

Local Authority:	<b>West Berkshire Council</b>
Reference:	<b>ASR24-2134</b>
Date of issue	<b>June 2024</b>

## Annual Status Report Appraisal Report

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

West Berkshire Council have revoked both AQMAs within their jurisdiction as compliance was achieved continuously within the last 5 years:

- Newbury AQMA: declared in 2009 for exceedance of the annual mean and Air Quality Objective (AQO) for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>); and,
- Thatcham AQMA: declared in 2011 for exceedance of the annual mean AQO for NO<sub>2</sub>.

The revocation orders were submitted to DEFRA in 2024.

West Berkshire Council undertook automatic (continuous) monitoring at one site during 2023 (CM1 Newbury). Both the 1-hour mean objective and the annual mean objective were not exceeded in 2023 with an annual mean NO<sub>2</sub> concentration of 26.7 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.

The Council undertook passive diffusion tube monitoring of NO<sub>2</sub> at 35 monitoring locations, including one triplicate site, which is co-located with the automatic monitor. No exceedances of the annual mean objective were recorded at any of these sites during 2023 with the highest NO<sub>2</sub> concentration being 26.7 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.

QA/QC procedures have been applied appropriately and accurately to the 2023 monitoring data. Both national and local bias adjustment factors have been considered, with justification provided around the choice to apply the local factor. Annualisation was required at three sites of the passive monitoring locations during 2023 and distance correction was not required at any location. All calculations were clearly outlined and justified.

In the report, the Council has detailed extensive measures and plans to continue to address air quality within its jurisdiction. Key completed measures in 2023 include: on A339 Bear Lane (Sainsbury's roundabout) improvement works to improve traffic flow have been completed and cycle parking – improvements to existing facilities and introduction of new ones began and continued in schools during 2023.

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Priorities for the upcoming year include drafting the Air Quality Strategy now that both AQMAs have been revoked, continuing to work within the unitary authority with Transport Policy and Highways Teams as there are some localised areas of congestion at peak times which require managing and investment, where improvements are needed to increase capacity at key junctions or effectively manage traffic flow and continue the School Streets projects and the promotion of alternative travel to school.

From 2023 those authorities who have not had to designate AQMAs and produce AQAPs should draw up a local Air Quality Strategy. The objective of a local Air Quality Strategy is to encourage prevention and reduction of polluting activities in preference to only taking steps to reduce air pollution once exceedances have been identified.

Local Air Quality Strategies will not have a set format and authorities will be able to draw on content within their ASRs and local transport plans to produce them. As long as the strategy addresses air quality assessments and policy responsibilities under the LAQM regime, it can be combined with the authority's other relevant plans and strategies if it is logical to do so.

Defra will monitor whether Local Authorities have or are developing a local Air Quality Strategy through the ASR appraisal process.

On the basis of the evidence provided by the local authority the conclusions reached in the report are **accepted** for all sources and pollutants. Following the completion of this report, West Berkshire 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. There are a couple of inconsistencies throughout the report:
  - a. Table A.0.4 reports a data capture of 40.4% for the monitoring location “3 Howard Road”, however, Table C.0.5 reports a data capture of 50%. Please correct the false data capture before publishing the ASR.
  - b. Table A.0.3 reports a data capture of 82.5%, however, in the chapter “Diffusion Tube Bias Adjustment Factor” the data capture is reported as 99%. Please correct the false data capture before publishing the ASR.
  - c. In the chapter “Diffusion Tube Bias Adjustmen Factor” it is reported that a bias adjustment factor of 0.85 was used, however, in Table B.0.1 a bias adjustment factor of 0.83 is specified. Please correct the bias adjustment factor before publishing the ASR.
2. The information in Table A.0.1 does not match the column headings. This should be corrected before publishing the ASR.
3. The data capture for the monitoring period and in 2023 is usually the same if monitoring was undertaken from January through to December. The data captures in Tables A.0.3, A.0.4 and A.0.5 differ between the data capture for the monitoring period and in 2023. Please check whether this is correct before publishing the ASR.
4. In the chapter “Diffusion Tube Bias Adjustment Factor” the national bias adjustment factor is reported as 0.87, however, the national bias adjustment factor is 0.81. While the national bias adjustment factor was not used, this should be corrected before publishing the ASR. Furthermore, it is recommended to include a screenshot of the National Diffusion Tube Bias Adjustment Factor Spreadsheet as the live version is updated regularly.
5. Table A.0.2 lists the diffusion tube monitoring location “Continuous Monitor 1, Continuous Monitor 2, Continuous Monitor 3” which is assumed to be co-located with the continuous monitor. However, in the relevant column of Table A.0.2 this monitoring location is not marked to be co-located. Please check whether this is correct before publishing the ASR.

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6. For Table A.0.4 it is assumed that “N/A” is missing for the monitoring location “Station Road” in the column “2022” as it is assumed that this was the monitoring location that was added in 2023. Please check whether this is correct before publishing the ASR.
7. The text on page ii in paragraph 2 refers once to 2022 when talking about the hourly NO<sub>2</sub> objective. This should be corrected to 2023 before publishing the ASR.
8. The x-axis of Figure 3.2 is not very legible due to the cramped labels. For future reports it is recommended to show this figure on a horizontally oriented page within the report.
9. It is commented that the Council have included comparisons of the local fraction of mortality attributable to PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions to the regional and national average in the most recent ASR.
10. It is commented that the Council have included an in-depth discussion about the local and national bias adjustment factor, including differences and justifications why the local bias adjustment factor was used in the most recent ASR.
11. It is commented that the Council have confirmed that they follow the Defra calendar for deploying the diffusion tubes in the most recent ASR.
12. It is commented that the Council have included a list of site IDs and report IDs to match the figures and tables to all figures in the most recent ASR.
13. It is commented that the Council have included graphs showing the monitoring results of locations outside the AQMAs as well in the most recent ASR.

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: [laqmhlpdesk@uk.bureauveritas.com](mailto: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:**