

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

16 NOVEMBER 2021

REPORT OF THE CHIEF OFFICER - LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HR AND CORPORATE POLICY

LOCAL AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT – ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2021

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the 2021 Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) Annual Progress Report (APR) based upon the air quality datasets obtained in 2020. This report requires Cabinet approval in order to submit a final version to Welsh Government (WG).
- 1.2 The report also provides an update on progress towards the DRAFT Air Quality Action Plan for the Park Street Air Quality Management Area.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:-
 1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
 2. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.

3. Background

- 3.1 Under Section 82 of the Environment Act 1995 every local authority has an obligation to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas, and to determine whether or not air quality objectives to protect health are likely to be achieved. Where the air quality reviews indicate that the air quality objectives are not being achieved, or are not likely to be achieved, Section 83 of the 1995 Act requires local authorities to designate an Air Quality Management Area ('AQMA'). Section 84 of the Act ensures that action must then be taken at a local level which is outlined in a

specific Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to ensure that air quality in the identified area improves.

- 3.2 The Annual Air Quality Progress Report, attached as **Appendix 1**, provides details on the ratified data for the air quality monitoring undertaken in 2020 within Bridgend County Borough.
- 3.3 Welsh Government issues statutory policy guidance to Local Authorities under section 88 of the Environment Act 1995 to bring the local air quality management system in Wales into line with the sustainable development principle outlined in Welsh Government's Well-being for Future Generations Act, 2015. This guidance, with which local authorities must have regard to when carrying out their air quality functions under the Environment Act 1995, sets out that authorities in Wales have to produce an Annual Progress Report each year and publish it by 31st December at the latest. This report must include monitoring results for the previous calendar year, a progress report on action plan implementation and an update on any new policies or developments likely to affect local air quality.
- 3.4 This Annual Air Quality Progress Report satisfies the above criteria examining ratified datasets for air quality monitoring undertaken in 2020 within Bridgend County Borough.

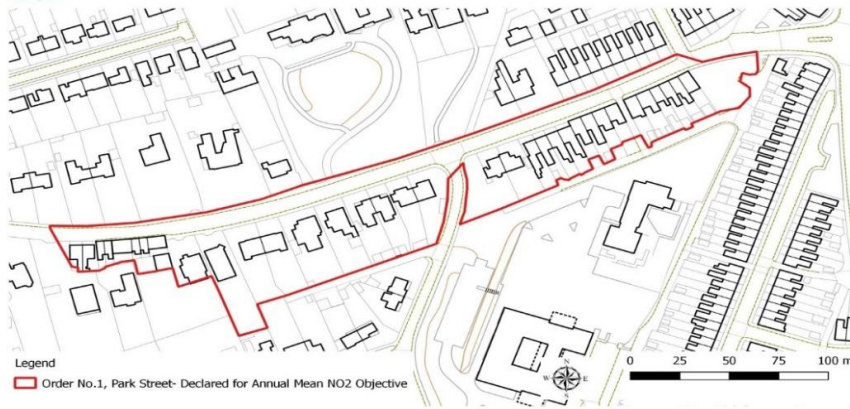
4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 The 2021 Annual Air Quality Progress Report confirms that in 2020, in general, air quality within Bridgend County Borough continues to meet the relevant air quality objectives as prescribed in the Air Quality (Wales) Regulations 2000 and the Air Quality (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2002.
- 4.2 2020 was of course dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic with strict lockdown arrangements in place from March into the summer of 2020, again in the autumn with the 'firebreak' lockdown (October into November) and finally from Christmas onwards. A noticeable effect of the various lockdowns was the significant reduction in road traffic in line with the prohibition of non-essential travel and the requirement to work from home wherever possible. In 2020, across Bridgend County Borough as a whole, there was an average reduction of 22% in NO₂ annual mean concentration experienced at roadside diffusion tube monitoring sites, relative to 2019.
- 4.3 However, the 2021 Annual Progress Report confirms that in 2020 air quality continues to be a concern along Park Street coinciding with the geographical boundary of the Park Street, Bridgend AQMA Order raised on the 1st January 2019. The area comprising the Bridgend County Borough Council Air Quality Management Area Order Number 1, Park Street is outlined in *Error! Reference source not found.*, below.

Figure 1- Extent of the Park Street Air Quality Management Area



Bridgend County Borough Council Air Quality Management Area (AQMA): Order No.1, Park Street

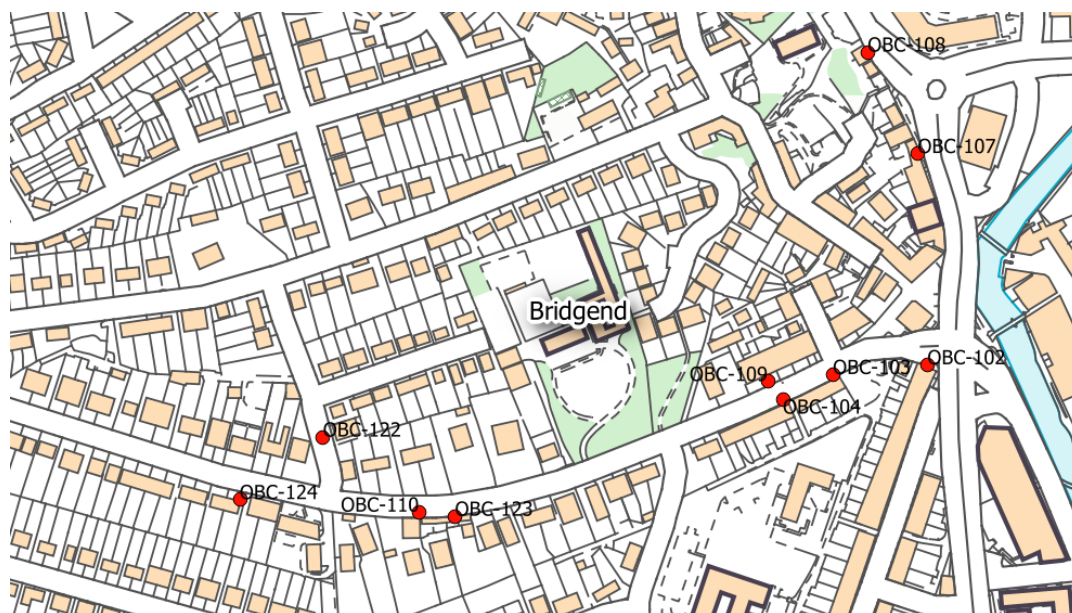


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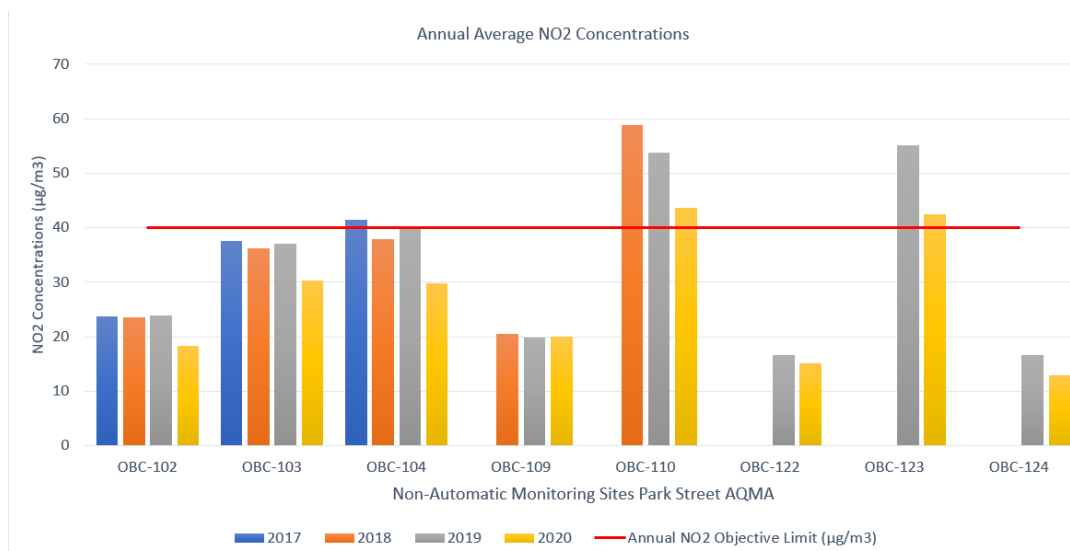
4.4 **Figure 2** below depicts the non-automated monitoring sites located in and around the Park Street Air Quality Management Area.

Figure 2 - 2020 NO₂ Diffusion Tube Monitoring Locations, Park Street/ Tondur Road



4.5 It is noted that monitoring undertaken in 2020 at monitoring sites **OBC-110** & **OBC-123**, located on Park Street residential facades, still demonstrates annual average levels in exceedance of the annual average air quality objective set at (40µg/m³) for NO₂, despite the generally lower NO₂ levels experienced in the monitoring period. Thus the annual mean NO₂ concentration for **OBC-110** is calculated at **43.6µg/m³** while the annual mean NO₂ concentration for **OBC-123** is calculated at **42.4µg/m³** respectively, as shown in **Figure 3** below. These site specific levels represent a reduction of 21.2% and 24.1% respectively, relative to 2019.

Figure 3 – Trends in annual mean NO₂ concentrations in the Park Street AQMA



- 4.6 After a number of delays to ensure that the necessary planning permission and legal agreements were in place, an automated air quality monitoring system (AMS) is now located in the grounds of the Quaker Meeting House on Park Street. Following its installation and commissioning in December 2020, the monitoring site measures and records on a 24/7 basis the levels of NO₂ and PM₁₀, and forms part of the Welsh Air Quality Network. This development is over and above the non-automated monitoring network, and the results recorded by the newly installed AMS can be viewed at online at <http://www.welshairquality.co.uk>.
- 4.7 Longer term, the AMS will allow for air quality trends to be examined on a high temporal resolution basis and therefore be able to assist with underpinning those short term periods whereby raised levels of NO₂ are particularly prevalent in the area.

Park Street, AQMA Action Plan Update

- 4.8 As part of the LAQM statutory duties, from the date of raising the AQMA Order (in this instance 1st January 2019) Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) and Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) had 18 months in which to prepare a DRAFT Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to improve air quality in the area, and once agreed, this plan to be formally adopted before two years has elapsed.
- 4.9 While SRS and BCBC have made good headway in developing this AQAP in accordance with WG's Policy Guidance, inevitably the impacts and associated difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic have meant that the timeline has had to be extended in consultation with Welsh Government, as detailed in 4.16 below.
- 4.10 In order to develop ideas and ensure an effective AQAP which considers all aspects, and prioritising public health, an AQAP Work Steering Group was established, comprising specialists from the various departments of Bridgend County Borough Council, as well as from partner agencies. Collating the ideas and suggestions generated by the Work Steering Group, a list of proposed mitigation measures has previously been created (as set out in Table 2 of the 2021 Annual Progress Report). An indicative cost and benefit score was also provided for each action. The potential actions have been scored for cost benefit and then ranked to identify the most deliverable actions (as set out in Table 3 of the 2021 Annual Progress Report).
- 4.11 The conclusion drawn by the AQAP Work Steering Group, and supported by the feedback received through the December 2019 Park Street AQMA public engagement sessions, is that the air quality experienced in the AQMA is derived from the nature of traffic flows utilising the network. Queuing and inconsistent traffic flows would appear to be the principal cause of the poor levels of air quality.
- 4.12 Following the indicative Cost Benefit Analysis a decision was made by the AQAP Work Steering Group to pursue those mitigation options that would manage and improve traffic flows through the Park Street AQMA and in so doing, deliver air quality improvements in the **shortest time possible**, and in line with the ambitions of Welsh Government and BCBC; reduce levels to **as low as reasonably practicable**.

- 4.13 Following the 15th September 2020 Cabinet decision to undertake detailed transport and air quality assessments within the Park Street AQMA, consultancy work has been underway to identify the most appropriate measures to implement from the preferred mitigation options package of:-
1. Implement a 4 phase junction (3 traffic, 1 pedestrian) at the Heol-y-Nant turning (Measure 21)
 2. Denying all access onto St Leonards Road (Measure 18);
 3. Optimise the Park Street/ Angel Street/ Tondu Road Junction (Measure 20).
- 4.14 Early transport modelling results indicate that the first of these (Measure 21) is unlikely to bring about the desired improvement in air quality as a result of queuing traffic, however it is a condition of the Persimmon planning permission that a right turning will be introduced into Heol-y-Nant. Air quality modelling is due to be run on this arrangement. Next will follow work to model options 2 and 3 above (Measures 18 and 20) for both transport and air quality considerations.
- 4.15 Once the outcomes of this modelling work are understood, the Air Quality Action Plan for the Park Street AQMA can be compiled accordingly. It will be presented to Cabinet for consideration prior to public consultation.

Covid-19 Impacts

- 4.16 The unprecedented circumstances of the COVID 19 pandemic have impacted on local air quality monitoring and the development of the action plan for the Park Street AQMA, both in terms of its scheduling and delivery. Welsh Government has been kept up to date with the position and inevitable delays in delivering the action plan. Welsh Government recognise the need to allow for a further extension period to facilitate the delivery of the action plan, and it has been agreed that a revised deadline of 31st March 2022 represents a realistic time frame in which to submit the DRAFT action plan to Welsh Government.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 The Report does not have any impacts on policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 SRS and BCBC adopt the principles of The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFGA). The act is a significant enabler to improve air quality as it calls for sustainable cross-sector action based on the principles of long-term, prevention-focused integration, collaboration and involvement. It intends to improve

economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in Wales to ensure the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

7.2 Declaration of the AQMA on Park Street and the subsequent production of the Air Quality Action Plan will ensure that future decision making in terms of air quality complies with the WFGA, and the Council meets the five ways of working, as detailed below:

- Long term – The action plan will balance short-term needs of improving air quality, and will also look at measures to safeguard the ability of meeting long-term needs.
- Prevention – By implementing measures which will be set out in the Action Plan, the Council should ensure improvements in air quality and will be able to prevent air quality deteriorating in the future.
- Integration – SRS will look to ensure that the work undertaken as part of the Action Plan integrates with public body's environmental well-being objectives.
- Collaboration –The Action Plan will be developed in collaboration with many departments within the Council and other external organisations, i.e., Public Health Wales.
- Involvement – The action plan will be subject to public consultation, and will ensure that those who have a strong interest in improving air quality will be fully involved and their ideas considered.

8. Financial implications

8.1 SRS has an existing budget to complete a programme of air quality monitoring across Bridgend.

8.2 Transport and air quality monitoring within the Park Street AQMA have been supported by Corporate contingency funding in 2021-22, progressing within the identified budget for this work.

8.3 Should any further detailed assessments be required, then this would necessitate discussion with the Section 151 Officer as to how that additional work could be funded.

9. Recommendation(s)

9.1. Cabinet is recommended to:-

- Note and accept the results of air quality monitoring gathered in 2020
- Note the progress made in developing the Air Quality Action Plan for Park Street; and
- Agree the finalisation of the 2021 Annual Progress Report (attached as **Appendix 1**) for submission as a final version to Welsh Government.

Kelly Watson
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Background documents:

None