

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	22 OCTOBER 2024
Report Title:	LOCAL AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2024
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER – LEGAL AND REGULATORY SERVICES, HUMAN RESOURCES AND CORPORATE POLICY
Responsible Officer:	JASON BALE – OPERATIONAL MANAGER, SHARED REGULATORY SERVICES
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	THERE IS NO EFFECT UPON THE COUNCIL’S POLICY FRAMEWORK OR PROCEDURE RULES AS A RESULT OF THIS REPORT.
Executive Summary:	<p>This report provides Cabinet with an update on local air quality monitoring undertaken across Bridgend County Borough Council in 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report shows that only the air quality objective for NO₂ is breached at three locations in the already declared Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) on Park Street. <p>It is noted that in 2023, monitoring undertaken at sites OBC-110, OBC-123 and OBC-140 located on Park Street residential facades, exceed the annual average air quality objective set at (40µg/m³) for NO₂. OBC-110 & OBC-123 recorded annual average figures of 43.3µg/m³. OBC-140 recorded an annual average figure of 42.9 µg/m³. <u>This represents a reduction in NO₂ concentrations of 19% and 22% at OBC-110 & OBC-123 since 2019.</u></p>

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the 2024 Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) Annual Progress Report (APR) based upon the air quality datasets obtained in 2023. This report requires Cabinet approval to submit a final version to Welsh Government (WG).
- 1.2 The report provides an update on progress regarding the Air Quality Action Plan for the Park Street Air Quality Management Area.

2 Background

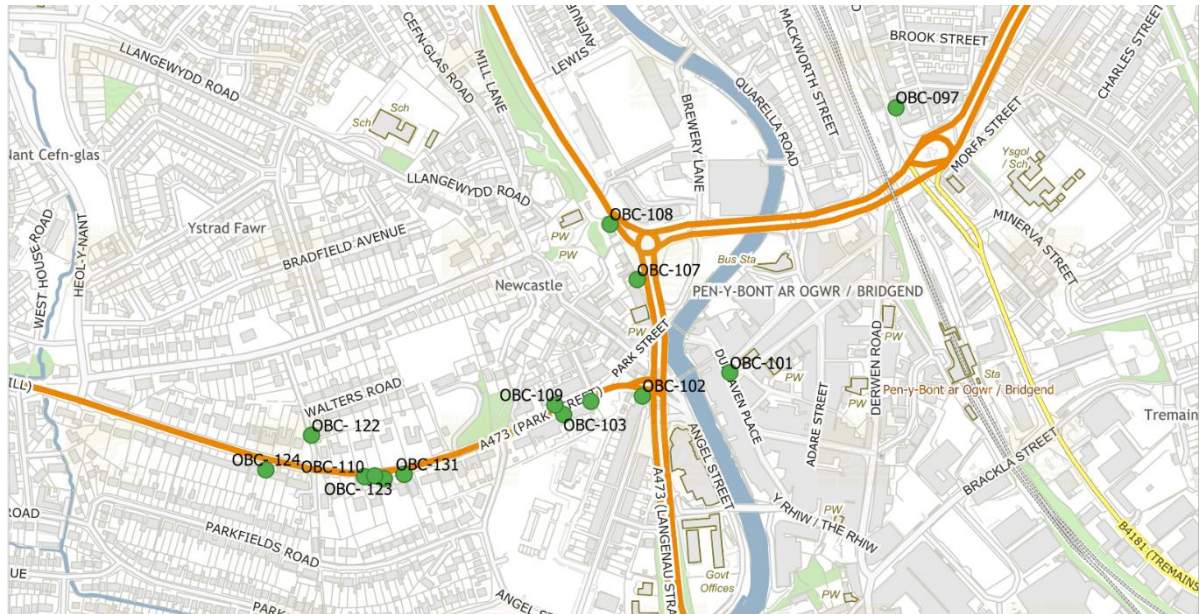
- 2.1 Under Section 82 of the Environment Act 1995 every local authority has an obligation to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas, and to determine whether or not air quality objectives to protect health are likely to be achieved. Where the air quality reviews indicate that the air 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.
- 2.2 The Annual Progress Report, attached as **Appendix 1**, provides details on the ratified data for the air quality monitoring undertaken in 2023 within Bridgend County Borough.
- 2.3 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 the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015. This guidance, which local authorities use when carrying out their air quality functions under the Environment Act 1995, sets out that authorities in Wales must produce a draft Annual Progress Report each year and submit a final version to Welsh Government by the 31st of 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.
- 2.4 The 2024 Annual Progress Report satisfies the above criteria examining ratified datasets for air quality monitoring undertaken in 2023 within Bridgend County Borough.

3. Current situation/ proposal

- 3.1 The 2024 Annual Progress Report confirms that in 2023, three sites located on Park Street exceed the air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide as prescribed in the Air Quality (Wales) Regulations 2000 and the Air Quality (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2002. All other locations within Bridgend County Borough continue to meet the relevant air quality objectives.
- 3.2 The Park Street, Bridgend Air Quality Management Area Order was raised on the 1st January 2019.

3.3 Figure 1 below depicts the non-automated monitoring sites located in and around the Park Street Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).

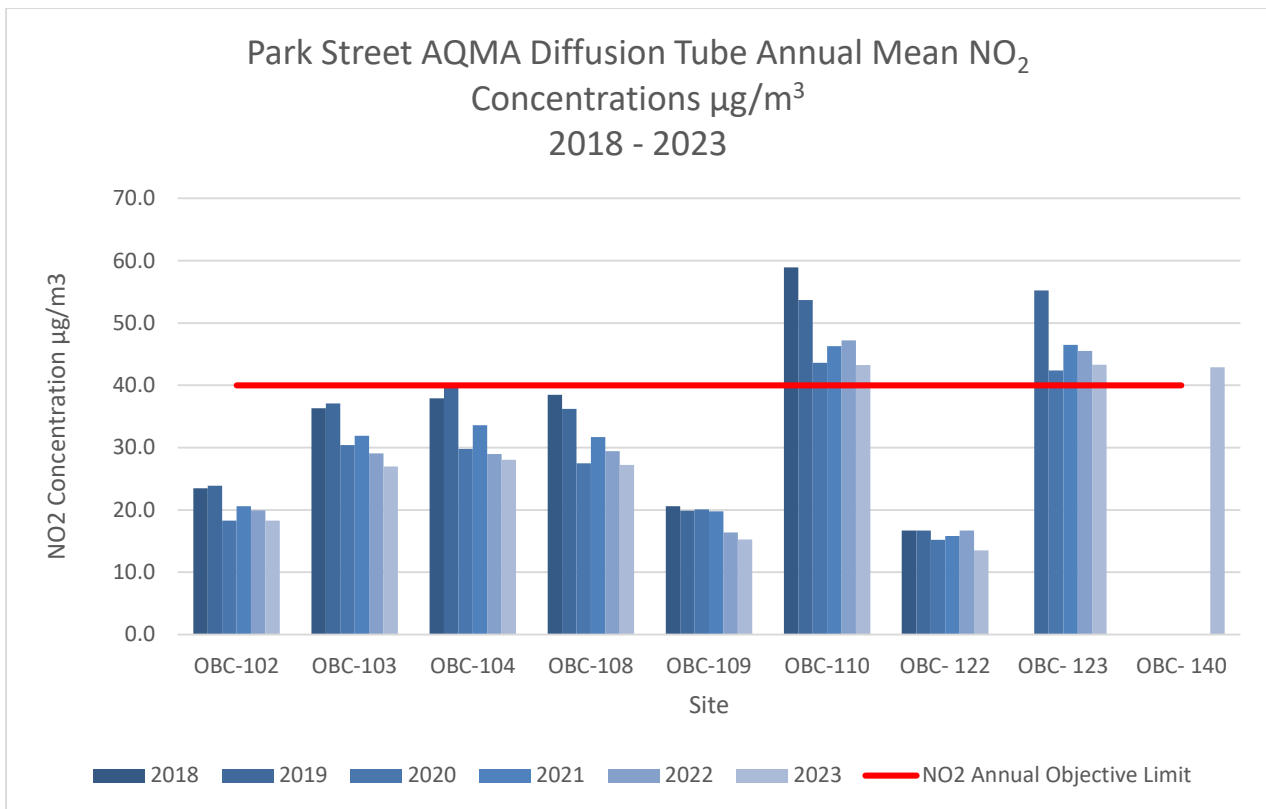
Figure 1 - 2023 NO₂ Diffusion Tube Monitoring Locations, Park Street/ Tondu Road/ Bridgend Town Centre



3.4 It is noted that in 2023, monitoring undertaken at sites OBC-110 and OBC-123, exceed the annual average air quality objective set at ($40\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) for NO₂. OBC-110 & OBC-123 recorded annual average figures of $43.3\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. This represents a reduction in NO₂ concentrations of 19% and 22% at OBC-110 & OBC-123 since 2019 and continues to show the positive downward trend of NO₂ concentrations within the AQMA. Figure 2 shows the trends in the annual mean NO₂ concentrations within the Park Street AQMA.

3.5 A further monitoring location within the AQMA, OBC-140 also recorded a result in excess of the annual average air quality objective for NO₂. OBC-140 was a new monitoring location introduced on Park Street in 2023. The purpose of this location was to monitor at one of the modelled receptor locations to enable a direct comparison of measured results with future modelled projections. OBC-140 recorded an annual average figure of $42.9\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ which is consistent with the concentrations at OBC-110 and OBC-123.

Figure 2 - Trends in annual mean NO₂ concentrations in the Park Street AQMA



3.6 As part of the Local Air Quality Management statutory duties, from the date of raising the AQMA Order (in this instance 1st January 2019) Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) and 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 was to be formally adopted before two years had elapsed.

3.7 The AQAP was published in April 2024.

3.8 Following the indicative Cost Benefit Analysis on these proposals, detailed air quality and transportation modelling was commissioned on those mitigation options that would manage and improve traffic flows through the Park Street AQMA, and in so doing, likely 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**.

3.9 These options have now been modelled under the following *Do Minimum* and *Do Something* scenarios:

- **Do Minimum - DM**
 - Introduction of a right turn holding lane at the Junction of Park Street with Heol y Nant (measure 21);
- **Do Something - DS (inclusive of the above)**
 - Deny all access onto St Leonards Road (Measure 18);

- Optimise the Park Street/Angel Street/Tondu Road Junction (Measure 20).

- 3.10 Under the requirement of Condition 27 of Planning consent P/18/1006/FUL, of the former Ysgol Bryn Castell site (Llangewydd Road, Cefn Glas) there was a requirement to introduce a right turn holding lane at the Junction of Park Street with Heol y Nant. This has been modelled as the **Do Minimum (DM)** scenario in the modelling exercises, as this change has now been implemented. Modelling of the right turning lane demonstrated congestion reduction on Park Street from vehicles turning right onto Heol-y-Nant.
- 3.11 In the summer of 2022, work was carried out to upgrade the traffic lights located at the junction of Park Street and Angel Street, along the A473. The refurbishment of the existing traffic lights was needed as the traffic light system was over 25 years old and the upgrade was essential to safeguard pedestrians, as well as making sure that traffic is managed in the best way possible on what is one of the county borough's busiest routes. The works follow-on from previous work completed on traffic lights at the A473's junction with Broadlands.
- 3.12 A right turn holding lane at the Junction of Park Street with Heol y Nant was implemented in January 2022. This was to be introduced by the developer (Persimmon) of the former Ysgol Bryn Castell site (Llangewydd Road, Cefn Glas) under the requirement of Condition 27 of Planning consent P/18/1006/FUL.
- 3.13 Both the Park Street/ Angel Street junction, and Heol y Nant right turn holding lane options were assessed by air quality modelling within the Park Street AQAP and were deemed to have a positive effect on traffic flows and air quality within Park Street.
- 3.14 Work has continued for the Park Street AQAP, with the assessment of various options that could improve air quality in the area. These options included investigating the benefits of bus electrification and HGV restrictions using Park Street. Modelling carried out in support of these options has found that the implementation of these measures will have little effect on receptors exceeding the NO₂ annual objective.
- 3.15 An updated modelling assessment was carried out in 2023, using modelled receptors predicted to remain in exceedance of the air quality standard in 2023 with 'do something' scheme in place. This assessment was provided to predict the date of natural compliance for both 'do minimum' and 'do something' schemes.
- 3.16 The results of the natural compliance assessment suggest that without further additional measures in place, the annual mean NO₂ concentrations will fall below the 40 µg/m³ threshold in 2026 and that the local authority could start to make a case for revoking the AQMA from 2027 onwards.
- 3.17 The remaining measure in the Do Something scenario is Measure 18, Deny all access onto St Leonards Road from Park Street. In order to progress this measure, BCBC

as the highway authority, would be legally required under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to undertake formal consultation on the implementation of Measure 18 in order to implement a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). Initial discussions with officers from highways have indicated that this process could take up 18 months and would be subject to funding of approximately £8,000. Should any objections to this proposal be received, BCBC would then be required to undertake an appeals process in the form of an Appeals Report which will have to be submitted to the appropriate Cabinet member to decide on the way forward, which could impact further on timescales for full implementation.

- 3.18 As a result of this assessment, the Council decided to delay implementation of the final traffic management mitigation measure 18, pending close evaluation of monitoring results in comparison to those within the assessment in relation to the natural compliance date of 2026. This measure is a retained measure for future consideration should air quality not improve.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 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.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 SRS & 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.
- 5.2 The declaration of the AQMA on Park Street and the subsequent 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 has looked to balance short-term needs of improving air quality and will also look at measures to safeguard the ability of meeting long-term needs to further improve air quality.

- Prevention – By implementing measures 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 the Council’s environmental well-being objectives.
- Collaboration –The Action Plan was developed in collaboration with many departments within the Council and other external organisations, i.e., Public Health Wales.
- Involvement – The action plan was subject to public consultation and the Council has ensured that those who have a strong interest in improving air quality have been fully involved and their ideas considered.

5.3 In accordance with air quality, as part of the objective for “Healthy Choices in a Healthy Environment”, Bridgend Public Services Board (PSB) outlines that resources are best utilised and collaborative working ensures that the built, cultural, and natural environment remains resilient in future. The priority areas to endorse and encourage the success of the objective will include working together to maximise benefit from cultural, built and natural assets. It will also look at promoting a more resource and energy efficient way of living and working. To measure the success of promoting a more resource and energy way of living, air quality, particularly NO₂ levels will be examined.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 The Annual Progress Report provides the latest full data set of air quality monitoring data for BCBC. One of the key actions identified in BCBCs Net Zero Carbon Strategy is to reduce emissions from Transport.
- 6.2 Given that road transportation is one of the key contributors to air pollution the ongoing assessment of air quality data trends will assist the Council in assessing the impact of its Climate Change interventions and reductions of transport emissions.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 Due regard has been paid to the BCBC Safeguarding Policy which seeks to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and adults at risk of abuse or neglect and to ensure that effective practices are in place throughout the Council and its commissioned services. Given the subject matter of this report no negative safeguarding implications have been identified.

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 has been completed within the identified budget for this work. 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. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended:

- 9.1. To note the results of air quality monitoring gathered in 2023 and to agree the finalisation of the 2024 Annual Progress Report (attached as **Appendix 1**) for submission as a final version to Welsh Government by 31st December 2024
- 9.2. To note the progress made in developing the Air Quality Action Plan for Park Street.

Background documents - None