

## **3f Air Quality Update**

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### **o Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to update members on developments in Air Quality Management and the links to transport. At a previous Board meeting, members had requested information on Air Quality management.

### **o Background**

Local authorities are required to assess the standard of air quality in their administrative areas, based on seven pollutants identified in the UK Air Quality Strategy. Assessment is conducted against objectives, set by the European Commission, based on World Health Organisation limits as to the levels of emissions where human life is threatened.

The Air Quality Strategy establishes a framework for the improvement of air quality and focusses on measures agreed at a national and international level. However, it was recognised, that despite such strategic measures, areas of poor air quality would likely remain, and that these will best be dealt with using local measures implemented through the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) regime. Part IV of The Environment Act 1995 sets provisions for protecting air quality in the UK and for local air quality management.

The system of Local Air Quality Management has been in place in the UK since 1997 and there are currently 34 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) across 15 local authority areas in Scotland.

Aberdeen City Council has declared three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) covering Anderson Drive, Wellington Road and City Centre (Parts of Holburn Street, Market Street, Union Street and King Street). All three AQMAs in Aberdeen relate to exceedances of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>), all of which are directly associated with emissions from traffic. These areas are monitored and the Council has developed an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) which it reports on annually.

There are currently no AQMAs declared in Aberdeenshire as pollutants are not found to exceed standards, but a number of areas are monitored to ensure continuing compliance.

### **o Aberdeen Air Quality Action Plan, Annual Progress Report 2016**

Below is an overview of the 2016 Annual Progress Report.

Annual mean nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) concentrations across Aberdeen's three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) continued to exceed the national and EU air quality objective in 2015. Annual mean particulate (PM<sub>10</sub>) concentrations also continued to exceed the national objectives within the City Centre and Wellington Road AQMA. Levels were generally lower for both pollutants compared to previous years and there appears to be a trend of improving air quality. The national 24 hour PM<sub>10</sub> objective was exceeded at the Market Street, King Street and Wellington Road monitoring stations, although meteorological conditions may have contributed to some of these exceedances.

The Air Quality (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2016 places a statutory duty on local authorities to achieve a further national annual mean objective for PM<sub>2.5</sub> by 2020. Based on current levels, it is likely that concentrations will be exceeded in Aberdeen within the AQMAs.

Aberdeen City Council expects the following measures to be completed over the course of the next reporting year which should help to improve air quality. They are:

- A96 Park and Choose site to be open
- Cycling Strategy/Active Travel Plan – consultation and adoption
- Improve public awareness of Air Quality issues – continued participation in European Mobility Week and Bike Week and other events
- Car clubs/Car sharing – further expansion of the Car club and adoption of hydrogen vehicles
- Green vehicle procurement and Fuel charging infrastructure – completion of second hydrogen refuelling station and additional EV charging points
- Pedestrianisation – Improvements to pedestrian experience on Broad Street
- Information Technology Systems – continued expansion of Bluetooth journey time monitoring and Vehicle Messaging Signs across the city
- Freight and Commercial Vehicle Access - Wellington Road STAG Part 1 complete
- Supplementary Planning Guidance – formal adoption of Transport, Air Quality and Noise supplementary guidance
- Integration of AQAP with Local Transport Strategy – specific actions identified for improving air quality within Local Transport Strategy action plan
- City Centre masterplan and Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan – Development of revised Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan with further air quality proposals
- Road hierarchy – consultation exercise with members of the public and stakeholders
- Car parking – implementation of controlled parking zone in the North Dee area.

## o Other Actions

Other actions include setting up an Eco-Stars Fleet Recognition Scheme. Aberdeen City Council received a £27,000 Scottish Government grant to set up the Eco-Stars Fleet Recognition Scheme across the whole Nestrans area, of Aberdeen City and Shire. The scheme offers free membership and aims to help fleet operators, including HGVs, buses, coaches and vans, improve efficiency, reduce fuel consumption and emissions and make cost savings. Transport and Travel Research Ltd has been contracted to provide the practical and technical advice and support to operators interested in participating in the scheme. Each registered operator is rated according to current performance and support is provided to progress through the star ratings. Nestrans is a partner in the scheme development, which will be launched in the Town House on 9 November 2016. The scheme already operates across a number of Scottish local authority areas and has several hundred members.

A large proportion of the actions involve transport and travel which Nestrans works with Aberdeen City Council on. There is also the **Cleaner Air For Scotland - The Road to a Healthier Future (CAFS)**. CAFS was launched by the Scottish Government in November 2015 and is national cross-government strategy that sets out how the Scottish Government and its partner organisations propose to reduce air pollution to further protect human health and fulfil Scotland's legal responsibility to meet EU air quality objectives. Regional Transport Partnerships are specifically tasked with supporting the delivery of transport strategies that encourage modal shift towards sustainable and active travel, including Smarter Choice initiatives, and promote the uptake of greener vehicles. Of major significance is the requirement for local authorities with AQMAs to undertake a Low Emission Feasibility Study. It is anticipated authorities will be required to complete the assessment process by mid-2017. Specifically, the requirement for a Low Emission Zone or Clean Air Zone will require

consideration. This is currently being undertaken by consultants commissioned by Aberdeen City Council.

### o **Other research**

There has been some academic research carried out into the impact of air quality on health which has resulted in a number of articles in the media. A briefing statement called 'Local action to mitigate the health impact of cars' has been published by the Faculty of Public Health, which may be of interest to members. A copy is available at:

<http://www.fph.org.uk/uploads/Briefing%20statement%20-%20Impact%20of%20cars.pdf> . Its key message is that "The UK Faculty of Public Health (FPH) recommends a major shift away from cars in favour of active travel: walking, cycling and public transport in order to reduce the health harms of road transport and improve the health of the population and individuals".

### o **Director of Public Health for Grampian**

On 9 September 2016, it was announced that Susan Webb has been appointed as Director of Public Health for NHS Grampian and NHS Shetland. The role involves providing advice towards improving the population's health by understanding the factors that determine health and ill health, how to change behaviour and promote both health and wellbeing in ways that reduce inequalities in health.

Susan trained as an Allied Health Professional working in acute and community settings before starting a career in Public Health. She has worked in Public Health across the north of Scotland for over 20 years and undertook a number of roles in health improvement and service planning before becoming the Deputy Director of Public Health in Grampian in 2000.

Susan is an honorary senior lecturer at the University of Aberdeen. She has a keen interest in ensuring best practice in public health and workforce development. Most recently she has been Interim Director of Public Health.

### o **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Note the content of the report.

KW/20 September 2016