



Subject:	Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021 - 2026
Date:	9 th November 2021
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services, City & Neighbourhood Services Department
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues.
1.1	The Committee will be aware that in accordance with the statutory provisions of Part III of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002, and as a consequence of the outworkings of the first round of review and assessment of ambient air quality for the city, completed in 2004, Belfast City Council declared four Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) across the city for a combination of exceedances of the hourly, 24-hour and annual mean Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland objectives for nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂) and particulate matter (PM ₁₀).
1.2	The four AQMA) were declared in a <i>'ribbon'</i> manner, encompassing the (i) Ormeau Road, (ii) Upper Newtownards Road, (iii) M1 Motorway and A12 Westlink corridor, and (iv) from Cromac Street to the junction with East Bridge Street and then from East Bridge Street to the junction with the Ravenhill and Albertbridge Roads and Short Strand. The AQMA) remain in place.

1.3	Source apportionment studies undertaken for the AQMAs indicated that exceedances of the nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂) and particulate matter (PM ₁₀) objectives were principally associated with road transport emissions. It should be noted that exceedances of the particulate matter (PM ₁₀) objectives occurred only within the M1 Motorway / A12 Westlink corridor and that this AQMA was revoked for particulate matter (PM ₁₀) exceedances in 2014, due to the relevant objectives being achieved over a number of preceding years.
1.4	Part III of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 requires that where an AQMA has been declared, a council shall subsequently prepare an Air Quality Action Plan containing mitigation measures that the council and its Competent Authority partners intend to implement in pursuit of the achievement of air quality objectives within the AQMA.
1.5	Accordingly, Belfast City Council, Competent Authorities and other partner organisations published the first Air Quality Action Plan for the city in 2006. A further Air Quality Action Plan was published in 2015. With the conclusion of the 2015 Air Quality Action Plan in 2020, the Council and partner organisations have now developed a new 5-year Air Quality Action Plan, covering the period 2021-2026, that is designed to address the few remaining nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂) hotspots within our AQMAs and to improve ambient air quality generally for the city.
1.6	Although aspects of the new Air Quality Action Plan, including proposed mitigation measures, have already been considered by Committee during the Plan development process, this paper serves to present the completed Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 to Committee for consideration and approval.
2.0	Recommendations.
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and approve the Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 and; • Agree that the Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 be submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) independent technical assessors for appraisal.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Committee is advised that the Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 has been developed with regard to the various requirements of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) local air quality management technical guidance document LAQM.TG(16) and utilising the UK Regions (exc. London) Air Quality Action Plan Template 2020, amended to reflect Northern Ireland governance arrangements.</p>

3.2	<p>Defra have recommended that Air Quality Action Plans be periodically reviewed and whilst no time period has been explicitly established, best practice suggests that a review should take place no later than every five years, or more frequently if significant changes to sources have occurred within the council area. Accordingly, the Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 has been developed with an anticipated lifespan of 5 years, but it is noted within the document that the Plan may be amended during its lifetime to reflect any additional actions necessary to address excessive concentrations of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) across the city, as identified through the detailed review and assessment project for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), currently being delivered by AECOM consultants and scheduled to report in early 2023.</p>
3.3	<p>Progress with implementation of the new Air Quality Action Plan will be reviewed by the Action Plan Steering Group on at least an annual basis in order to comply with government reporting requirements, either via the current Progress Report or via the forthcoming Annual Status Report. As part of the public discussion into a Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland, DAERA have proposed that Annual Status Reports will replace current Updating and Screening Assessment and Progress Reports, thereby aligning Northern Ireland with ambient air quality reporting arrangements already in place in the other devolved administrations. Annual Status Reports are proposed to be submitted to DAERA by 30th September of each year.</p>
3.4	<p>In terms of the document structure, the Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 includes an executive summary that also provides information concerning the roles and responsibilities of those organisations that have been involved in the Plan's development.</p>
3.5	<p>The Plan also includes an introductory section and a summary of recent local air quality management conditions for the city, including headline trend data for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂).</p>
3.6	<p>The Plan includes brief summaries of various strategies, plans and policies that contribute towards improving ambient air quality for the city, including the Belfast Local Development Plan, the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy and the Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan, etc.</p>
3.7	<p>The Plan provides various source apportionment information, identifying the extent to which key sources of ambient air pollution contribute to the air quality objective exceedances that have been identified within our Air Quality Management Areas. There are accompanying calculations demonstrating the emission reductions required to achieve the air quality objectives and the anticipated years when compliance will be achieved.</p>

3.8	<p>The Plan then provides details of key policy areas for improving ambient air quality in Belfast such as by encouraging the uptake of active travel and public transport. The Plan also provides a limited assessment highlighting the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns on local transport activities and ambient air pollution levels.</p>
3.9	<p>The Plan document includes details of the 12-week public consultation exercise for the new Air Quality Action Plan, in fulfilment of the statutory requirements of Schedule 2 Air Quality: Supplemental Provisions of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002, together with some key consultation summary statistics.</p>
3.10	<p>Table 5 of the Air Quality Action Plan lists all of the mitigation measures to be implemented by our Competent Authority partners and other city organisations and bodies represented on the Air Quality Action Plan Steering Group. Table 5 includes a description of the measure, the lead authority, an implementation date, an estimated completion date and an ambient air quality benefit. The table details 51 mitigation measures, including the action identified at the previous meeting of the People and Communities Committee that the Council, as part of the Air Quality Action Plan, would include greater enforcement within smokeless zones and agree to develop an awareness campaign to educate residents on the impact of polluting home fuels (Action 51).</p>
3.11	<p>Appendix 1 to the Air Quality Action Plan contains a summary of the various responses to the public consultation on the draft Air Quality Action Plan. The Committee is advised that these consultation responses have already been circulated amongst Competent Authority partners and other city organisations and bodies represented on the Air Quality Action Plan Steering Group. Where these competent authorities, organisations or bodies have provided responses to the consultation comments, they have been captured within the relevant section of Appendix 1 - Table A1.</p>
3.12	<p>Details of all of the ambient air quality and related references cited throughout the Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 are included within the Reference section, towards the rear of the document.</p>
3.13	<p>The Committee is advised that in accordance with local air quality management policy guidance, the Air Quality Action Plan is to be submitted to DAERA for technical appraisal by the Department's independent assessors. The Action Plan will be brought back to Committee for further consideration should any significant revisions be required by the assessors.</p>

3.14	<p>Once formally approved, it is anticipated that the Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 will be made available in printed copy and via the Council's website.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications.</u></p>
3.15	<p>There will be design and printing costs associated with the formal publication of the Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments.</u></p>
3.16	<p>An Equality Screening and a Rural Needs Assessment have been completed for the draft Air Quality Action Plan for Belfast 2021-2026. These documents currently remain available to review on the Council's Your say Belfast consultation platform, via the following web link:</p> <p>https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/air-quality</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021 - 2026