

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	21 NOVEMBER 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	12
TITLE:	AIR QUALITY UPDATE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR TONY PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	Strategic Environment, Planning & Transport
SERVICE:	Regulatory Services	WARDS:	ALL
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on air quality matters following the Council's submission of the 'targeted feasibility study' to Government.
- 1.2 The report also provides an update on the following other air quality related projects that the Council have recently completed, or are in the process of delivering.
- Vehicle Idling
 - Electric Vehicle Charge Points in residential streets with no off street parking - 'Go Electric Reading'
 - Electrify Reading
- 1.3 Following the outcome of the Targeted Feasibility Study it is proposed to update the Council's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP).

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.
- 2.3 That the committee agrees to the proposal to bid for funding to commission a Low Emissions Strategy

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The Government, via a Ministerial Direction, required Reading and 32 other 'third wave' councils to complete a Targeted Feasibility Study, considering 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 additional data was considered, four additional road links were projected to exceed the annual mean NO₂ limit value after 2019 if no further measures were taken:

- Friar Street projected to be compliant in 2021
- London Road projected to be compliant in 2022
- Kings Road/Wokingham Road projected to be compliant in 2022
- Chatham Street projected to be compliant in 2022
- Caversham Road projected to be compliant in 2019
- Oxford Road/ Grovelands Road projected to be compliant in 2019

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 based on computer modelling:

A. Traffic management scheme at Cow Lane Junction. An extensive re-routing scheme to remove traffic from the A329 due for completion in early 2019. This is expected 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 No measures were able to bring forward compliance at Caversham Road and Census ID 6924 due to the short timescales involved. For the other road links, bus retrofit was identified as being the most effective single measure able to bring forward compliance.
- 3.7 Following a detailed submission, the Government has directed Reading Borough Council to implement the 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 is estimated to involve retrofitting up to 137 buses to Euro 6 standard. It is estimated that this can be implemented by the end of 2019. 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 Reading buses have been informed of the scheme, and officers are currently working with Reading Buses to complete the recently published application forms to access funding.
- 3.10 Although retrofitting buses was the most effective single measure achievable in the timescale, the modelling showed that upgrading all taxis to electric also improved air quality and speeded up compliance in some locations. Officers will continue to explore ways to facilitate this.
- 3.11 Unfortunately, due to the short time scales set by the Government, no measures can be implemented to bring forward compliance along Caversham Road and around the Oxford Road/ Grovelands Road junction.

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 over the last 18 months bringing the need to reduce idling to their attention and asking

drivers to switch their engines off. In addition to this in June this year a letter was 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. To date no FPN has been issued.

- 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 In 2018, officers have run 3 idling action events. One event was held in the town hall and town centre. The other 2 were held in schools, EP Collier and The Heights.
- 4.5 During the events volunteers (members of the public, or at the schools some of the pupils) 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, but ultimately enforcement in line with our approved policy may be required.

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 The charge points will be installed using the existing supply to street furniture such as lamp columns along these streets to enable residents to charge their vehicles.
- 5.3 Defra awarded the Council £100,000 to carry out the project following a successful bid application.
- 5.4 A street survey has identified 2547 lamp columns in the areas of interest. 450 of these are at the front of the pavement and suitable for installation of electric vehicle charge points. The other 2097 lamp columns are located at the rear of the foot way and would therefore require the installation of a bollard, or pillar at the roadside.
- 5.5 A residents' survey is currently being carried out to gauge where there is most demand for the charge points to be installed. These locations will be prioritised. The survey is currently live and can be seen at: www.reading.gov.uk/goelectricsurvey
- 5.6 The branding 'Go Electric Reading' was created for the purposes of this project. This has been added to leaflets and posters that have been left at public buildings such as libraries and leisure centres as well as car

show rooms. A press release and a web page containing additional information on electric vehicles have been published.

- 5.7 An expression of interest has recently been published to test market interest for installing the EV charge points. The response to this will aid the decision as to whether a formal procurement process will be required.

6. ELECTRIFY READING

- 6.1 In the New Year, Electric Blue are scheduled to carry out a campaign raising the awareness with the residential and business community about the benefits of electric vehicles in Reading and encourage local support for having electric taxis.
- 6.2 Electric Blue will contact businesses within Reading to raise awareness and see if they will pledge their support to the campaign. Businesses supporting the campaign would have their logos added to a campaign website.
- 6.3 The campaign will demonstrate support from businesses for EVs to convince local taxi drivers of the benefits of converting to EVs.
- 6.4 The campaign will work to raise awareness and encourage everyone to book electric taxis over conventional combustion engine run vehicles.
- 6.5 Electric Blue will support Reading's Taxi Fleets, by providing local taxi drivers with the opportunity to try out the new electric, zero emission Dynamo taxi and creating a business case showing why they should 'go electric'.
- 6.6 The campaign is already being run in Watford. An example of the campaign website for Watford can be found by following the below link: <http://www.electrify.taxi/watford/>
- 6.7 The campaign is free of charge to the Council. The campaign is simply to raise awareness and does not endorse Electric Blue over any other company to provide products or services.
- 6.8 As a company providing EV related products and services Electric Blue are likely to benefit from any increase in demand for EVs, but this would also be true of other companies providing similar services.

7. AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN

- 7.1 Following the outcome of the Targeted Feasibility Study it is proposed to update the Council's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to reflect the findings.
- 7.2 The AQMA has been declared over the centre of Reading and the main roads in and out, some of which do not exceed air quality targets. The modelling work carried out as part of the Feasibility study identified several road links of particular concern. It may be possible to tailor some measures within an updated action plan to those specific areas.

- 7.3 Buses were identified as having the single biggest impact on air quality along the road links of concern. The feasibility study will result in funding to retrofit all the buses using these road links with emissions systems to bring them up to EURO 6 standard.
- 7.4 Taxis were also identified as having an impact on air quality. Their impact is not being addressed through the outcome of the feasibility study, therefore it is proposed to add appropriate actions to the AQAP to address pollution from this source.
- 7.5 New measures to address the impact from smoke from open fires and wood burners are likely to be included in the Government's new Air Quality Strategy. Depending on the details of this, it is proposed to add appropriate actions to help control pollution from chimneys.
- 7.6 In July 2018 the Council's Policy Committee considered a report outlining the proposals for a new transport plan. Central to Reading's new Local Transport Plan will be a new Car Parking and Air Quality Management Strategy which would be based on up-to-date information on commuter travel and parking in the borough, and the impact on congestion and pollution levels in the town. Initial feasibility studies are being completed to inform the plan and include a Workplace Parking Levy which would largely follow the model already in operation in Nottingham; a Clean Air Zone / Low Emission Zone; road charging and a package of complementary measures which could include traffic management, access restrictions, park and ride, Mass Rapid Transit and bus priority, public transport information, ticketing improvements and walking and cycling improvements. It is critical that the plan delivers significant future air quality improvements for the Borough
- 7.7 It is also proposed to review the possibility of producing a Low Emissions Strategy which would help to provide better integration of transport, air quality, planning, public health, sustainability and other relevant Council departments and drive policy thinking. It is proposed to put in a bid for one of DEFRA's Air Quality Grants in order to fund this.

8. NATIONAL POLICY CHANGES

- 8.1 The Government is due to publish the final version of a new Clean Air Strategy by the end of the year.
- 8.2 Following a recent call for evidence on 'domestic burning of house coal, smokeless coal, manufactured solid fuels and wet wood,' the strategy is expected to include actions to improve smoke control powers in the Clean Air Act.

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:
- Keeping Reading's environment town clean, green and safe;

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 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 Low Emission Strategy 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. However, there are also potential cost implications due to the ongoing service and maintenance costs.

13.3 Officers will include criteria during procurement to minimise the risk from service and maintenance costs. Where it is not possible to eliminate future costs, officers will look to balance these against revenue from the use of the charge points.

13.4 The Government announced as part of the Budget 2018 that an additional £20m of funding will be made available to support more local authorities to meet their air quality obligations. Officers are seeking further information from DEFRA on what this funding will cover and how it might be accessed.

14.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 Air Quality Plan 2017 - SEPT Committee November 2017