

Blaby District Council

Cabinet Executive

Date of Meeting	24 June 2024
Title of Report	Air Quality Annual Status Report 2024 This is a Key Decision and is on the Forward Plan.
Lead Member	Cllr. Les Phillimore - Housing, Community Safety and Environmental Services
Report Author	Environmental Services Manager
Strategic Themes	All Themes: Enabling communities and supporting vulnerable residents; Enhancing and maintaining our natural and built environment; Growing and supporting our economy; Keeping you safe and healthy; Ambitious and well managed Council, valuing our people

1. What is this report about?

- 1.1 To seek approval of the Annual Status Report 2024 for submission to Defra and publication.

2. Recommendations to Cabinet Executive

- 2.1 To approve the Annual Status Report 2024 for appropriate consultation and submission to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and publication.
- 2.2 To undertake consultation prior to revocation of Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) 3 (M1 corridor between Thorpe Astley and Leicester Forest East).
- 2.3 To delegate authority to the Environmental Health, Housing & Community Services Group Manager, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to make minor amendments to the Annual Status Report 2024 prior to submission and publication.

3. Reasons for Decisions Recommended

- 3.1 It is appropriate for Members to be informed of the air quality monitoring data for the District in 2023.
- 3.2 Air quality monitoring has demonstrated that levels of Nitrogen Dioxide in AQMA 3 are below the Air Quality Objective. Consultation is needed with appropriate parties to comply with relevant legislation and guidance.
- 3.3 This is to ensure any final amendments to the ASR report can be made in time for the statutory deadline for submission to Defra by 30th June 2024.

4. Matters to consider

4.1 Background

4.1.1 Air Quality Management

The Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) regime is established by the Environment Act 1995, as amended by the Environment Act 2021, and requires local authorities to assess air quality in their area. Where nationally set Air Quality Objectives (AQOs) are not achieved, local authorities are required to declare Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). For each AQMA, an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) must be produced, describing the measures aimed to reduce pollutant concentrations.

The AQMAs in Blaby District are currently as follows:

- AQMA 1 – A5460 Narborough Road South
- AQMA 2 – M1 corridor in Enderby and Narborough
- AQMA 3 – M1 corridor between Thorpe Astley and Leicester Forest East
- AQMA 4B – Enderby Road, Whetstone
- AQMA 6 – Mill Hill, Enderby

- 4.1.2 The ASR 2023 recommended the revocation of AQMAs 1,2 and 4b due to data indicating pollutant levels well below the Air Quality Objectives. The ASR 2023 also recommended the declaration of a new AQMA in Braunstone Town (AQMA 7) due to an exceedance of the AQO in 2022. Defra approved the ASR 2023 in late February 2024, which meant that the consultation on our proposals to revoke and declare the AQMAs was delayed. This consultation is now underway. Several parish councils have requested additional time to consider the proposals and so a report will be brought to the Cabinet Executive in autumn 2024 when we will seek approval of new areas as well as any revocations.

Air quality monitoring is the main method for assessment of the current levels of air pollutants, against nationally set Air Quality Objectives. Each year an Annual Status Report (ASR) is completed and submitted to Defra, summarising the air quality monitoring results for the area.

The ASR is prepared using a template, published by Defra, to be submitted by 30th June each year. It has a public facing executive summary followed by a more technical main report. There are appendices which include detailed air quality monitoring results, quality assurance techniques and maps presenting data, for areas where monitoring takes place.

Monitoring of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀) has continued throughout 2023. The Council currently have 5 continuous monitoring stations, 27 diffusion tubes, and 15 low-cost monitors (Zephyrs®). Scheduled calibrations on the five Continuous Monitoring Stations (CMS) were maintained throughout the year, the diffusion tubes were changed in accordance with the national Diffusion Tube Calendar, and the Zephyrs® were also correctly maintained.

4.1.3 Overview of Results

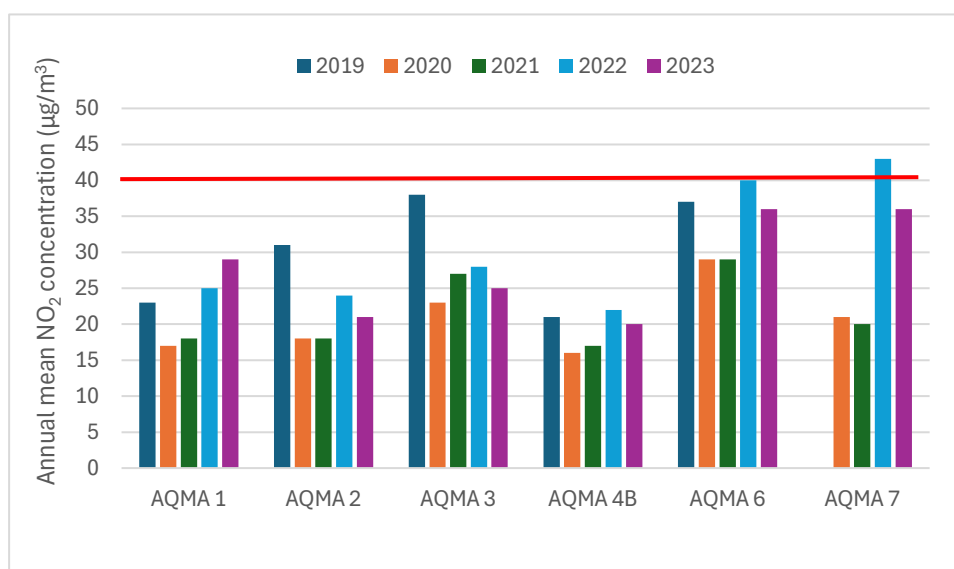
The results of all monitoring undertaken in 2023 are shown in Appendix D of the ASR. The maps include all data obtained over the last five years, where relevant, to enable comparison and allow for assessment of the future of an AQMA.

All data has been ratified and subject to the relevant corrections in accordance with Defra guidance. The results indicate that there are no exceedances of the AQOs for any of the monitoring locations in 2023 once distance corrected.

The decision was made in the 2023 ASR to keep AQMA3 for a further year due to the significant levels of development in and around the area going forward, and there being some potential for levels of NO₂ to increase. The vast majority of monitoring results for 2023 show a further reduction in levels of NO₂. In accordance with current Defra guidance, we are therefore proposing to revoke this AQMA. Protection against further increases are provided through policies in the Local Plan. Monitoring will also continue.

The table and graph shown below report the highest observed NO₂ concentrations (once distance corrected) in the five AQMAs over the last five years and the proposed AQMA 7 for the last 4 years. Results indicated an overall decrease across Blaby district compared to 2022. The AQO is shown on the graph by a red line.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
AQMA 1	23	17	18	25	29
AQMA 2	31	18	18	24	21
AQMA 3	38	23	27	28	25
AQMA 4B	21	16	17	22	20
AQMA 6	37	29	29	40	36
AQMA 7 (proposed)	-	21	20	43	36



All monitoring locations across the district are reviewed annually to ensure that best use is being made of our monitoring resources.

The Council is continuing to work on several projects funded by Defra air quality grants. These include the 'Particulates Matter' project, which focuses on improving knowledge and information to residents on PM_{2.5}, and the 'Lets Go Electric Project' enabling the first Electric Vehicles to be purchased in the Councils commitment to Net Zero and cleaner air.

4.2 Proposals

- 4.2.1 Members to approve the Annual Status Report 2024 for submission to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and publication.
- 4.2.2 To undertake consultation prior to potential revocation of AQMA 3 (M1 corridor between Thorpe Astley and Leicester Forest East).
- 4.2.3 That delegated authority is given to the Group Manager of Environmental Health, Housing & Community Services, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to make minor amendments to the ASR 2024 prior to submission and publication.

4.3 Relevant Consultations

The ASR has been sent to Public Health and Highways colleagues at Leicestershire County Council.

4.4 Significant Issues

No significant issues have been identified relating to Human Rights, legal Implications, Human Resources, Equalities, or Public Health Inequalities. The data in this report demonstrates that the council is committed to monitoring and undertaking action to improve air quality in its area, which has a positive impact on climate change.

5. **What will it cost and are there opportunities for savings?**

- 5.1 The direct costs associated with the ASR are met from existing approved budgets. There have been small savings from the reduction of monitoring as part of a review. The direct costs of declaring an AQMA are included in the approved budgets.

6. **What are the risks and how can they be reduced?**

6.1

Current Risk	Actions to reduce the risks
Not to submit the ASR to Defra for appraisal by 30 June 2024	Submission of the ASR is a statutory requirement. It has been completed in a timely fashion to enable it to be submitted an amended deadline agreed with Defra, which allowed consideration of the ASR by this meeting.
Not to revoke AQMA 3	To comply with the provisions of the Environment Act 1995 (as amended) to revoke the AQMAs as soon as sufficient data has been collected.

7. Other options considered

- 7.1 Completion and submission of the ASR is a statutory requirement and therefore there are no other options.
- 7.2 Revocations and declarations of AQMAs have to comply with the provisions of the Environment Act 1995 (as amended) and associated Defra guidance, therefore there are no other options.

8. Environmental impact

- 8.1 A positive environmental impact can be noted from the monitoring of air quality across the district affording an understanding of how different areas are impacted and action plan measures which can be implemented. Additionally, there are benefits from increasing knowledge and raising awareness for the general public.

9. Other significant issues

- 9.1 In preparing this report, the author has considered issues related to Human Rights, Legal Matters, Human Resources, Equalities, Public Health Inequalities, and Climate Local and there are no areas of concern.

10. Appendix

- 10.1 Appendix A – Annual Status Report 2024

11. Background paper(s)

- 11.1 There are no relevant background papers for this report.

12. Report author's contact details

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