

COFNOD O BENDERFYNIAD WEDI'I DDIRPRWYO GAN SWYDDOG RECORD OF
DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION

Penderfyniad Allweddol | Key Decision ✓

PWNC | SUBJECT: Publication of the 2021 Air Quality Progress Report

DIBEN YR ADRODDIAD | PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

The purpose of this report is to approve the publication of the “2021 Air Quality Progress Report” for public consultation and to confirm the Director - Public Health, Protection & Community Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, Well-being & Cultural Services, will consider the outcome of the public consultation and should it be deemed appropriate, accept the 2021 Air Quality Progress Report.

PENDERFYNIAD WEDI'I DDIRPRWYO | DELEGATED DECISION:

The Council publishes the “2021 Air Quality Progress Report” for public consultation; and

The Director of Public Health, Protection & Community Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, Well-being & Cultural Services, considers the outcome of the public consultation and subject to any amendments required as a result of the feedback received, accepts the ‘2021 Air Quality Progress Report.



Llofnod y Prif Swyddog
Chief Officer Signature

Louise Davies

Enw (priflythrennau)
Name (Print Name)

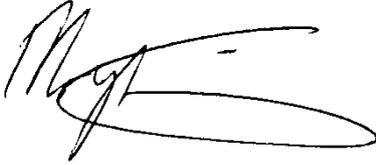
18.11.21

Dyddiad
Date

Mae'r penderfyniad yn cael ei wneud yn unol ag Adran 15 o Ddeddf Llywodraeth Leol 2000 (Swyddogaethau'r Corff Gweithredol) ac yn y cylch gorchwyl sy wedi'i nodi yn Adran 5 o Ran 3 o Gyfansoddiad y Cyngor.

The decision is taken in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government Act, 2000 (Executive Functions) and in the terms set out in Section 5 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution.

YMGYNGHORI | CONSULTATION



18.11.21

LLOFNOD YR AELOD YMGYNGHOROL O'R CABINET
CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE

DYDDIAD | DATE

LLOFNOD SWYDDOG YMGYNGHOROL
CONSULTEE OFFICER SIGNATURE

DYDDIAD | DATE

RHEOLAU'R WEITHDREFN GALW-I-MEWN | CALL IN PROCEDURE RULES.

A YW'R PENDERFYNIAD YN UN BRYD A HEB FOD YN DESTUN PROSES GALW-I-MEWN GAN Y PWYLLGOR TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU?:

IS THE DECISION DEEMED URGENT AND NOT SUBJECT TO CALL-IN BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

NAC YDY | NO✓

Rheswm dros fod yn fater brys | Reason for Urgency:

.....

Os yw'n cael ei ystyried yn fater brys - llofnod y Llywydd, y Dirprwy Lywydd neu Bennaeth y Gwasanaeth Cyflogedig yn cadarnhau cytundeb fod y penderfyniad arfaethedig yn rhesymol yn yr holl amgylchiadau iddo gael ei drin fel mater brys, yn unol â rheol gweithdrefn trosolwg a chraffu 17.2:

If deemed urgent - signature of Presiding Member or Deputy Presiding Member or Head of Paid Service confirming agreement that the proposed decision is reasonable in all the circumstances for it being treated as a matter of urgency, in accordance with the overview and scrutiny procedure rule 17.2:

.....
(Llywydd | Presiding Member) **(Dyddiad | Date)**

DS - Os yw hwn yn benderfyniad sy'n cael ei ail-ystyried yna does dim modd galw'r penderfyniad i mewn a bydd y penderfyniad yn dod i rym o'r dyddiad mae'r penderfyniad wedi'i lofnodi.

NB - If this is a reconsidered decision then the decision Cannot be Called In and the decision will take effect from the date the decision is signed.

AT DDEFNYDD Y SWYDDFA YN UNIG | FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

DYDDIADAU CYHOEDDI A GWEITHREDU | PUBLICATION & IMPLEMENTATION DATES

CYHOEDDI | PUBLICATION

Cyhoeddi ar Wefan y Cyngor | Publication on the Council's Website:- ___18.11.21___

DYDDIAD | DATE

GWEITHREDU'R PENDERFYNIAD | IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

Nodwch: Fydd y penderfyniad hwn ddim yn dod i rym nac yn cael ei weithredu'n llawn nes cyn pen 3 diwrnod gwaith ar ôl ei gyhoeddi. Nod hyn yw ei alluogi i gael ei "Alw i Mewn" yn unol â Rheol 17.1, Rheolau Gweithdrefn Trosolwg a Chraffu.

Note: This decision will not come into force and may not be implemented until the expiry of 3 clear working days after its publication to enable it to be the subject to the Call-In Procedure in Rule 17.1 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

Yn amodol ar y drefn "Galw i Mewn", caiff y penderfyniad ei roi ar waith ar / Subject to Call In the implementation date will be

___24.11.21___
DYDDIAD / DATE

WEDI'I GYMERADWYO I'W GYHOEDDI: ✓ | APPROVED FOR PUBLICATION :✓

Rhagor o wybodaeth | Further Information:

Cyfadran Directorate:	Public Health, Protection & Community Services
Enw'r Person Cyswllt Contact Name:	Neil Pilliner
Swydd Designation:	Environmental Protection & Housing Standards Manager
Rhif Ffôn Telephone Number:	01443 425519

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

KEY DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION

**REPORT TO ACCOMPANY A DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF
PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

15th NOVEMBER 2021

PUBLICATION OF THE 2021 AIR QUALITY PROGRESS REPORT

**Author(s): Neil Pilliner, Environmental Protection & Housing Standards
Manager;
Sarah Illsley, Senior Environmental Control Officer;
Gareth Purnell, Pollution Control Officer.**

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to publish the “2021 Air Quality Progress Report” for public consultation.

Dependent upon the outcome of the public consultation: -

- a) to continue, as circumstances allow, to undertake the Council’s annual reporting duties in relation to the analysis of local air quality and review of local air quality management.

- 1.2 In accordance with the Council’s Scheme of Delegation, this report has been prepared to accompany the intended Officer decision of the Director of Public Health, Protection and Community Services, as described below.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 The Council publishes the “2021 Air Quality Progress Report” for public consultation; and
- 2.2 The Director of Public Health, Protection & Community Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities, Well-being & Cultural Services, considers the outcome of the public consultation and subject to any amendments required as a result of the feedback received, accepts the ‘2021 Air Quality Progress Report

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council conducts regular monitoring and review of ambient outdoor air quality within its area to determine compliance to statutory Air Quality Objectives [AQOs], set by Welsh Government to protect public health. The 2021 Air Quality Progress Report provides the latest examination of this work as well as an assessment of possible future influences upon local air quality management and the continued progress the Council and its partners are making to advance the improvement of local air quality.
- 3.2 Local air quality will vary over time in response to changes to local, regional and national sources of pollutants as well as fluctuations in climate and weather. With the emergence of COVID-19 it is not surprising that 2020 observed unparalleled changes to local air quality, with substantial reductions in air pollution observed throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf. The effects of this ongoing event are both complex and challenging and has, for now, significantly affected the ability to consider the longer-term aspects of local air quality management. As such, the scope and practice of the 2021 Air Quality Progress Report has inevitably been amended, with greater future uncertainty acknowledged.
- 3.3 It is still the case that the vast majority of Rhondda Cynon Taf experiences good air quality which is likely to remain so into the future and potentially continue to improve. Only some small areas within Rhondda Cynon Taf associated with busy urban road junctions, the regional road network or specific local sources are likely to be vulnerable to poor air quality.
- 3.4 Currently Rhondda Cynon Taf has sixteen Air Quality Management Areas [AQMAs], all of which are in respect of breaches of AQOs for Nitrogen Dioxide. These AQMAs are of limited size and are distributed throughout the Borough. Due to the unprecedented experiences throughout 2020, the majority of these AQMAs experienced air quality that was compliant to the relevant AQOs for Nitrogen Dioxide. However, given future uncertainty it is believed that these AQMAs will be required to stay in place, at least for the foreseeable future.
- 3.5 To ensure effective prioritisation of resources, continued accountability, developing coordination with stakeholders, public participation and to satisfy its statutory obligations it is necessary for the Council to publish for consultation, the 2021 Air Quality Progress Report.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Evidence suggests that the lowest social economic groups are most likely to experience poor air quality and are likely to be the most adversely affected by it. As an example, Nitrogen Dioxide is a ubiquitous yet harmful gas that may reduce the quality and length of life of chronically exposed individuals. It is acknowledged as often having significant relevance to local air quality management, being most observed in urban areas or near strategic transport infrastructure.
- 4.2 Although the vast majority of Rhondda Cynon Taf experiences relatively low levels of Nitrogen Dioxide, the reasons why it can become elevated in certain distinct

locations can be very specific to the area concerned. The reasons often include local topography & urban environment, volume, speed and composition of road traffic, as well as the management and likelihood of chronic congestion. Often strategic arterial roads, for instance the A470 and the A4119 may have a demonstrable effect on both local and regional levels of air pollution.

- 4.3 The unique events of 2020 and ongoing COVID-19 related disruption has presented a significant challenge to the undertaking, interpretation and management of local air quality. At times it has not been possible to fully undertake air quality monitoring activities to the degree that would have been normal prior to 2020. However, the Local Authority has attempted to capture important air quality information that may help facilitate the local interpretation of this unprecedented time and its possible implications for the future.
- 4.4 Prior to 2020, some localised areas within Rhondda Cynon Taf observed elevated levels of Nitrogen Dioxide, that were on occasion above or at risk of being above the relevant AQOs for Nitrogen Dioxide. In 2020, the majority of these limited areas experienced levels of Nitrogen Dioxide well below the relevant AQOs for Nitrogen Dioxide, with only the Cymmer AQMA and Mountain Ash Town Centre AQMA experiencing elevated levels of Nitrogen Dioxide.
- 4.5 Although the effect of COVID-19 related disruption has been universally felt, its impact, although significant at all locations, has not been completely uniform. The monitoring data indicates that southern, potentially more affluent areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf may have experienced greater improvement. Whereas more northern areas and specifically more deprived areas indicated by the Health and Air Pollution Risk Assessment /Area Prioritisation (HAP-RAP) analysis may have been less influenced. It may be the case that those communities less affected are also communities less likely, due to the nature of prevailing local employment, to utilise 'working at home' arrangements. It may also be possible that both the Cymmer and Mountain Ash Town Centre AQMAs experience characteristics that even with sizeable reductions in local road traffic, elevated levels of Nitrogen Dioxide may still persist for longer due to the complex nature of the pollutant.
- 4.6 Given the changes that have been witnessed in 2020 and ongoing circumstances, there remains considerable uncertainty about the future trend in local air quality. It is possible that short-term disruption could occur into the near future. It is also likely that some of the changes in society observed in 2020 will have longer lasting consequences. It is expected that some of the significant reductions in Nitrogen Dioxide will be reversed, to some extent, into the future as economic activity recovers and various transport related emissions re-establish. However, it is uncertain if patterns of transport needs and behaviour observed prior to 2020 will fully re-establish in the future. In addition, changed working methods, increased awareness of active travel and possible changes to town centre use may result in a different sustained Nitrogen Dioxide trend within Rhondda Cynon Taf. Due to the highlighted significant uncertainty currently associated with local air quality trends it is still necessary to maintain the current sixteen Air Quality Management Areas within Rhondda Cynon Taf.

- 4.7 It is aspired that all communities within Rhondda Cynon Taf will experience low levels of Nitrogen Dioxide that, at the least, is compliant with the relevant AQOs. In recognition of its importance to public health, the “level of Nitrogen Dioxide in ambient air” has also been set as National Indicator No. 4. This burden reduction approach is aimed at achieving a reduction in the population weighted general level of Nitrogen Dioxide throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf. In working with its partners, the Council has drawn upon expertise and analysis to help identify those communities, which may benefit the most from an active approach to improve local air quality whilst also seeking to fulfil Council’s statutory obligation on local air quality management.
- 4.8 It is acknowledged that when working towards achieving compliance to an AQO within an AQMA, it may be necessary to draw upon a range of both national and local actions. Currently the Council has adopted corresponding Air Quality Action Plans [AQAPs] that identify and facilitate bespoke targeted measures that could be utilised to work towards achieving compliance within the associated AQMA.
- 4.9 Many issues underlining poor air quality, are also significant in the broader Active Travel, Climate Change, Environmental Noise and Biodiversity Agendas. Effective solutions to improve air quality can supplement efforts in tackling climate change and environmental noise. Close integration with the Active Travel Agenda, Climate Change Agenda and Noise Action Plan Priority Areas will continue to be aspired to in future local air quality management.
- 4.10 With the declaration of a ‘Climate Emergency’ by Welsh Government, there is current momentum driving forward climate change engagement and action. This is demonstrated by the acknowledged importance of the outcomes of the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) and recognition by the Local Authority that it must play its part in taking urgent action regarding Climate Change. In doing so, the work programme developed by the Council’s Climate Change Steering Group has identified the close relationship between Climate Change and local air quality. This has enabled wider recognition for local air quality management and supports an holistic approach to tackling these strategic issues.
- 4.11 A number of actions to improve air quality have been implemented in the recent past, albeit COVID-19 related disruption has inevitably affected the planned delivery of certain interventions and changed the evaluation of possible future ones, in the near term at least. Prior to the coronavirus COVID-19 response, the Council had embarked upon preparatory action to enable an effective review of its Air Quality Action Plans in 2021. However, due to the current uncertainty associated with the ongoing coronavirus COVID-19 response any such review in 2021 would now encounter notable challenges. As such it is considered necessary to delay the completion of the scheduled review to 2022, at the earliest.
- 4.12 The recently published ‘[Clean Air Plan for Wales](#)’¹ sets out a potential evolution that, supported by the [White Paper on the Clean Air \(Wales\) Bill](#), could have implications as to how the Council performs certain local air quality management duties into the future. This may require future decision-making to consider the need for the

¹ Welsh Government, *Clean Air Plan for Wales: Healthy Air, Healthy Wales*, August 2020

reappraisal of priorities and/or resources as well as enhanced collaborative working arrangements.

- 4.13 In acknowledging future uncertainty, it is also accepted that, where possible, potential future opportunities should be explored as society adjusts to recent experiences in achieving possible local air quality gains. In addition, should circumstances allow, the Council will continue to support the continuity of its local air quality management reporting by working towards producing an air quality progress report in 2022.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The 2021 Air Quality Progress Report does not stipulate any actions or a course of conduct that would have equality and diversity implications per se. An Equality Impact Assessment is not necessary at this time.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 To discharge its statutory responsibilities, the Council will consult upon the 2021 Air Quality Progress Report with the public and other statutory consultees as prescribed by Schedule 11 of the Environmental Act 1995; including the Welsh Government who will peer review its findings.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 7.1 The 2021 Air Quality Progress Report does not inherently allocate resources for the progression of actions associated within AQAPs. Instead, it is expected that other funded agendas may appreciate an advantage in delivering various air quality improvement actions. Albeit this may inherently result in a certain degree of uncertainty as to the pace and scale of delivery.

- 7.2 The 2021 Air Quality Progress Report recommends continuing the current level of provision with regards local air quality monitoring and analysis. This is estimated to have a direct cost (not staff and on-costs) of approximately £23,000 per year which is met through existing resources. However, several significant pieces of monitoring equipment utilised by the Council have been in use for more than fifteen years and are approaching their end of life. The Council will quantify the capital requirements associated with replacing this equipment.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is under a legal obligation, in accordance with Section 82(1) of the Environment Act 1995 [the Act], to review local air quality within its area and make an assessment of likely compliance to the relevant statutory Air Quality Objectives as set in regulations.
- 8.2 To maintain consistency with statutory guidance² and the principles and working practices necessary to facilitate the goals of the Future Generations (Wales) Act

² Welsh Government, Local Air Quality Policy Guidance for Wales LAQM.PG(17)(W), 2017

2015, the 2021 Air Quality Progress Report has been compiled in accordance with the Welsh Government issued reporting template for local air quality management.

- 8.3 The Council is not yet under a legal obligation to achieve compliance to an Air Quality Objective or fully implement an Air Quality Action Plan immediately. However, the Council is required to demonstrate annually its progress towards compliance to an Air Quality Objective.
- 8.4 Under Section 85 of the Act, the Senedd may compel the Council to act in a certain way in regard to local air quality. Statutory guidance has clarified that such a direction will be issued to instruct the Council to undertake its local air quality management duties, including declaring, amending or revoking an Air Quality Management Area should Welsh Government feel it necessary to do so.
- 8.5 Local air quality management duties are an obligation derived from United Kingdom primary legislation in its own right.

9. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 9.1 Both mortality and morbidity factors associated with poor air quality have increased in precedence as understanding of the health impact of air quality has improved. This includes a greater appreciation of the accumulative impacts poor air quality can have on deprived communities affected by higher rates or poor health.
- 9.2 In regard to “People – Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone” within the Well-being Objectives Plan. Although not an identified action per se, local air quality management may directly bring about improved health outcomes for local communities. This will be achieved by improving the quality of air these communities may regularly experience, as well as addressing the perceptions of poor air quality and its effect on local amenity.
- 9.3 In regard to “Economy – Building a strong Economy” within the Well-being Objectives Plan. Many of the actions within the sixteen Air Quality Action Plans may incidentally support the efforts to achieve this Objective. For instance, measures to increase and support public transport and resultant community connectivity, can have a driving effect for local and regional economic development.
- 9.4 In addition, the adoption of the Council’s [Corporate Plan](#) emphasises air quality within the “Places – Where people are proud to live, work and play” as a relevant consideration when pursuing the stated aim of “Keeping the County Borough moving”. It also provides a number of potentially delivery options involving an emphasis on transport and active travel improvements.
- 9.5 Local air quality management statutory guidance now incorporates the principles and ways of working associated within the Well-being of Future Generations Act. By fully abiding by this guidance and utilising a method that acknowledges and promotes sustainable multi-agenda delivery, the 2021 Air Quality Progress Report furthers the Council delivery of WFG.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council has produced the “2021 Air Quality Progress Report” and will now publish its findings for public dissemination and comment.
- 10.2 The Council has identified that it is necessary, subject to the outcome of public consultation, to accept the assessment of local air quality and the review of actions, developments and policies, which may affect local air quality management.
- 10.3 To comply with statutory obligations and promote understanding of the situation, a comprehensive consultation will be undertaken. The responses received, including that from the Welsh Government, will inform any final decision and if necessary, this matter will be re-examined.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION

15th NOVEMBER 2021

REPORT OF DIRECTOR PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES

PUBLICATION OF THE 2021 AIR QUALITY PROGRESS REPORT

Officer to contact:

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