

<b>Report on</b>	Mid Ulster District Council Air Quality Report 2023
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Kieran Gordon, Assistant Director Health, Leisure & Wellbeing
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Melanie Patterson, Environmental Health Service Manager Anne Caldwell, Principal Environmental Health Officer

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>  If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	x

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To update members on the Draft Air Quality Monitoring report 2023 for the Mid Ulster District Council area and of the ongoing monitoring currently being undertaken in relation to this.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) provides the framework within which air quality is managed by Northern Ireland's local authorities. The LAQM process places an obligation on all local authorities to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas, and to determine whether air quality objectives are likely to be achieved.
2.2	In Northern Ireland, Local Authorities report annually on air quality within their districts via Progress Reports.
2.3	Air Quality Progress Reports have been submitted by the former Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council, Cookstown District Council, and Magherafelt District Council since 2002 and more recently since 2015 via Mid Ulster District Council.
2.4	These initial air quality reports looked at a number of pollutants listed under European Directives and examined whether air quality objectives were likely to be met in each of the three districts. A list of the pollutants and the relevant air quality objectives are set out within the body of the draft report.
2.5	After the initial assessment it was determined that air quality objectives for four of these seven pollutants would be comfortably met within each of the three Districts. However, it was felt that further examination would need to be undertaken for the remaining three pollutants.
2.6	These pollutants were Nitrogen Dioxide (NO <sub>2</sub> ), Sulphur Dioxide (SO <sub>2</sub> ) and PM10. For a number of years, the levels of SO <sub>2</sub> and PM10 were monitored at areas identified as worst-case scenarios in each of the Districts. These areas were chosen due to the relatively high number of solid fuel burning properties near by the monitoring sites. After several years of monitoring, it was found that all the areas chosen were well within the air quality objectives and were extremely unlikely to exceed the objectives in the future. As a result, monitoring was discontinued for these two pollutants. The only remaining pollutant that is routinely monitored in the Mid Ulster District is Nitrogen dioxide.

2.7	If a local authority finds any places where the objectives are not likely to be achieved, it must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) at this location. This area could be just one or two streets, or it could be much bigger.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p>Monitoring for NO<sub>2</sub> takes place along the roads that are more heavily congested throughout the District. Congestion generally occurs along the main North-South transport route identified in the Local Development Plan 2030 – Draft Plan Strategy. The roads in question link the three main towns of Magherafelt, Cookstown and Dungannon. Two of the smaller villages that this traffic passes through are also monitoring sites, namely Moneymore and Moy. The chosen sites tend to be located close to residential dwellings at points where the traffic is slowing down or idling at busy junctions or traffic lights.</p> <p>3.2 In April 2023 the number of diffusion tube monitoring locations across the district was expanded. The new monitoring sites are located at Moy; Newell Road, Dungannon; Circular Road, Dungannon; and Coalisland.</p> <p>3.3 It should be noted that the 2023 Draft Air quality report set out in Appendix A only considers 2022 data, so monitoring data from the aforementioned new sites will not be considered until the Updating and Screen Assessment report is completed later this year.</p> <p>3.4 There were previously five AQMA's declared for NO<sub>2</sub> within the Mid Ulster District Council area, two of which have already been revoked due to improvements in the air quality at those locations. Ongoing monitoring has however shown continued exceedances of the air quality objective for NO<sub>2</sub> at two of the remaining AQMA's.</p> <p>3.5 The third AQMA located in Magherafelt Town Centre has consistently shown no exceedances at any of the six monitoring sites for the past five years in a row, with all results being below 37 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.</p> <p>3.6 When last year's report was submitted it was anticipated that the Magherafelt AQMA could be revoked if the air quality monitoring showed improved results within air quality objectives for the third consecutive year. Due to the impacts of Covid-19 a precautionary approach was previously taken where it was decided that a further year's results would need to be considered before any decision was taken in relation to potential revocation.</p> <p>3.7 The addition year's results presented within the attached report (Appendix A) continue to show no exceedances of the NO<sub>2</sub> within the Magherafelt AQMA. The Environmental Health Service intend to review the information associated with the Magherafelt AQMA and subsequently make a determination on revoking the AQMA, in accordance with Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs guidance: <i>Local Air Quality Management during the COVID-19 Outbreak: Update, dated August 2021 and Supplementary Guidance for Councils RE: Revocation/Designation of AQMAs (Updated 2023)</i>.</p> <p>3.8 It could be argued that the improvement in the air quality at Magherafelt is most likely linked to the construction of the A31 Magherafelt by-pass. The by-pass consists of a 5.9km single carriageway to the east of Magherafelt town, and now diverts a lot of the through traffic that previously passed through the town centre around the outskirts of the town. The recommendation regarding the potential revocation of this AQMA will be brought to Members for decision at a future committee.</p>

3.9	Diffusion Tube monitoring at locations within the AQMA's in Dungannon and Moy have demonstrated that there are 2 sites where NO <sub>2</sub> levels continue to exceed the objective limit of 40ug/m <sup>3</sup> , namely Newell Road, Dungannon and Charlemont Street in Moy.
3.10	Diffusion tube monitoring at eight locations along the main thoroughfare in Cookstown and Moneymore did not demonstrate any exceedances of the air quality objective. This is probably due to the wide-open nature of the streets in question. Routine monitoring will continue at these locations.
3.11	The report also considers the likely impacts of any new developments on air quality within the District. These are dealt with through the planning process whereby an applicant for a development may be asked to forward an air quality appraisal for their proposal, detailing the potential impact on air quality within the district.
3.12	In summary, the proposed 2023 Air Quality report has examined the results from the ongoing monitoring exercises across the district.
3.13	Outside of the AQMAs it was found that concentrations of Nitrogen Dioxide were below the objectives, therefore there is no requirement to proceed to a further Detailed Assessment at these relevant locations.
3.14	The Environmental Health Service intend to continue to monitor pollutants at their current locations and submit an Updating and Screening assessment report later in 2024.
3.15	Further information and access to relevant reports are also publicly accessible via the following website: <a href="https://www.airqualityni.co.uk/">https://www.airqualityni.co.uk/</a>
3.16	In addition to the Progress report, a recent Air Quality stakeholder meeting was held at on 29 <sup>th</sup> January 2024 to review the air quality issues within the District. Stakeholders from other statutory agencies and a number of elected Members attended the meeting – a copy of the presentation slides are enclosed within Appendix B. A further meeting is planned for June 2024 and meeting invitations will be extended to stakeholders from other statutory agencies and all MUDC elected Members.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	Financial: £7300 from DAERA's Local Air Quality Management grant
	Human: Officer time – 50 % grant funded up to maximum of £6,000 (23/24)
	Risk Management: Considered in line with relevant policies and procedures.
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A

<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	To note the contents of this report.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
6.1	Appendix A: Draft Air Quality Progress Report 2023 Appendix B: Presentation slides from Air Quality stakeholder meeting held on 29 <sup>th</sup> January 2024.