

Local Authority:	Cheltenham Borough Council
Reference:	ASR23-1832
Date of issue	August 2023

Annual Status Report Appraisal Report

The Annual Status Report sets out new information on air quality obtained by Cheltenham Borough Council as part of the Review & Assessment process required under the Environment Act 1995 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021) and subsequent Regulations.

The Council have identified areas where there were exceedances of the annual mean air quality objectives for NO₂. Consequently, Cheltenham Borough Council has one AQMA declared in the borough. This AQMA was declared in September 2020 (following the revocation of the borough-wide AQMA) for exceedances of the NO₂ annual mean AQS objective of 40 µg/m³. A new AQAP was published in 2022, for an exceedance of the air quality objective in the AQMA in 2019.

The Council undertook automatic (continuous) monitoring of NO₂ at one site during 2022. The automatic monitoring site, located at St George's Street, recorded an annual mean concentration of 27 µg/m³, which is well below the annual mean air quality objective of 40 µg/m³.

The Council undertook non-automatic monitoring (i.e. passive) monitoring of NO₂ at 44 diffusion tube sites during 2022. This included one triplicate site, co-located with the automatic analyser (located on St Georges Street), resulting in 46 diffusion tubes being deployed each month in the district. Five sites were added in 2022 onto the 39 sites of the monitoring network. In 2022, across the monitoring network, the highest annual mean NO₂ concentration that was recorded was 36 µg/m³ (Site ID: 5). This site was located within the current AQMA designation. In 2022, the annual mean NO₂ concentration increased at 74% of diffusion tube sites, this is the same as 2021. There were no exceedances of the air quality objective of 40 µg/m³ at any of the monitoring sites in 2022.

Cheltenham Borough has robust QA/QC procedures for diffusion tube monitoring, which were applied appropriately and accurately to the 2022 monitoring data. The local bias adjustment factor has been applied. Annualisation was not required. Distance correction was not required due to the low concentrations reported. All calculations were clearly outlined and justified, and appear accurate.

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Defra recommends that Directors of Public Health approve draft ASRs. Sign off is not a requirement, however collaboration and consultation with those who have responsibility for Public Health is expected to increase support for measures to improve air quality, with co-benefits for all. Please bear this in mind for the next annual reporting process.

On the basis of the evidence provided by the local authority the conclusions reached are **accepted** for all sources and pollutants. Following the completion of this report, Cheltenham Borough Council should submit an Annual Status Report in 2024.

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Commentary

The report is well structured, detailed, and provides the information specified in the Guidance. The following comments are designed to help inform future reports:

1. There is a good discussion of annual mean concentration trends across the borough and the AQMA. Observed trends are also presented clearly, this is encouraged.
2. The Council added five additional diffusion tube monitoring locations in 2022. This is welcomed.
3. The Public Health Outcomes Framework was mentioned, with specific reference to indicator D01 (Fraction of mortality attributable to particulate air pollution). In addition, a new monitoring station on Gloucester Road was added to monitor PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} in November 2022. This is welcomed and the results for the new location should be included in next year's ASR.
4. The Council has drafted a new Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) which is currently under revision. This is welcomed and progress on the AQAP should be reported in next year's ASR.
5. In Table A.2, sites 8,9 and 10 are marked as not being in AQMA. These are co-located with the automatic monitor CM1 which is in AQMA. The Council are urged to correct this in the report.
6. The Council has addressed comments from last year's ASR appraisal and made recommended changes in the report.
7. Robust and accurate QA/QC procedures were applied and there is clear reasoning and evidence for the calculation of a local bias adjustment factor.
8. Overall, the report is well structured, detailed and satisfies the criteria of relevant standards.

This commentary is not designed to deal with every aspect of the report. It highlights a number of issues that should help the local authority either in completing the Annual Status Report adequately (if required) or in carrying out future Review & Assessment work.

Issues specifically related to this appraisal can be followed up by returning the attached comment form to Defra, Welsh Government, Scottish Government or DOE.

For any other queries please contact the Local Air Quality Management Helpdesk:
 Telephone: 0800 0327 953
 Email: LAQMHelpdesk@bureauveritas.com

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LAQM Guidance Notes – 2023

Changes to the Local Air Quality Management Framework

Through the Environment Act 2021 and updated Local Air Quality Management Statutory Policy Guidance 2022, the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) framework has been considerably strengthened. This page highlights some of the changes for delivery to help you prioritise action for improved air quality:

1. Strengthened Criteria for Air Quality Action Plans (AQAPs)

Where a Local Authority is not meeting air quality objectives, they must create an AQAP setting out their intentions to improve air quality in the area. Without current action plans in place, Local Authorities risk negatively impacting their communities by not proactively working to reduce air pollution in the area.

The requirements and guidance around AQAPs were recently strengthened under the Environment Act 2021 and revised LAQM Statutory policy guidance, which Local Authorities must have regard to. The key criteria for action plans are that they:

- set out the measures they will take to secure the achievement, and maintenance, of air quality standards and objectives
- specify a date by which each measure will be carried out
- are revised no later than every five years

2. New Escalation Process for Reporting

Government is committed to increasing transparency by requiring timely and accurate publication of Annual Status Reports (ASRs) and AQAPs by local authorities, as set out in the [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023](#). These documents are public-facing and serve to keep local communities informed of the steps being taken by their local authority to improve air quality.

To ensure ASRs and AQAPs are delivered on time, Defra has introduced a new reminder and warning letter system for Local Authorities. This system was set out in the [LAQM Statutory Policy Guidance 2022](#) and started to apply from 30 June 2023.

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If reporting requirements continue to be missed, the matter can be escalated to a Section 85 Secretary of State direction to the relevant Local Authority Chief Executive specifying action. You are therefore advised to ensure all statutory reporting duties for LAQM are met on time.

3. Public Bodies Required to Contribute to Action Plans

The Environment Act 2021 amended the Environment Act 1995 to increase the number of public bodies that have a duty to co-operate with Local Authorities for LAQM. Air quality partners are certain other public bodies that a Local Authority identifies as having responsibility for a source of emissions contributing to an exceedance of local air quality objectives. This could be a neighbouring authority, National Highways, or the Environment Agency. Once identified, there is a statutory requirement for such public bodies to engage and to contribute actions they will take to secure achievement of the local air quality objective and to maintain achievement thereafter.

All tiers of local Government are also now required by law to collaborate to address exceedances of Air Quality Objectives. County councils, the Mayor of London and combined authorities have similar duties to air quality partners. The difference is that, when requested, they must contribute to an action plan being prepared by a Local Authority, regardless of whether the local authority has identified them as being responsible for a source of emissions.

Under the new legislation, you may choose to request the support of another public body in the development of an AQAP and the same may be requested of your organisation.

Please refer to the LAQM Statutory Policy Guidance 2022 for more information. Should you require further assistance, please contact the LAQM Helpdesk: <https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/air-quality/featured/england-exc-london-policy-guidance/>

Web: <http://laqm.defra.gov.uk/helpdesks.html>

FAQs: <http://laqm.defra.gov.uk/laqm-faqs/>

Tel: 0800 032 7953

Email: laqmhlpdesk@uk.bureauveritas.com

The Air Quality Hub also provides free online information and is a knowledge sharing resource for local authority air quality professionals: <https://www.airqualityhub.co.uk/>

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Appraisal Response Comment Form

Contact Name:	
Contact Telephone number:	
Contact email address:	UKLAQMAppraisals@aecom.com

Comments on appraisal/Further information: