide Members with a progress update on Air Quality monitoring undertaken across the Borough, with continuous improved air quality arising from the implementation of the Air Quality Action Plan.

ISSUE

1. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

1.1. In 2019, Pendle Council declared a climate emergency and introduced the Climate Emergency Action Plan (2020 to 2025). The plan aims to reduce carbon emissions across all service areas and encourages partners, organisations and the public to act.

1.2. The adverse health effects of outdoor air pollution on public health are well documented. The principal source of NO_x is derived primarily from traffic-related pollutants, nitrogen dioxide (NO_x) and particulate matter 2.5 (PM 2.5). NO_x is also one of the major greenhouse gases associated with formation of acid rain, smog and damage the atmosphere.

- 1.3. Pendle Borough Council has statutory responsibility under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995. This is a framework known as Local Air Quality Management or LAQM, to review and assess air pollution against the National Air Quality Standards. Where an air pollutant fails to meet the Air Quality Standards (AQS), an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) must be declared, along with an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) detailing implementation to improve air quality within the designated area.
- 1.4. An AQMA was declared in 2011, covering Windsor Road from Langroyd Road, to Skipton Road, in Colne. At the time, the main air pollutant of concern was Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_x). The ASR and AQAP recognises the importance of continuous improvement in air quality standards, aiming to reduce air pollution from key sources including road traffic, industry, agriculture, and residential heating.
- 1.5. The most recent AQAP was published in 2024, since then progress has been made against several actions. Implementation and progress of such actions are monitored as part of the Air Quality Status Report (ASR). The Council is also statutorily required to submit the ASR to Defra. The ASR also details monitoring data and data trends of NO_x captured for 2023 and 2024. The ASR and AQAP, establish a clear structure for monitoring and responding to future air quality challenges.

2. MONITORING DATA AND TREND

- 2.1. The Air Quality Objective (AQO) standard for NO_x is 40µg/m³. The definition of micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³), is a unit of measurement to express the concentration of NO_x or pollutant in air. Where 1 µg/m³ represent 1 microgram of NO_x for every cubic metre in air.

2023

- 2.2. In 2023 Pendle Borough Council undertook non automatic, diffusion tube monitoring at 50 sites, including locations near schools and busy roads to keep track of the levels of NO_x. These sites are assessed monthly, providing essential data for the Council's annual Air Quality Status Report. There are no exceedances of the AQO in the Colne AQMA in 2023. The maximum recorded concentration found was at the Junction of North Valley/Langroyd Road, Colne. This is within the Colne AQMA, with the recorded level being 31.9 µg/m³.

- 2.3. Comments made by DEFRA, (2023 ASR) were as follows: *“Pendle Borough Council have illustrated which measures they have met within the last reporting year and the progress of any current measures in great detail. This should continue”*. *“On the basis of the evidence provided by the local authority the conclusions reached in the report are **accepted** for all sources and pollutants....”*

2024

- 2.4. There were no exceedances of the NO_x AQO in 2024, the highest reported concentration was 31.4 µg/m³ at 3 Burnley Road, Brierfield. Within the AQMA, the highest reported concentration was 26.5 µg/m³ at 44 Windsor Street, Colne. The majority of monitoring sites saw reductions in concentration from 2023 to 2024, only five sites saw increases from 2022. The maximum observed increase was 2.0 µg/m³ at 32 Windsor Street, Colne, which increased from 22.1 µg/m³ to 24.1 µg/m³.

- 2.5. Comments made by DEFRA, (2024 ASR) were as follows: *“On the basis of the evidence provided by the local authority the conclusions reached in the report are **accepted** for all sources and pollutants....”*. *“PBC have included an additional appendix for the detailed assessment to support the revocation of the Colne AQMA, which appears to have been undertaken to a robust methodology. This demonstrates PBC are taking steps to revoke the Colne AQMA, this should be continued in 2024 and the AQMA should be revoked. Following*

the completion of this report, Pendle Borough Council should revoke the Colne AQMA and submit an Annual Status Report in 2025”.

2.6. The levels of NO_x have been below the AQO for a number of years. They are not expected to rise above the limit in the foreseeable future. This is in line with a national trend in the reduction of NO₂ levels and due to implementation of the AQAP.

3. PROGRESS AGAINST ACTIONS

3.1. Pendle Borough Council has taken forward a number of direct measures from the AQAP during 2023 in pursuit of local air quality. Details of all measures completed, in progress or planned are set out in Table 2.2 of the 2024 ASR.

- Improvements to existing transport infrastructure, changes to road layouts and operations around North Valley Road within the AQMA and Burnley Road, in Brierfield, to reduce congestion and associated vehicle emissions in collaboration with LCC.
- Requirement for an air quality assessment to be undertaken on all relevant planning applications.
- Encouragement of staff, businesses and the public to use greener sustainable and alternative modes of transport by improving accessibility and locations of electric vehicle charging stations across the Borough, car parks and through planning applications.
- Promotion of public transport, alternative forms of travel and the new Pendle Cycle Way.
- Conducting inspections and enforcement of Pendle Borough Council’s permitted premises, under the Permitting Regulations, to control emissions from commercial premises.
- Announced a new traffic free route in Nelson with the introduction of Pendle Water Bridleway, which encourages sustainable alternative modes of transport.
- Continue to work with and in collaboration with other partners and stakeholders such as Lancashire County Council Highways, Public Health at Lancashire County Council, and other Lancashire based authorities in order to improve air quality across Pendle.
- Review revoking of AQMA based upon analyses assessment of past results of Nox, that have not exceeded the AQS for several years.

3.2. Regular monitoring of the actions contained within the Action Plan takes place, with progress contained within the yearly ASR.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Pendle’s AQS and AQAP demonstrates our dedication to protecting the well-being of our residents and enhancing our environment. With robust evidence of low levels of air pollution below the AQS leading to improved health of residents.

4.2. The draft Air Quality Strategy once adopted finalised document will be published on the Council’s website, ensuring transparency and accessibility for the community.

4.3. The next step for the Council is to seek public consultation with a view to revoking Colne AQMA.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: The Air Quality Status Report provided an update on the Council's Air Quality Action Plan contributing to the Corporate Objective and Climate Emergency Action Plan (2020-2025).

Financial: The Council's current air quality monitoring and reporting programme is carried out within existing budgets which are reviewed annually

Legal: The Local Air Quality Management ("LAQM") regime was introduced by the Environment Act 1995. The Borough Council's duties under the Environmental Act 1995 are mandatory. The duties imposed on the Council are to review air quality from time to time and, under Part IV of the Act, to develop and implement an air quality action plan to tackle air pollution.

Risk Management: There are no implications for adopting an ASR, however failure to work towards completion of the Air Quality Action Plan may instigate DEFRA and Secretary of State Involvement.

Health and Safety: None directly arising from this report.

Sustainability: None directly arising from this report.

Community Safety: None directly arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity: None directly arising from this report.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Pendle Council Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) 2023.

Appendix 2- Pendle Council Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) 2024, including detailed assessment of Colne Air Quality Management Area.

Appendix 3- Air Quality Action Plan, January 2024

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no other papers associated with this report.