

Air Quality in Walsall – Update 21 February 2019

Targeted Feasibility Study

The Black Country TFS combined submission was completed on 31 July and the Council received a formal response from Defra on Friday 5 October.

Utilising remaining funds from the Defra grant, the Council will continue to explore opportunities for measures to improve air quality in the borough along with possible system/hardware upgrades to monitoring equipment.

Walsall NO₂ Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)

Subject to on-going monitoring and reporting, there will possibly be an opportunity within the next two to three years to review the extent of the AQMA (which came into effect in 2006) to determine both its merits and extent.

Birmingham Clean Air Zone (CAZ)

On Tuesday, 11 December, Birmingham City Council's Cabinet met to discuss a report seeking approval for the final CAZ proposals to be submitted to Government in the form of a Full Business Case. The Full Business Case included the proposed charges for non-compliant vehicles entering the Clean Air Zone, set at £8 per day for private cars, taxis (both Hackney carriages and private hire) and vans, with HGVs, coaches and buses charged £50 per day.

It understood that this has not as yet been fully progressed as the proposals have been subject to scrutiny.

Tackling Air Pollution around Schools

The Council's Pollution Control Team currently has monitoring stations at Rough Hay School, Darlaston, and Woodlands School, Willenhall, both installations being classified as 'urban background' sites. Previously there has also been monitoring undertaken at Alumwell School, Primley Avenue; Queen Mary's High School; and Chuckery Primary School.

Woodlands School has NO₂ and O₃ (ozone) analysers within close proximity to the cars that park along Hunts Lane – notably at school drop-off and pick-up times.

It should be noted that there are no schools within areas where the Council is either monitoring or predicting an exceedance of any air quality objective.

Low Emission Vehicles and Electric Vehicle Charging

To assess the demand for electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in residential areas, a consultation exercise has recently been conducted. Following on from this, the Black Country local authorities are exploring the potential for direct action to facilitate uptake of clean vehicle technology across the Black Country.

Walsall Council is considering options for moving towards electric and/or hybrid technologies for its vehicle fleet. Charging infrastructure will need to be installed at both the depot and Civic Centre to facilitate such a project. In the long-term, if the pilot project is successful, it is expected that vehicle replacement will increasingly be focused on ULEV vehicles.

Under the new Highways and Infrastructure Services Contract, Tarmac Limited have recently installed one of the two EV charge points at the Apex Road depot as they look to move towards their staff vehicles towards hybrid solutions.

West Midlands Air Quality Improvement Programme (WM Air)

In a new regional air quality programme, Walsall Council is to act as a project partner for the West Midlands Air Quality Improvement Programme (WM-Air) funded by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). Working with a range of stakeholders across business and public sectors, WM-Air aims to provide a better understanding of pollution sources and levels of pollution across the West Midlands Region, tapping into data and resources that have been collated and used by local authorities over many years. It will seek to examine the scientific challenges facing air quality specialists and provide a platform to support work to tackle poor air quality. Walsall Council already has a well-developed air quality model for the Black Country and has been engaged since 2016 in a Public Health funded study into fine particles and their health impacts which it is envisaged can feed into the WM Air work programme.

Health and Wellbeing Board

On 3 December 2018 the Health and Wellbeing Board were provided with an update on the actions taken by organisations represented on the Board to contribute to improving Air Quality in the Borough.

West Midlands Low Emissions Strategy

Objectives and outcomes of a implementing a new West Midlands Low Emissions Strategy and Action Plan are presently being formulated, which include the following themes:

- Support for local action - Joint action between local authorities, the WMCA and other stakeholders where this will accelerate existing agreed local plans to tackle air quality and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Social, economic, and environment outcomes – accelerated activity will result in improved health, such as reduction in premature deaths and health inequalities, economic productivity, such as reduced congestion and attraction of new business, and an improved natural environment.
- Attract investors - help to scale up opportunities to attract investors to fund innovation, manufacturing and deployment of solutions both locally and for export. Underpin the WMCA ambition to produce the UK's first 'clean, inclusive, and resilient growth' local industrial strategy and inform relevant bids such as future Industrial Strategy 'grand

West Midlands Low Emissions Towns and Cities Programme (WM LETCP)

WM LETCP is a partnership comprising the seven West Midlands local authorities working together to improve air quality and reduce emissions from road transport regionally via Defra grant funding. The intention is to do this by promoting uptake of low emission fuels and technologies, establishing and sharing best practice policies, and developing various tools and resources for this purpose. The objectives of the programme are to investigate and produce regional strategies designed to improve air quality with a view to meeting national air quality objectives.

WM LETCP has to date produced Good Practice Guidance related to planning and procurement; a Proposed West Midlands Low Emissions Vehicle Strategy; Low Emissions Feasibility studies examining the impacts of key West Midlands road corridors and potential for introduction of low emission zones; and an Economic and Health Impact study of reductions in air pollution. The Proposed West Midlands Low Emissions Vehicle Strategy and Good Practice Air Quality Planning Guidance are currently in the process of being reviewed and updated.

National Institute of Health Research (NIHR)

A feasibility study is currently being explored with a view to designing and implementing a Walsall air quality alert system for COPD sufferers to safeguard against poor air quality. This is looking into how the national Daily Air Quality Index (DAQI), which relies on regional data,

can be made specifically applicable to Walsall and potentially use our existing modelling and monitoring and/or modelling capabilities with a view to alerts for patients.

Key to this is understanding whether air quality alerts are actually effective in changing people's exposure to poor air quality and what effects then ensue on people's health, health service demand and on health inequalities.

Discussions involving a range of stakeholders are on-going to inform the viability of preparing a plan for submission of bid to Research for Patient Benefit (RfPB) in July 2019.