

Agenda Item	25
Report No	EDI/86/19

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Environment, Development and Infrastructure

Date: 7 November 2019

Report Title: Air Quality and National Clean Air Day 2020

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report details the work being undertaken by the Council to improve air quality in the Highlands and support National Clean Air Day.

2. Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to:

- I. note the summary of the 2019 Air Quality Annual Progress Report (APR) for the Highland Council; and
- II. agree for Environmental Health to assist and monitor the Council's support for National Clean Air Day 2020.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – Limited staff resources are currently available for air quality work. The Environmental Health team has 0.45 FTE (0.05 Senior EHO, 0.30 specialist Technical officer, 0.10 Technical Officer for monitoring). On a very limited basis other enforcement staff can participate in projects e.g. related to idling.
- 3.2 Legal – The Council have statutory duties on Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) as set out in Part IV of the Environment Act 1995.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – The report highlights proposals for the Environmental Health Team to work with others for community activities to promote the National Clean Air Day 2020.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – Work on air quality supports the Council's climate change commitments.
- 3.5 Risk – Failure to deliver on air quality statutory responsibilities will impact on the health of residents and visitors to the Highlands, open the Council to reputational risks and criticism. Sampling air quality and reports undertaken dating from 1998 have concluded

that general air quality in the Highland Council area is good. Active monitoring is undertaken in higher risk locations.

3.6 Gaelic - none

4. Background

4.1 The impact of Air pollution on health has been long recognised and legislation on emissions has greatly improved air quality over the last century. Despite these improvements air pollution is still a risk to health and research is demonstrating the significant public health risks linked to air pollution. Health Protection Scotland have estimated that there are 1,700 deaths a year in Scotland attributable to the impact of exposure to manmade fine particulate matter (PM2.5), much of which is derived from road transport vehicles.

4.2 In Scotland, the Council is following the Scottish Government's Cleaner air for Scotland (CAFS) strategy, and the legal requirements Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) as set out in Part IV of the Environment Act 1995.

4.3 The duties around air quality fully support the Council's programme and priorities to make the Highlands a healthier region and as a place to thrive.

5. Air Quality in the Highlands

5.1 The first review of air quality in the Highlands by Environmental Health was published in 1998. **From that initial review to the most recent, the sampling and reports have concluded that general air quality in the Highland Council area is good.**

5.2 Over the years reviews have identified other possible localised issues and detailed assessments have been carried out:

- benzene levels at petrol terminals in Inverness Harbour and Nigg (2003);
- Sulphur dioxide levels due to solid fuel in housing in Castletown (2003); and
- Sulphur dioxide levels due to Alcan Smelter in Fort William (2003).

The detailed assessments concluded that there was no likelihood of air quality objectives not being met due to these processes.

5.3 The Council has declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in 2014 following Nitrogen dioxide sampling in Inverness on Queensgate and Union Street. Measured concentrations in excess of the Annual Mean Nitrogen dioxide levels were found that could impact on the residential properties in the area.

5.4 The Council has worked with partners, including SEPA, HITRANS, NHS Highland, Inverness BID on an Action Plan to improve the Air Quality within the AQMA. Results since have generally been improving and Environmental Health will be reviewing the status of the AQMA.

5.5 Active monitoring is ongoing by the Council in Inverness, Fort William and Dingwall. National monitoring is also carried out at 3 sites in the Highlands: Inverness, Fort William and Strath Vaich in Ross-shire. Daily reporting from the sites is available on <http://www.scottishairquality.scot/latest/>

5.6 The Council monitors air quality through existing automatic network stations and with passive sampling methods to identify areas where air quality might be poor. The

planning process is also used to ensure appropriate siting of development with the potential to pollute, and new sensitive receptors.

- 5.7 Environmental Health is required to submit an Annual Progress Report (APR) which details the results of air quality monitoring in the area and summarises the work being undertaken by the Highland Council to improve air quality and any progress that has been made.
- 5.8 The Annual Progress reports from 2013 through to 2019 are available at the link below: <https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1281/pollution/73/pollution/2>
- 5.9 The Environmental Health team has recently made a successful bid for a number of portable air quality monitors that can provide rapid assessment of local air quality. These will be used to support work related to the AQMA and can also be used for education projects with schools.
- 5.10 Idling vehicles - The Council has adopted the fixed penalty powers available under the Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) (Scotland) Regulations 2003. This makes vehicle idling an offence and offenders may be issued with a £20 fixed penalty notice (FPN). It must be noted that the Scottish Government Guidance on the regulations stress that the intent is to encourage all motorists to have due regard to the local environment. An educative approach is suggested with enforcement action purely advisory in the vast majority of cases. To date the Council has not issued any FPNs for idling.
- 5.11 Care, Learning and Housing Committee on 10 October approved the Road Safety team and Environmental Health developing a pilot project on air quality improvement with a willing and appropriate school. This project could include safer routes, parksmart and localised air monitoring and idling education/enforcement. Participation of SEPA will be investigated as they provide educational resources on air quality and access to funding through e.g. Citizen Science projects.

6. National Clean Air Day

- 6.1 National Clean Air Day is held each year in June to help raise awareness for the problems of air pollution and the different ways that people can work towards making the air cleaner.
- 6.2 The Council has supported Clean Air Day in previous years with a number of publicity events being organised often involving schools.
- 6.3 Examples include:
 - for Clean Air Day 2019, Plockton High School physics teacher Lorraine Dell organised a day of classes for pupils, where the issue of air pollution, environmental damage around the world and climate change were discussed and debated. Pupils could wear jeans in return for a £1 donation and a stand in the school library was set up with books on the environment. The Clean Air Day resource packs were fully utilised to ask pupils' questions such as 'why is clean air important?' and 'what can we do to reduce the amount of pollution was cause?';
 - for Clean Air Day 2019, Farr Primary School south of Inverness, headteacher Suzanne Dunbar organised a Clean Air Day banner competition with the winning artwork to be made into posters. The pupils began the day with a walk through the

woods to school, joined by members of the local community, to highlight how less polluting activities improve air quality. A 'Dr Bike' maintenance crew also came along to the playground, again highlighting the benefits of active travel; and

- in 2018, Crown Primary held an event with a Council electric car being demonstrated and around 200 pupils, from the primary four to seven age groups, participating in a workshop about air pollution and active travel.

6.4 A motion was approved by the Council in June 2019 for the Council to support Clean Air Day 2020, with a report being submitted to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on what the individuals, communities and organisations can do to improve air quality and protect their health with the Council undertaking subsequent awareness raising through its media channels.

6.5 Significant support for Clean Air Day is available through the dedicated website <https://www.cleanairday.org.uk>. This provides support for councils, businesses, individuals, and communities by providing resources for campaigns and events and providing detailed supporting information. Toolkits include posters, leaflets, tips and even sample newsletter articles and emails to send to colleagues.

6.6 In Scotland, Environmental Protection Scotland have co-ordinated the response for Clean Air Day <https://www.ep-scotland.org.uk/cleanairday/>

6.7 Clean Air Day 2020 is on Thursday 18 June. A specific theme and or targeted campaign for 2020 has not yet been published.

6.8 To take forward the Council motion, Environmental Health will undertake the following actions:

- a) liaise with Environmental Protection Scotland on the 2020 campaign (by November 2019);
- b) update the Council's website with links and available information on actions individuals, communities and organisations can do to improve air quality and protect their health (by 31 December 2019);
- c) work with corporate communications to promote Clean Air Day 2020 to Council teams from February 2020 onwards;
- d) work with corporate communications on wider promotion of Clean Air Day 2020 from April 2020 onwards; and
- e) assist and monitor the Council's support for Clean Air Day 2020 up to and following the event.

7. Future Air Quality Statutory duties

7.1 In August 2019, the Scottish Government published an independent review of the Cleaner Air for Scotland Strategy. The report's overall conclusion is that Scotland is generally performing quite well by EU and global comparison, with ambient atmospheric pollution concentration levels and regulated pollution emissions generally continuing to fall as a result of actions taken thus far. However, the report stresses that further work is required to minimise the risks to public health. It includes recommendations for Local Authorities such as the need to ensure better recognition and integration of the different disciplines and inter-connected policy and delivery areas related to air pollution.

7.2 Going forward, the Council will need to ensure that effective liaison continues between all teams with responsibilities and duties that impact on air quality.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities

Date: 18 October 2019

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Background Papers:

Highland Council Annual Air Quality Reports:

<https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1281/pollution/73/pollution/2>

Scottish Government independent review of CAFS Strategy

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/pollution/air-quality/>

Scottish Government CAFS Strategy

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/cleaner-air-scotland-strategy-independent-review/>

Health Protection Scotland – 2018 mortality data

https://hpspubsrepo.blob.core.windows.net/hps-website/nss/2452/documents/1_air-pollution-health-briefing-%20PM2.5-attributable-mortality-v1%200.pdf