

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Community Overview & Scrutiny Panel

12 July 2021

TITLE:	Update on the Levels of Pollution and the Air Quality Action Plan
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Councillor Bowen - Portfolio Holder for Communities
CONTACT OFFICER:	Alicia Patterson - Head of Environmental Health
WARDS INVOLVED:	Leek and Cellarhead

Appendices Attached

Appendix 1: SMDC Air Quality Data and Action Plan Update 2020

Appendix 2: SMDC ARS 2020

Appendix 3: Consolidated Air Quality Action Plan

1. Reason for the Report

- 1.1 To update the Panel on the latest Air Quality data across the Staffordshire Moorlands and the measures being proposed or undertaken in relation to the declared Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Leek and Cellarhead, as part of the Air Quality Action Plan for the Areas.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Panel notes the content of the report.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 In accordance with the Council's statutory duty to manage air quality in the District, monitoring of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) was completed across the District during 2019. In general, the monitoring confirmed that NO₂ annual mean concentrations generally showed a slight downward trend, decreasing at 60% of the sites from the previous year.
- 3.2 Once adjusted to be representative of a location of relevant exposure, only three exceedances of the Air Quality Objective (40µg/m³) were recorded

and all three were located in the existing Air Quality Management Area in Cellarhead, with the highest reading recorded to be 41.9µg/m³.

3.3 There were no exceedances of the Air Quality Objective in AQMA No1: Leek. Full details of the air quality results can be found in the Annual Status Report 2020 (attached at Appendix 2).

3.4 Despite the difficulties presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, continued monitoring of NO₂ was completed across the District during 2020. No exceedances of the Air Quality Objectives were seen at any location across the District in 2020, including in the two declared Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in Leek and Cellarhead.

4. **How this report links to Corporate Priorities**

4.1 This report supports the following Corporate Aims of the Council:

- Aim 1: To help create a safer and healthier environment for our residents to live and work.
- Aim 4: To protect and improve the environment.

5. **Alternative Options**

5.1 There are no alternative options to consider.

6. **Implications**

6.1 Community Safety - (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)

There are no Community Safety issues arising from this report.

6.2 Workforce

There are no workforce implications arising from this report.

6.3 Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Council's Diversity and Equality Policies.

There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

6.4 Financial Considerations

There are no initial financial implications arising from this report. All assessments will be carried out as part of the Council's routine work. However, the Council may seek support from external bodies should

any further modelling be required for the preparation of the action plan. Typically the cost of this would be in the region of £5,000.

6.5 Legal

The Council has a statutory duty to manage air quality in its area and, where nationally set criteria are exceeded, to declare an Air Quality Management Area. Once declared, the Council is obliged to prepare, following due consultation with interested parties, an Air Quality Action Plan. The Plan must subsequently be implemented. Failure to do so may result in legal action being taken against the Council.

6.6 Climate Change

The management of air quality in the District is an essential part of the Council's response to climate change and is the subject matter of this report.

6.7 Internal and External Consultation

Public consultation cannot change the decision of whether or not to declare an Air Quality Management Area (this is mandatory). However, a public notification/informative exercise has been completed to inform those affected by the 2 AQMAs which have been declared by the Council, including:

- Letters and information to all residents affected;
- Web Promotion.

6.8 Risk Assessment

It is a statutory requirement that the Council assesses air quality and takes action where appropriate. In appropriate cases there is an obligation to declare an AQMA. The necessary process is underway and there are no risks to the Council at this stage of the process.

The European Commission has formally launched infraction proceedings against the UK for breach of nitrogen dioxide limit values under the EU Air Quality Directive. Part 2 of the Localism Act allows the Government to require responsible authorities to pay all or part of an infraction fine. By undertaking its statutory duties and carrying out all reasonable measures to address breaches of the nitrogen dioxide limits, it is anticipated that such fines will not be derogated to this Council.

Executive Director (Governance & Commissioning)

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7. Detail

- 7.1 The report provides details of the monitoring of air quality which has been undertaken in the District as part of the Council's statutory duty to manage air quality in its area. It is suggested that results from monitoring carried out in 2020 should be viewed with caution as they reflect a large reduction in traffic across the district due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns, notably during the first lockdown in April. However, they do provide valuable data and confirm that road traffic sources are the primary source of NO₂ pollution across the District, which supports the measures outlined in the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP)(attached at Appendix 3).
- 7.2 Full details of the air quality results for 2020 can be found in SMDC Air Quality Data 2020 attached at Appendix 1.
- 7.3 A number of direct measures of the Air Quality Action Plan were implemented during 2019 in pursuit of improving local air quality. The majority of these have been as part of the Air Aware project and the innovative Transport Management System (TMS) in Cellarhead.
- 7.4 The Air Aware project aims to provide school engagement, business engagement, and a communications campaign to raise awareness of air quality issues, focusing on Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). This has proved to be very popular with Leek schools, with 7 now engaged in the project. Further details are presented in Appendices 1 & 3. The project also funded an EV feasibility study across Staffordshire, which will be used to inform an EV action plan.
- 7.5 The TMS project at Cellarhead is being undertaken in conjunction with Amey, Staffs County Council and Keele University, and aims to improve traffic flows and thus air quality at this junction, by utilising fibre optics to sense traffic queues and adjust traffic light settings accordingly. Further details of the project are presented in the AQAP (Appendix 3)
- 7.6 Unfortunately, the implementation of action plan measures (outlined in the AQAP) were hampered during 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, SMDC was successful in a joint bid with Staffordshire County Council, East Staffordshire DC and Lichfield DC to continue and enhance the Air Aware project (phase 2).
- 7.7 This second phase will include: the further enhancement of schools engagement, targeting secondary schools in both Leek and Cellarhead;

further support for business sites; a wider communications campaign on air quality, including domestic fuel use; development of an EV action plan; and the deployment of air sensors in Leek to monitor air quality in real-time. This will potentially enable information to be made available to residents to inform travel choices as well as provide an evidence as to the effectiveness of the action plan measures. Further details of the full proposals are provided in Appendix 1.

- 7.8 In addition to the successful bid for phase 2 of the Air Aware project, the first stage of the new TMS trial at Cellarhead crossroads has completed the installation of four (real time) air quality sensors at points around the Cellarhead junction. These will be used to evaluate the success of the proposed new TMS, with the trial commencing this year.