

Air Quality Grant 2020/21 – Final Report

Grant Determination Number_31/5410

ITA_7555

Project_28998

Contact details and project dates	
Local Authority Name	West Berkshire Council
Our Ref: ecm	Suzanne McLaughlin
Key Contact Details: Name, position, email, telephone	Suzanne McLaughlin, Principal Officer Charlie Fielder, Environmental Health Officer
Project Start date	April 2021
Project status	Completed August 2024
Finance	Total Project cost and total spend: £ 259,406

Project Summary

The grant comprised of a joint application, led by West Berkshire working in partnership with Bracknell Forest Borough Council and Wokingham Borough Council, as the Public Protection Partnership (PPP). £259,406 was awarded which equated to 100% of the grant applied for tackling roadside NO2 in all 7 AQMAs across the 3 areas, and area of 448,000 residents.

The 2 main areas of the project were:

- Measuring PM2.5 levels at schools in / near the 7 AQMAs
- Behavioural Change through an Anti Idling Campaign and NO2 Biggest Loser

Project Aims

The aims were:

- To monitor PM2.5 at schools local to the AQMAs to ascertain if they are achieving the 2025 objectives and provide site specific mitigation measures. The results will then help to develop actions to reduce PM.
- To change people and vehicle drivers' perception to idling and reduce traffic emissions and / or exposure to improve public health outcomes.
- To provide specific intervention and education with school children with bumper sticker competition and direct delivery of toolkit.
- To monitor NO2 outside schools to determine effect of interventions on idling.

Project Objectives

The relevant study areas were:

- Communication – through direct work with schools, publicity in direct signage, press and social media
- Behavioural Change – through the communication, signage and direct contact, and vehicle idling data
- Vulnerable groups – PM2.5 and NO2 monitoring data at schools

The relevant emission sources were:

- Cars
- HGVs
- buses.

The pollutants relevant were:

- NO2
- PM2.5.

Work undertaken and changes from initial proposal

Original expected project start date stated in the grant application was April 2021 but grant was not received until May. Overall time delays were from the time taken to carry out the recruitment process of the dedicated Air Quality Officer (AQO); the procurement procedures for PM2.5 monitoring project and contract awarding; and the AQO leaving employment before end of the fixed term and prior to the end of the projects. However this enabled an extension to Behavioural Change contractor to deliver more on the anti-idling project on behalf of the PPP.

The delay in starting the PM2.5 monitoring project was by 1 school term. The monitoring at schools did not occur at the same time, was carried out in tranches. Also due to electricity issues with installation the monitoring in the 3 tranches were not concurrent, but each did ensure term time and holiday time were monitored for comparison.

The NO2 monitoring did not commence until Q4, but the aim was to commence monitoring at the beginning of the calendar year.

There were delays in achieving approval of the signs from the 3 separate authorities so led to delay in progressing to next stage of anti idling project. By end Q10 the final report on the Behavioural Change project concluded that the surveys were inconclusive and that additional interventions would have been useful if the budget had allowed, and further work was recommended. This extension was agreed for 1 additional survey in each LA area to better understand the impact of the anti-idling signage on drivers and whether there is an impact on idling. In addition poor take up of the schools within the AQMA areas resulted in a widening of offer for the school intervention work. Following the extension to anti idling project, ie additional surveys before and after signage put up, showed decrease in idling

Overall the original overall project end date was April 2023 and was extended to April 2024 however the final date August 2024 once the Biggest Loser NO2 results were collated and the winners announced.

Review of benefits and challenges of chosen delivery model

The deliverability time scale was based on advice from a contractor who in the end was not successful in the procurement of the PM2.5 monitoring nor the behavioural change Anti-idling project. Insufficient time was allocated for the recruitment of the AQO and the time taken to deliver the procurement of the PM2.5 monitoring contract and the impact of site set up issues.

Effectiveness of project in relation to objectives and milestones

The projects did cover all areas of communication, dealing with behavioural change and focusing on a vulnerable group, as planned.

The anti-idling project was effective in ensuring the emission sources from all vehicle types as planned were covered.

The PM2.5 monitoring was undertaken at 42 locations from Q4 to Q8.

The NO2 Biggest Loser monitoring at 42 locations was carried out from Q4 to Q12.

Delivery or maintenance long term of outcomes

Key statistics are:

- 42 schools provided with PM2.5 monitoring report and action plan to further investigate the sources
- 8 schools where assemblies attended of which 3 had a workshop
- 140 schools sent the anti-idling toolkit
- 348 entries to the bumper sticker competition, with over 500 sent out
- 42 schools monitored for NO2 with 94% showed reduction following behavioural change campaign
- Results from monitoring PM2.5 and NO2 assisting in LAQM and added in Annual Status Reports for the relevant LA.

Stakeholder engagement

This was achieved in the following ways:

- Updating Members via Joint Public Protection Committee reports
- Members Briefing Bulletins
- Contact with over 140 schools
- Within the 3 authorities updating colleagues via Environment Delivery Project Board (West Berkshire), Active Travel Officer Group (West Berkshire), Air Quality Working Group (Wokingham), Active Travel (Wokingham), Climate Change Officers Board (Bracknell Forest), Transport (Bracknell Forest), Parking Enforcement team (Bracknell Forest)
- Stakeholder workshop led by the behavioural change consultants with officers from all 3 LAs in Highways, Transport, Environmental Health and Communications teams.

Sharing best practice

This was achieved in the following ways:

- PPP website and social media - eg dispelling myths of engine running
- Air Quality pages on Public Protection Partnership website all updated with resources [Resources - PPP \(publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk\)](https://publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk).
- Dissemination of the messaging commenced to parish councils/magazines, in Council publications such as WBC Environment Newsletter March 2024 edition
- Resources published on the DEFRA Air Quality Hub sections on Anti-Idling (bumper sticker, competition banner and posters) and Schools/Education (School Toolkit, Engagement Letter to Parents, and Schools Engagement Presentations).
- WSP presented the Anti idling work at Behavioural Science in Public Health Network event in summer 2023 and received plaudits for its attempt at trying something different. The event was attended mainly by local authorities and academics. The attendees were predominantly behaviour change specialists, public health specialists, and researchers.
- Joint Public Protection Committee reports and updates and data in each LA ASR

Lessons learned

The following key lessons were:

- Need to be mindful of the time in dealing with recruitment process
- Need to be mindful of the time in dealing with procurement process
- Difficulty in locations for PM2.5 monitoring on school premises due to power supply accessibility caused the monitoring not take place in 3 exact tranches of 14 school in with even distribution of schools in each LA
- Cost of electricity connections not confirmed in timely manner
- Insufficient budget for a more wide-ranging behavioural campaign for additional interventions

- AQO post was vital to keep the emphasis and focus on the project so when the post vacant existing resources had to cover but in conflict with many other EH work
- Schools intervention take up was very poor, although plenty of notice given
- Remember dealing with 3 LAs colleagues/ communications teams with differing views on eg signage which caused additional delay in being able to order the printing

Funding / expenditure

Overall all the budget was spent, and the final expenditure was in Q14.

The procurement was carried out in line with West Berkshire Council Constitution rules in order to obtain best value for money.

At the beginning of the project the spend was low due to getting the AQO in post and the procurement process for the PM2.5 monitoring project but by the end of Q3 the contract was awarded. By the end of Q4 the contract for the Behavioural Change specialist for the anti idling project was awarded.

Once the AQO post was vacant funding transferred to extend the work carried out by the Behavioural Change contractor to cover the engagement with schools work and more on the communications of this project.

Signatory

Name of Officer at the local authority:

Suzanne McLaughlin

Name of Local Authority:

West Berkshire Council

Date:

06/02/2025