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| Local Authority: | Bracknell Forest Council |
| Reference: | ASR24-2139 |
| Date of issue | July 2024 |

Annual Status Report Appraisal Report

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

BFC currently has one Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) which is 'AQMA Crowthorne' which was first declared in February 2011 for exceedances of the NO₂ annual mean Air Quality Objective (AQO). BFC has previously had an AQMA (AQMA Bracknell) which was declared in May 2013 for exceedances of the NO₂ annual mean AQO which was revoked in March 2024. There have been no exceedances of the NO₂ annual mean AQO recorded inside the 'AQMA Crowthorne' AQMA since 2020 but we agree with BFC's plans to wait until compliance (concentrations recorded as being 10% below the relevant AQO) has been achieved inside this AQMA in 2022, 2023, and 2024 before considering plans to revoke the 'AQMA Crowthorne' AQMA. BFC has also produced and published a new Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) in 2024 to replace the old AQAP which was published in 2014.

BFC undertook automatic monitoring at one site, and non-automatic NO₂ diffusion tube monitoring at twenty-six sites in 2023. No changes to the monitoring network were made by BFC between 2022 and 2023. In 2023, no exceedances of the NO₂ annual mean AQO were recorded. In 2023, the highest NO₂ annual mean concentration was recorded at monitoring site 58xC-58yC-58zC located on Bracknell Road in Crowthorne inside the 'AQMA Crowthorne' AQMA (this is a triplicate monitoring site) which recorded a concentration of 33.2µg/m³ (representative exposure) which is an increase of 2.6µg/m³ over the concentration of 30.6µg/m³ recorded at the same monitoring site in 2022. This monitoring site also recorded the largest increase in NO₂ annual mean concentrations between 2022 and 2023 out of all the monitoring sites used by BFC.

The highest NO₂ annual mean concentrations recorded outside of a AQMA is at monitoring site 86xB-86yB-86zB located on the A322 (Downshire Way) in Bracknell which recorded a concentration of 30.3µg/m³ (representative exposure) in 2023 which is a decrease of 2.3µg/m³ over the concentration of 32.6µg/m³ recorded at the same monitoring site in 2022. The general trend in NO₂ annual mean concentrations is mixed with some monitoring sites recording an increase in concentrations between 2022 and 2023, and others recording a decrease in concentrations over the same time scale. The average change in NO₂ annual mean concentrations between 2022 and 2023 is a decrease of 0.7µg/m³. The largest decrease in NO₂ annual mean concentrations recorded between 2022 and 2023 was recorded at monitoring site

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99B located on the A322 (Bagshot Road) in Bracknell located outside of the 'AQMA Crowthorne' AQMA which recorded a concentration of 19.5µg/m³ (representative exposure) in 2023 which is a decrease of 3.8µg/m³ over the concentration of 23.3µg/m³ recorded at the same monitoring site in 2022. No other exceedances of any other relevant AQOs were recorded in 2023.

QA/QC procedures have been applied, with a local bias adjustment factor. BFC uses Gradko International for the supply and analysis of the NO₂ diffusion tubes, which are prepared with 20% Triethanolamine / De-ionised water. This factor was used as it was considered to be more representative of BFC's administrative area, and that there was a good data capture (99%) from the automatic analyser within the (now revoked) 'AQMA Bracknell' AQMA so the monitoring results coming from the automatic analyser were considered to be of a high quality. No annualisation or distance corrections was required at any monitoring site in 2023. A PM_{2.5} annual mean concentration was estimated using the recorded PM₁₀ annual mean concentration at the one automatic monitoring site (in the absence of actual PM_{2.5} monitoring) using Chapter 7 Section 1 of the Local Air Quality Management Technical Guidance (LAQM.TG22)¹. Using this method, an estimated PM_{2.5} annual mean concentration of 11.3µg/m³ was calculated for the automatic monitoring site which would be below the PM_{2.5} annual mean AQO.

The ASR discusses what measures within the AQAP were completed within the reporting year of 2023 which range from the installation of 38 fast 22 kilo-watt electric vehicle charge points across 12 council-owned car parks, to the installation of a new pedestrian crossing on Temple Way to provide safer links to the new Blue Mountain development and new schools and community facility. The ASR also discusses what measures BFC expected to be completed over the course of the next reporting year which range from the production of a new local transport plan for the Borough to set the plans, policies and ambitions for the transport network over the 10 years and beyond, to investigate other ways of improving traffic flow along Crowthorne High Street following delays caused by objections to plans aimed at improving this location in the centre of the 'AQMA Crowthorne' AQMA.

On the basis of the evidence provided by the local authority the conclusions reached in the report are accepted for all sources and pollutants, on the proviso that the grammatical and formatting errors in the report are corrected prior to publication on the council's website. ASRs are public facing documents that serve to keep local communities informed of the steps being taken by their

¹ Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs, Local Air Quality Management Technical Guidance (TG22), August 2022. Available at: <https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/LAQM-TG22-August-22-v1.0.pdf>

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local authority to improve air quality, and as such it is important that they are accessible and easy to read. Following the completion of this report, Bracknell Forest Council should submit an Annual Status Report in 2025.

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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. BFC has provided good quality discussion on the effects of PM_{2.5} within their administrative area. This is good practice and is encouraged for future reports.
2. There is good quality discussion on the trends of the results recorded for all pollutants which includes good quality graphs showing the trends in results recorded over the last 5 years. This is encouraged for future reports.
3. There is good quality discussion about the QA/QC procedure used for both the automatic and non-automatic monitors which includes justification for using the locally calculated bias adjustment factor instead of the national bias adjustment factor. Contained within Appendix C is good quality discussion about additional air quality work undertaken by BFC in 2023. This is encouraged for future reports.
4. The 'Web Link to AQAP' column in Table 2.2 should be updated to reflect that a new AQAP for the 'AQMA Crowthorne' AQMA has been published by BFC.
5. Table 2.2 states that there has been 3 years of compliance with the relevant AQOs for the 'AQMA Crowthorne' AQMA. This is incorrect as there have been 4 years of compliance with the relevant AQOs from 2020 to 2023. The number of years of compliance with the relevant AQOs should be calculated correctly for future reports.
6. The names of all tables should be checked to ensure that they match the names of the tables contained within the excel template.
7. Column 'In AQMA? Which AQMA?' in Table A.0.2 should be fully completed, even if a monitoring location is not located within an AQMA.
8. The text contained within the 'New or Changed Sources Identified Within Bracknell Forest During 2023' section in Appendix C should be updated for the reporting year of 2023 as it still references the 2022 reporting year.
9. The title of Figure D.10 should be updated to accurately reflect what the figure is showing. The figure is showing the AQMAs within BFC's administrative area, but the title suggests that it is showing the locations of the non-automatic monitoring sites.
10. The boundaries of the AQMA drawn in Figure D.0.6 should be checked to ensure that it is correct as it doesn't match the boundary of the AQMA captured in the portal.

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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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Notice for 2024

Changes to the Local Air Quality Management Framework

Through the Environment Act 2021 and 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)

The requirements and guidance around AQAPs have been strengthened under the Environment Act 2021 and the LAQM Statutory Policy Guidance 2022. Action plans must include:

- an assessment of source apportionment,
- provide the population living within the AQMA (where the data is available),
- specify the concentration emission reductions required,
- set out the measures being taken to secure the achievement and maintenance of air quality standards and objectives,
- specify clear timescales for the implementation of measures,
- specify the date air quality objectives are expected to be achieved,
- include quantification of the impacts of the proposed measures,
- detail how delivery partners will work together to implement the AQAP,
- set out a plan to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan,

Actions plans must be finalised within 18 months of an AQMA being declared and reviewed every five years thereafter.

2. 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 introduced a 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.

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 advised to ensure all statutory reporting duties for LAQM are met on time.

3. Public Bodies Required to Contribute to Action Plans

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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 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: laqmhelpdesk@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

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

Comments on appraisal/Further information: