

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT NEIGHBOURHOODS AND SPORT

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	22 NOVEMBER 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	AIR QUALITY PLAN 2017		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	REGULATORY SERVICES TRANSPORT	WARDS:	ALL
LEAD OFFICER:	JAMES CROSBIE CHRIS MADDOCKS	TEL:	
JOB TITLE:	REGULATORY SERVICES MANAGER TRANSPORT PLANNING MANAGER	E-MAIL:	James.Crosbie@reading.gov.uk Chris.Maddocks@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 A report was presented to Committee in July which outlined the Government's proposals for reducing Nitrogen Dioxide and the Council's response to the consultation. The Government took into consideration consultation responses and a largely redrafted document was published on 26 July 2017.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on the Air Quality Plan for nitrogen dioxide and its impact on Reading, the recently published Clean Growth Plan and next steps to improve air quality.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the changes to the Air Quality Plan

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 A draft plan to tackle Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) was published on 5 May 2017 following a challenge at the European Courts to the 2015 plan by Client Earth, an environmental lobbying group. The draft plan remodelled where NO₂ might be exceeded and concluded that significant intervention was likely to be required in 40 local authority areas including Reading and Wokingham.
- 3.2 The draft plan outlined proposals for the introduction of charging and non-charging Clean Air Zones, which aim to bring NO₂ levels within limit values within the quickest possible time.
- 3.3 The Council responded to the consultation on the draft plan and outlined its concerns on a number of the proposals, which included:

- The data modelling used by DEFRA which did not align with the Council's own monitoring.
- The devolution of the vast majority of responsibilities to local councils, with little national strategy or support.
- A lack of clarity around the support/resource that would be provided to councils to implement the draft plans.
- A lack of detail on plans to develop national infrastructure to introduce more Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs).

4. THE AIR QUALITY PLAN FOR NITROGEN DIOXIDE (NO₂) IN UK (2017)

- 4.1 The new Air Quality plan for Nitrogen Dioxide (the 'new plan') has remodelled the air quality data using more up to date figures. This remodelling reduced the number of local authorities named where action is required from forty to twenty nine. Reading was modelled out of the requirement to prepare an action plan and the new data indicates that the town will meet legal requirements by 2020. It is worth noting that the modelling indicates that Reading meets the legal requirement by 1µg/m³, so this is a marginal 'pass', which without continued action under the Air Quality Action Plan, could still result in the council having to take action.
- 4.2 The new plan sets out those local authorities that are required to conduct feasibility studies and timescales for completion and sets out what the government will do to support the implementation of local plans.
- 4.3 The new plan suggests that the named councils consider a wide range of measures such as:
- changing road layouts at congestion and air pollution pinch points;
 - encouraging public and private uptake of ULEVs;
 - using innovative retrofitting technologies and new fuels; and,
 - encouraging the use of public transport.

If these measures are not sufficient, local plans could include access restrictions on vehicles, such as charging zones or measures to prevent certain vehicles using particular roads at particular times. However, local authorities should bear in mind such access restrictions would only be necessary for a limited period and should be lifted once legal compliance is achieved and there is no risk of legal limits being breached again." (UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations - An overview).

5. CLEAN GROWTH STRATEGY 2017

- 5.1 On 12 October the Government published its Clean Growth Strategy. The strategy is primarily aimed at delivering the fifth carbon budget through domestic action, but there are specific measures contained in the plan which impact on plans to reduce Nitrogen Dioxide, specifically accelerating the shift to low carbon transport. The Clean Growth Strategy sets out the following:
1. End the sale of new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans by 2040.
 2. Spend £1 billion supporting the take-up of ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEV), including helping consumers to overcome the upfront cost of an electric car.
 3. Develop one of the best electric vehicle charging networks in the world by:
 - investing an additional £80 million, alongside £15 million from Highways England, to support charging infrastructure deployment;
 - taking new powers under the Automated and Electric Vehicles Bill, allowing the government to set requirements for the provision of charging points.

4. Accelerate the uptake of low emission taxis and buses by providing £50 million for the Plug-in Taxi programme, which gives taxi drivers up to £7,500 off the purchase price of a new ULEV taxi, alongside £14 million to support 10 local areas to deliver dedicated charge points for taxis.
5. Providing £100 million for a national programme of support for retrofitting and new low emission buses in England and Wales.
6. Announce plans for the public sector to lead the way in transitioning to zero emissions vehicles.
7. Invest £1.2 billion to make cycling and walking the natural choice for shorter journeys
8. Work to enable cost-effective options for shifting more freight from road to rail, including using low emission rail freight for deliveries into urban areas, with zero emission last mile deliveries.
9. Position the UK at the forefront of research, development and demonstration of Connected and Autonomous Vehicle technologies, including through the establishment of the Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles and investment of over £250 million, matched by industry
10. Invest around £841 million of public funds in innovation in low carbon transport technology and fuels including:
 - ensuring the UK builds on its strengths and leads the world in the design, development and manufacture of electric batteries through investment of up to £246 million in the Faraday Challenge
 - delivering trials of Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) platoons, which could deliver significant fuel and emissions savings

6. CLEAN AIR STRATEGY

- 6.1 The Government have indicated that they aim to publish a Clean Air Strategy in 2018 which will set out how it will meet international commitments to significantly reduce emissions of five damaging air pollutants by 2020 and 2030.

7. OXFORD ZERO EMISSION ZONE

- 7.1 The media have recently reported on Oxford City and Oxfordshire County Council's proposal to introduce a zero emission zone in the city centre. Oxford are currently consulting on a scheme which would see a city centre zero-emission zone for all vehicles by 2020, with the zone being gradually expanded over time as and when the required infrastructure and technology develops. The fully expanded scheme would be implemented by 2035 and cover all vehicles, but still within a tightly confined area of the city.

8. NEXT STEPS

- 8.1 Given that the Government have determined that Reading will no longer breach the NO₂ limits by 2020, no further action is required in respect of the new Air Quality Plan for Nitrogen Dioxide 2017. However, given concerns about the accuracy of DEFRA's modelling and the continuing need to protect residents' health from exposure to poor air quality, work is still required. A report by the Royal College of Physicians was published on 31 October and named Reading as one of forty four local authority areas breaching particulate limits based on the World Health Organisations limit values. Officers are currently investigating the data on which this report is based and it is believed that it is based on 2013 data.
- 8.2 The Council will continue to deliver on the Air Quality Action Plan (attached as a background paper), which includes delivery of key highways and transport schemes and projects; idling campaigns and as required enforcement and update of the Borough's Smoke Control Zones and the framework round it. Additionally, the Council has reviewed its Local Plan and has made updates to reflect proposals outlined in the Air Quality Plan for Nitrogen Dioxide 2017 and the Clean Growth Strategy.

8.3 Client Earth have recently taken the Government to court over its latest Air Quality Plan for Nitrogen Dioxide and the outcome of this may impact on requirements placed on the Council.

9. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

9.1 This paper is an update on the Government's strategy and there is nothing in this paper which sets out changes to the Council's approach to managing poor air quality.

10. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

10.1 The Air Quality Plan for Nitrogen Dioxide 2017 and Clean Growth Strategy has been published by the Government following consultation.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

11.1 No decision is being made in respect of this report and therefore no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no legal implications in respect of this report.

13. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. As and when the Government releases its funding streams for various schemes and projects, bids will be submitted by officers.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 The Air Quality Plan for Nitrogen Dioxide 2017 and Clean Growth Strategy can be found at:

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-quality-plan-for-nitrogen-dioxide-no2-in-uk-2017>
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-growth-strategy>
3. http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/4209/Air-Quality-Action-Plan/pdf/AQAP_Proposed_actions.pdf