

Harborough District Council

Report to the Cabinet Meeting of 10th June 2024



Title:	Air Quality Update – Annual Status Report 2024
Status:	Public
Key Decision:	Yes
Report Author:	Gareth Rees – Air Quality Officer
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Darren Woodiwiss (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change)
Appendices:	A – 2024 Annual Status Report B – DRAFT Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) Revocation Order

Summary

The report sets out the work undertaken during the calendar year of 2023 in relation to air quality across the whole of the district as set out in the Annual Status Report in Appendix A.

Over the past few years the annual average levels of Nitrogen Dioxide in Lutterworth have been below the National Air Quality Objective levels and based on the levels it is considered appropriate to revoke the current Air Quality Management Order for Lutterworth.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members:

1. approve the 2024 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) for submission to DEFRA as set out in Appendix A.
2. approve the revocation of the Lutterworth AQMA as set out in Appendix B.

Reasons for Recommendations

The submission of the Annual Status Report ensures compliance with Part IV of the Environment Act 1995.

Where the Council has sufficient confidence that the local pollution levels within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) are below the national objective levels, they should revoke the AQMA Order.



1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The Purpose of the report is to update members on the outcome of the annual review of local air quality across the district with the 2024 Annual Status Report (ASR) to be submitted to DEFRA (Attached as Appendix A) and seek approval for the revocation of the Lutterworth AQMA following 6 years of compliance with the Annual Mean Air Quality Standard for Nitrogen Dioxide as outlined in the 2024 ASR.

2. Background

- 2.1. Air pollution is associated with several adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children and older people, and those with heart and lung conditions.
- 2.2. Generally the air quality throughout the district is good however there are known issues in both Lutterworth and areas of Kibworth Beauchamp and Kibworth Harcourt along the A6 highway which cuts both villages, with regards to exceedances of the annual average objective level for Nitrogen Dioxide. An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) has been declared in both areas. The Lutterworth AQMA was first declared in 2001 and The Kibworths AQMA in November 2017.
- 2.3. The Annual Status Report (ASR) provides a detailed assessment of any monitoring results carried out in the district for the previous year along with any action undertaken to work towards improving air quality and is based on the calendar year 2023.

3. Details

- 3.1. The Council has a duty to review local air quality and to take action through the declaration of an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) where the national air quality objectives for certain pollutants are not met.

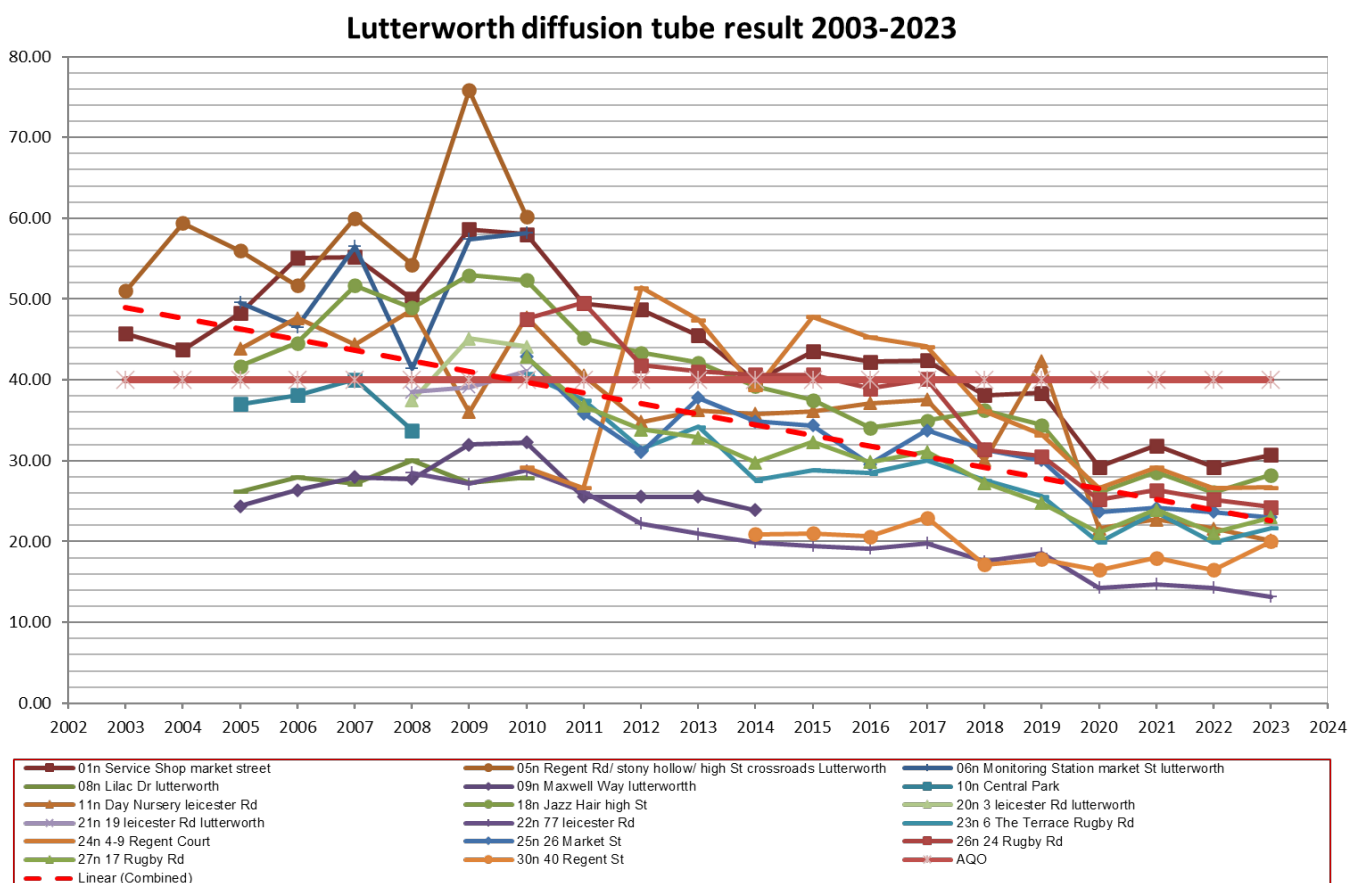
- 3.2. The Council currently has two AQMAs:

One AQMA in Lutterworth declared for exceedances of the annual mean Air Quality Objective (AQO) for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂). Copies of the Air Quality Management Orders and a map showing the area covered is available from the Council website. https://www.harborough.gov.uk/info/20025/environmental_health/101/air_quality/3

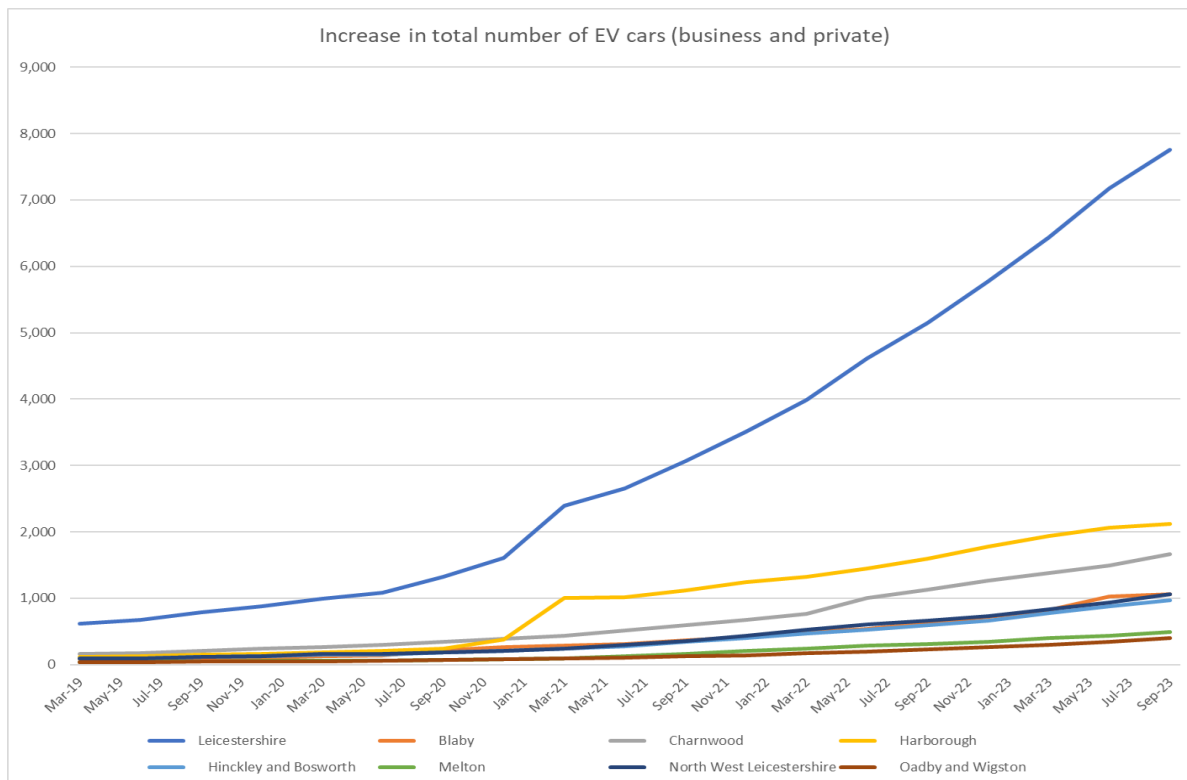
One AQMA in the Kibworths declared for exceedances of the annual mean Air Quality Objective (AQO) for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂). Copies of the Air Quality Management Orders and a map showing the area covered is available from the Council website. https://www.harborough.gov.uk/info/20025/environmental_health/101/air_quality/2

- 3.3. For several years the Council has been monitoring local air quality across the district using a network of diffusion tubes. The annual average results are collated and corrected in accordance with the nationally published annual correction factors. The annual average national objective level for Nitrogen Dioxide is 40µg.m⁻³ and in 2023 no locations exceeded this objective level and the average annual levels at relevant receptors ranged from 12.2µg.m⁻³ to 37.0µg.m⁻³.
- 3.4. The Council has been monitoring air quality in Lutterworth since 1997 and for the sixth year running since the declaration of the AQMA in 2001, the 2023 Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) results did not exceed the annual mean air quality standard.

- 3.5. Pollutant concentrations may vary significantly from one year to the next, due to the influence of meteorological conditions. Before revoking an AQMA, on the basis of measured pollutant concentrations, the Council needs to be reasonably certain that any future exceedances (that might occur in more adverse meteorological conditions) are unlikely.
- 3.6. For this reason, the 2018 to 2023 annual average results in Lutterworth are sufficient to show that the AQMA is showing long term compliance with the Annual Mean Air Quality Standard for Nitrogen Dioxide. The graph below shows all diffusion tube data collected in the Lutterworth area between 2003 and 2023 and shows a general trend of improvement at all locations within the AQMA, showing compliance since 2018.



- 3.7. In 2018, the Council worked with Leicestershire County Council to install a gating system which manages the free flow of heavy goods vehicles through the town to minimise the stop/start of such vehicles. This intervention, and the general increased uptake of electric vehicles both contribute to the reduction of local levels of pollution.
- 3.8. According to The Society of Motor Manufacturers & Traders (SMMT), at the end of 2016 the number of new electric vehicles nationally was just 0.4% but this had increased to 16.5% of new car registration by 2023. A further 7.4% of all new cars registered were plug in hybrids making the total market share in 2023 of 23.4%.
- 3.9. Across the district the number of electric vehicles (private and business) also continues to increase as set out in the graph below. These figures are for electric vehicles only and not hybrids.



3.10. The monitoring of air quality in Lutterworth shall be continued so that the Council can ensure ongoing compliance and the data can be used for ensuring future development does not have a detrimental impact on Lutterworth's air quality.

3.11. An automatic air quality monitor has been installed along the A6 in the Kibworths since 2019 and during 2023 this monitor did not record any exceedances of air quality objectives for Nitrogen Dioxide. A further air quality monitoring unit in The Kibworths did not record any exceedance of the air quality objectives for NO₂, PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ during the year. Although, one of the Nitrogen Dioxide tubes, whilst below the national objective level still is high enough for the Council not to consider revoking this air quality management area at the current time.

3.12. In addition to the air quality monitoring undertaken, during 2023 the Council has:

- been working with Development Control and Leicestershire County Council Highways to determine whether there is funding available to implement the junction improvements for the A6 in Kibworth (modelled in 2019. This work is still on going.
- worked in partnership with North West Leicestershire District Council and Air Quality Consultants Ltd. to implement a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) air quality grant project to monitor the impact of very small particular matter known as PM_{2.5} from solid fuel burning and to encourage behaviour change to improve local air quality. Whilst the project was very useful in raising awareness and highlighting the importance of considering what people burn, based on the data from the monitoring, the project found that there was no clear link between solid fuel burning and local PM_{2.5} concentrations.
- taken part in clean air day.

4. Implications of Decisions

4.1. Corporate Priorities

Effective air quality management supports the Council's delivery of the key priority

CO16: The environmental impacts of growth are mitigated as far as practically possible.

4.2. Consultation

Whilst there is no legal requirement for consultation on the outcome of the Annual Status Report, officers have engaged with the local ward members for Lutterworth and Lutterworth Town Council to ensure that all interested parties are aware of the plan to revoke the AQMA based on the outcome of the 2023 monitoring data.

The Director for Public Health is also required to approve the Annual Status Report before submission to DEFRA.

4.3 Financial

There are no direct resource implications in relation to the development of the Annual Status Report as this will be undertaken within the current staffing arrangements. A budget for ongoing air quality monitoring has been created.

4.4 Legal

There is a legal duty on local authorities to assess air quality and to take necessary steps to improve local issues. Where there is sufficient evidence to give the local authority the confidence that there is not a breach of the national objective levels within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and the improvement levels will be sustained, the AQMA should be revoked.

4.5 Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications in relation to the completion of the Annual Status Report as the report outlines the work undertaken in the previous calendar year. However, it is important that the Council has a good understanding of local air quality issues and where issues are identified take the necessary steps to manage them, either through the declaration of an Air Quality Management Area or by managing the impact of development through the planning process.

4.6 Risk Management

Failure to meet Government targets on Air Quality may have a direct health impact on the local community.

4.7 Equalities Impact

There are no equality implications in the development of the Annual Status Report

4.8 Data Protection

There are no Data Protection implications.

5. Alternative Options Considered

There is a duty on the Council to complete and submit an Annual Status Report to DEFRA. Not to submit an Annual Status Report would mean that the Council has not fulfilled its obligations under the Environment Act 1995.

Where there is sufficient evidence and the Council has the confidence that pollution levels will not fall below the national objective levels for particular pollutants, they should revoke any Air Quality Management Areas where there is no breach.

6. Background papers

Previous Air Quality Reports can be found on the council's website:

https://www.harborough.gov.uk/directory_record/2268/air_quality_review_and_assessment