

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	20 NOVEMBER 2019	AGENDA ITEM:	9
TITLE:	AIR QUALITY UPDATE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & TRANSPORT BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The report provides an update on actions taken to deliver the Air Quality Action Plan 2016 and air quality related projects that the Council have recently completed, or are in the process of delivering including:

- Bus Emission System Retrofit
- Vehicle Idling
- Electric Vehicle Charge Points in residential streets with no off street parking - 'Go Electric Reading'
- 2019 Air Quality Grant Bid

1.2 The report also provides details on a project to update the Air Quality Action Plan following the detailed studies which were undertaken following the Ministerial Direction targeted at reducing Nitrogen Dioxide as well as a brief overview of the Governments proposed Environment Bill.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

2.1 That the committee notes the actions taken.

2.2 That the committee notes the proposal to review the Air Quality Action Plan.

3. BUS EMISSION SYSTEM RETROFIT

3.1 The Government, via a Ministerial Direction, required Reading and 32 other 'third wave' councils to complete a Targeted Feasibility Study. The study,

considered all options to identify additional measures that could bring forward compliance with Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) limits on specific roads which it had identified as soon as possible.

- 3.2 At the start of the process the Government’s modelling indicated three road links with a projected exceedance of the annual mean NO₂ limit. The three links were sections of the A329 (IDR section of Caversham Road before Vastern Road roundabout).
- 3.3 The Council had local monitoring data that indicated that there were other road links with exceedances. This additional data was also put forward for consideration in the study.
- 3.4 When this data was considered, four additional road links were projected to exceed the annual mean NO₂ limit (40 µg/m³ - 1 year) value after 2019 if no further measures were taken:

Road link ID	Local NO ₂ (2019)	Expected year of compliance
Friar St	44	2021
(London Rd)	47	2022
(Kings Rd/Wokingham Rd)	47	2022
(Chatham St)	47	2022

- 3.5 Following this the Council were required to produce a long list of measures that could bring forward compliance and then form a short list of measures considered to be the most realistically achievable in the timeframe given as well as having a quantifiable impact. The shortlist came up with four viable options. It is important to stress that the shortlist of measures had to be realistically delivered by 2019 and reduce emissions to a point where the roads impacted were compliant with the limit values. The following measures were shortlisted at the time, based on computer modelling:

- A. Traffic management scheme at Cow Lane Junction. An extensive re-routing scheme completed in early 2019. Modelled to reduce emissions on the target links of the A329.
- B. Low emission buses: 50% of the bus fleet in Reading is Euro 6. This measure would increase that to 100% Euro VI buses. Euro standards are a classification of emissions from the tailpipe of a vehicle, Euro 1 being the worst and currently Euro 6 the best.
- C. Low emission taxis: 8% of the taxi fleet are Euro 6 with the most vehicles being Euro 4 (46%). This measure included three options:

- i). All taxi to be Euro 6
- ii). All taxi to be Electric
- iii). Combined i) and ii) above.

- 3.6 The bus retrofit was identified as being the most effective single measure able to bring forward compliance.
- 3.7 Following the submission of the Targeted Feasibility in July 2018, the Government directed Reading Borough Council to implement a bus retrofit as soon as possible and at the latest, in time to bring forward compliance with the dates set out in 3.8 below.
- 3.8 The scheme involves retrofitting 84 buses to Euro 6 standard. The local modelling sets out that bus retrofit could have the following impact:
- Bring forward compliance on Friar Street from 2021 to 2019.
 - Bring forward compliance on London Road from 2022 to 2021.
 - Bring forward compliance on Kings Road/Wokingham Road from 2022 to 2020.
 - Bring forward compliance on Chatham Street from 2022 to 2021.
- 3.9 Officers are working with Reading Buses and the emissions systems contractor HJS to complete the retrofits as quickly as possible.
- 3.10 The project deadline was scheduled for completion by the end of 2019, but several issues during the retrofit process mean that some of the retrofits will not be completed in time.
- 3.11 Due to development and scheduling issues 85% of the buses will now be completed to schedule. The remaining 8 buses cannot be retrofitted until the emissions system is ready at the end of February.
- 3.12 Progress of the project is reported back to Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) via monthly update phone calls and quarterly reports which has reported the achievements to date and the remaining elements to complete. It should be noted that Ministerial action has been taken against other local authorities who have failed to secure air quality improvements. JAQU are fully aware that Reading are progressing the project and that the speed of completion is reliant on a third party contractors. JAQU have also commented that Reading is not alone in having difficulties delivering to schedule. Officers continue to work with Reading Buses to secure the complete programme as soon as practicable recognising the importance that this upgrade will have on air quality.
- 3.13 Modelling undertaken prior to the retro fit scheme determined the expected reduction in NO₂ by the project. On completion of the retrofit, the Council will need to demonstrate the improvements on the road links identified. Existing monitoring across the network will be assessed to determine compliance. If we do not achieve the required reductions predicted, other measures to include those identified within the AQ feasibility Study such as to improve Reading's taxi fleet will support the reduction in NO₂ for Reading.

4. VEHICLE IDLING

- 4.1 The powers adopted under the Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2002 to issue fixed penalty notices (FPNs), can only be used after a driver has been warned.
- 4.2 Licensing officers have been speaking to taxi drivers on the rank for over 2 years, bringing the need to reduce idling to their attention and asking drivers to switch their engines off. In addition to this letters have been sent to all Hackney Carriage Taxi Drivers by the Lead Member for Strategic Environment & Transport. The letter reiterated the issue to drivers and warned them that drivers found to be idling at the ranks without reasonable excuse would be subject to fixed penalty notices.
- 4.3 Sixty no idling signs have been put up at idling hotspots around the Borough such as the taxi ranks outside Reading Train Station, Garrard Street and on Friar Street, as well as outside schools that have requested them after being contacted by the Council.
- 4.4 On 22 June 2019 Clean Air Day, officers ran an idling action event in the Town Hall and town centre including the main taxi ranks at the station interchange.
- 4.5 During the event volunteers (members of the public) were trained about vehicle idling. The volunteers were then paired up and sent out to speak to drivers about idling. Leaflets on idling and air quality themed snakes and ladders games which could be played at home with family to raise awareness about the issue were given out.
- 4.6 Officers will continue to use proactive measures as detailed above to encourage compliance with no idling law which in the main has been successful. Notwithstanding this given the scale of proactive work and targeting of the messaging to the taxi trade, enforcement officers have had to now begin to issue fixed penalty notices (FPNs) to a minority of taxi drivers found to be idling unnecessarily on the rank. To date 2 FPNs have been issued.
- 4.7 A new emissions policy was recently approved by Licensing Committee, which will result in all hackney carriage vehicles moving to electric or ultra-low emission standards by 2030.

5. GO ELECTRIC READING

- 5.1 Go Electric Reading is a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) funded project run by the Council to look at providing electric car charging for people living in homes without a drive.
- 5.2 Detailed site surveys ruled out a large number of locations and led to a re-evaluation of how best to deliver the project. It has become apparent that most of the streets where demand has been indicated are not suitable for lamp column chargers. This is due to the following reasons:
 - Lamp columns at the rear of the pavement or old cast iron lamp columns are unsuitable for lamp column chargers to be installed directly.

- Satellite pillars could be used, but these add to street clutter, taking up valuable space on already narrow pavements. A minimum of 1.45m is required for disabled access and on some roads satellite pillars reduce space to below this minimum.
- The supply would also need to be replaced on some of the older columns.
- The service and back office maintenance contracts become expensive when installing a large number of lamp column chargers (estimated at £291 each per annum).

5.3 It was therefore decided to implement the project in two separate phases. Phase 1 of the project has seen fifteen charge points recently installed into lamp columns along the below streets to enable residents to charge their vehicles.

- St Batholomews Road x 2
- Manchester Road x2
- Coventry Road x3
- Filey Road x1
- Caversham Road x2
- Wantage Road x3
- Anstey Road x1
- East Street x1

5.5 In Phase 2 of the project it is planned to install fast or rapid Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs) on Council owned assets near to the residential areas that have indicated demand for EVCPs. Permission to use the funding for this has been granted by DEFRA.

- Chester Street Caversham
- Kensington Road
- Civic Car Park B, Town Centre
- Thames Side Promenade, Richfield Avenue

5.6 Detailed site investigations have been carried out at each location and a Feasibility Study is being drawn up including the costings for the project. Once this is received it will enable officers to determine how many can be installed with the remaining funding. The Feasibility Study is due to be received before the end of the year and the charge points will be installed by April 2020.

6. 2019 AIR QUALITY BID

6.1 DEFRA have opened the Air Quality Grant window and are accepting bids for projects to improve air quality.

6.2 Officers are putting together an application to fund a project aiming to accelerate the introduction of electric taxis to the fleet. This links into a new emissions policy for Hackney Carriages which was agreed at Full Licensing Committee on 23 October 2019.

- 6.3 Officers are asking for £250,000 of funding to purchase four electric taxis and one rapid charge point. The electric taxis will be leased to local - companies (“After The Accident” and “Claims & Hire”) who will in turn sub-lease them to taxi drivers licensed by the council. It is proposed that the vehicles will be identifiable as electric and in support of the Council’s response to the Climate Change Emergency declared in February 2019 by new livery.
- 6.4 Funding will also be sought for a rapid charge point to be installed near the town centre as this infrastructure is currently lacking, and will be required to enable drivers to obtain a quick top up of charge during a shift.

7. AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN

- 7.1 It is proposed to update the Council’s Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). The update will reflect the findings of the Targeted Feasibility Study and complement new Council plans such as the Local Transport Plan (LTP), the Local Plan and the Climate Change Strategy.
- 7.2 The AQAP will be redeveloped by building on the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) Feasibility study currently being carried out by Transport.
- 7.3 Officers propose to use consultancy support in order to progress this in a timely manner. This would involve:
- AQAP review;
 - Inception meet and discuss other key objectives
 - Additional non-CAZ measure assessments adding onto CAZ assessments;
 - Air Quality Management Area review (remain/change/revoke);
 - Options appraisal for DEFRA/LAQM;
 - Stakeholder workshop/engagement work;
 - Feedback and summary;
 - Report in Local Air Quality Monitoring format.
- 7.4 It is proposed to use any remaining grant to fund this work, the cost of which is currently being finalised.
- 7.10 The AQAP update will incorporate the initiatives brought forward in the LTP and CAZ Feasibility and build on these to ensure that a comprehensive set of measures that quantify impact are in place and can be ranked in order of desired implementation in order to improve local air quality.

Key Milestones:

- M1 - Inception meeting - January 2020
- M2 - Data review summary
- M3 - AQMA monitoring & assessment report
- M4 - Summary & measures options matrix
- M5 - AQAP measures workshop
- M6 - Draft AQAP
- M7 - Final AQAP - January 2021

7.11 The process to develop the revised AQAP usually takes 6 to 9 months, but may take significantly longer to enable integration with Readings ongoing Demand Management Measures review and Outline Business Case.

7.12 Consultancy management support for the process will cost up to £22,210.

8. NATIONAL POLICY CHANGES

8.1 In response to Brexit and concerns over a broad range of environmental concerns, a new Environment Bill has been presented which proposes a new statutory cycle of monitoring, planning and reporting to ensure continuing improvement to the environment. It also establishes a new framework for setting long-term, legally binding and joined-up targets, covering air quality, resource efficiency and waste reduction, water and biodiversity.

8.2 A new target specified in the Bill is for an annual mean concentration for fine particulate matter (PM2.5), the air pollutant acknowledged as of greatest harm to human health.

8.3 The Bill also creates a new public body - the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) - as a domestic independent watchdog who will be responsible for taking action in relation to breaches of environmental law.

9. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

9.1 The Air Quality Action Plan alongside changes which are currently being developed/delivered to the Local Plan, Local Transport Plan and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment would contribute to the following strategic aims:

- Securing the economic success of Reading
- Keeping Reading's environment town clean, green and safe
- Promoting health. Education, culture and wellbeing

10. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

10.1 A revised Air Quality Action Plan would require formal consultation.

11.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

12.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The Environment Act 1995 requires Local Authorities to review and assess local air quality and to take action to improve air quality where exceedances of objective levels are identified.

12.2 Reading Borough Council has fulfilled its statutory duty by declaring an Air Quality Management Area, developing an Air Quality Action Plan and implementing measures from it to improve air quality, but exceedances of the annual average NO₂ objective remain.

12.3 The Government made a Ministerial Direction on 5 October 2018 under the Environment Act 1995 (Implementation of Measures for Nitrogen Dioxide Compliance) Air Quality Direction 2018 requiring that Reading delivers a bus retrofit programme.

13.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The projects detailed in the report are all grant funded, limiting revenue implications to the Council. The bus retrofitting bid and subsequent grant is fully funded and does not require match funding. The Taxi lease Air Quality Grant bid is likely to require some match funding and as with previous successful bids this has been delivered through existing resource.

13.2 'Go Electric Reading' has the potential to raise revenue for the Council by taking a small amount of the cost per charge from residents. Potential cost implications due to the ongoing service and maintenance costs have been built into the cost of the project for the first 6 years of operation.

14.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1 The projects mentioned above i.e. bus retrofit, 'go electric reading,' Idling Taxis and the proposed taxi lease air quality grant bid all aim to improve local air quality (NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}), but also lower Carbon emissions. In so doing these projects all help the Council work towards the target of being zero carbon by 2030.

15.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1 Air Quality Plan 2018 - SEPT Committee November 2018