

LOCAL AIR QUALITY IN ARGYLL AND BUTE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The quality of natural environment of Argyll and Bute has major influences on its economy, tourism, and on the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors to the area.
- 1.2. This paper presents the 2021 Annual Progress Report for Local Air Quality in Argyll and Bute, which fulfils the Council's statutory duties under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995. The environmental health team have carried out the monitoring work over the course of the year to produce the Progress Report, which has been formally submitted to the Scottish Government.
- 1.3. The Progress Report concludes that :
 - a. Local air quality in Argyll and Bute continues to be good with all indicator parameters below prescribed limits. There is no need for any designated Local Air Quality Management Areas in Argyll and Bute.
 - b. Monitoring concludes that nitrogen dioxide levels are below air quality objectives at all monitoring locations. There is a marked fall in annual air quality levels at most monitoring locations across Argyll and Bute and the most likely reason is reduced transportation and travel during the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.
 - c. There is a need to continue routine monitoring by the Council's environmental health team for nitrogen dioxide, and continue the assessment of new developments for all indicator parameters. This is incorporated within the environmental health service work plan for 2021/22.
- 1.4. The environmental health service will undertake an internal review of the Councils local air quality arrangements to ensure compliance with local air quality standards and that we adapt to emerging National and International initiatives, including the outcomes of COP26. This will be completed by 31st December 2021 and actions implemented thereafter.
- 1.5. **Recommendation:** Members are asked to note that the Local Air Quality Annual Progress Report 2021 confirms that local air quality in Argyll and Bute is good and to consider this in the context of the international Climate Change Conference (COP26).

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. The quality of the natural environment of Argyll and Bute has major influences on its economy, tourism, and on the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors to the area. The environment is a key theme in many of the Councils Corporate Outcomes.
- 2.2. This paper presents the 2021 Local Air Quality Annual Progress Report of Argyll and Bute Council, developed by the Council's Environmental Health service, which meets the Council's statutory duties under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995.
- 2.3. Air pollutants may now be largely invisible but their gases and particulates can be harmful to human health and the natural environment. Air pollution disproportionately affects the most vulnerable members of society, including the very young, the elderly and people with existing medical conditions. Measures to reduce air pollution aim to protect human health and eliminate health inequalities. In addition, they improve the quality of places and habitats in the wider environment.
- 2.4. In 2018, Health Protection Scotland (HPS) provided an estimate of approximately 1,700 attributable (premature) deaths in Scotland annually for particulates. This figure rose to 2,000 as a reasonable estimate for combined pollutants.
- 2.5. The 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 31st October to 12th November 2021, will consider a range of important environmental issues. It is expected that countries will be asked to come forward with ambitious 2030 emissions reductions targets that align with reaching net zero by 2050

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to note that the Local Air Quality Annual Progress Report 2021 confirms that local air quality in Argyll and Bute is good and to consider this in the context of the international Climate Change Conference (COP26).

4.0 DETAIL: AIR QUALITY IN ARGYLL AND BUTE

- 4.1. Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 provides local authorities with a statutory duty to assess local air quality and support the Government's duties and aims to improve health. The Act set out the regulatory framework requiring Local Authorities to meet the air quality objectives for eight priority pollutants and report annually on the measures undertaken to do so. The pollutants are nitrogen dioxide, particulates (PM10, PM2.5), sulphur dioxide, Benzene, 1,3 Butadiene, carbon monoxide and lead.

- 4.2. Previous air quality reports have concluded that monitoring is not required for any of the pollutants, other than nitrogen dioxide. Previous monitoring programs for fine particulates and carbon monoxide ceased, as they demonstrated that concentrations were well below national prescribed levels. The Councils' air quality monitoring program, carried out by environmental health, focusses on nitrogen oxides (predominately from vehicular emissions).
- 4.3. The **Annual Progress Report 2021**, attached for Members' information, concludes that monitoring for local air quality in Argyll and Bute continues to show a long-term steady or falling trend, with a marked reduction at most monitoring locations during 2020. Monitoring for nitrogen dioxide at all locations show levels well below the air quality objective. Figures 1 to 10 (pages 24 to 33) of the attached Report, provide more detail.
- 4.4. Key findings to note are:
- (i) Local air quality in Argyll and Bute continues to be good with monitoring showing that nitrogen dioxide levels are below air quality objectives at all monitoring locations
 - (ii) Routine monitoring confirms that diffusion tube results for Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) are within air quality objectives. This monitoring is undertaken at 10 fixed sites across Argyll and all sites show a steady or falling trend well below the annual objective.
 - (iii) There were a number of planning applications and developments in 2020 with the potential to affect air quality objectives. Assessments were undertaken and concluded that they would not adversely impact on local air quality objectives.
 - (iv) COVID-19 is likely to have had a short-term benefit, as there is a marked fall in annual air quality levels at most monitoring locations across Argyll and Bute. The likely reason is reduced transportation and travel during the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions and it will be interesting to note the outcome of next years review.
 - (v) Covid restrictions impacted on the Councils local air monitoring arrangements with delays in replacing diffusion tubes at certain locations. A recommendation incorporated in the Progress Report, is the need to review the Council's air quality monitoring program. This will be cognisant of national and international initiatives to ensure that we anticipate and adapt to future requirements.

5.0 CLIMATE CHANGE AND COP26

- 5.1 Climate change impacts can exacerbate health problems associated with poor air quality and pollution. Air quality and climate change are intrinsically linked, both arising from broadly the same sources. Measures that seek to improve air quality can also have a positive impact on the climate.
- 5.2 The Government's strategy Cleaner Air for Scotland 2 – Towards a Better Place for Everyone (CAFS2), introduced in July 2021, is Scotland's second air quality strategy. This sets out how the Government and its partner organisations propose to further reduce air pollution to protect human health and fulfil Scotland's legal responsibilities over the period 2021-2026.

- 5.3 The 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 31st October to 12th November 2021, will consider a range of important environmental issues. Countries are likely to be asked to come forward with ambitious 2030 emissions reductions targets that align with reaching net zero by 2050
- 5.4 Climate change policies on decarbonising travel, transportation and energy production are expected to be key in achieving these ambitious targets and there will likely be implications arising from these for managing local air quality in Scotland.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The Council's Local Air Quality Annual Progress Report for 2021 confirms that national air quality objectives are being met and that air quality in Argyll and Bute remains good. There is no requirement for the Council to proceed to any Detailed Assessment or to declare any Local Air Quality Management Areas (LAQMAs).
- 6.2 Monitoring work will continue to allow further assessment of air quality standards in Argyll and Bute. This will enable the Council to meet its statutory requirement to produce an annual report on air quality to the Scottish Government, and, where necessary, identify actions where there are exceedances of national levels.
- 6.3 The Council's environmental health service will undertake an internal review of the Council's local air quality arrangements to ensure compliance with Government's expectations and we adapt to emerging national and international initiatives, including the outcomes of COP26. This will be completed by 31st December 2021 and actions implemented thereafter.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Policy:	Consistent with Corporate Outcomes BO12 (Public Health and Health Protection) and BO13 (our built environment)
7.2 Financial	None; Monitoring work incorporated within existing environmental health operating budget
7.3 Legal	Statutory duty under Part IV of Environment Protection Act, and progress Report has been submitted to Scottish Government.
7.4 HR	None
7.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:	None
7.5.1 Equalities	None
7.5.2 Socio-economic duty	None
7.5.3 Islands	None
7.6 Risk	None
7.7 Customer Service	None

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: 2021 Air Quality Annual Progress Report for Argyll and Bute Council