Wirral's Air Quality Strategy

2024-2028

Contents

Foreword

The quality of the air we breathe affects everyone. We want to ensure that our residents, workers, and visitors can breathe the cleanest air possible, and this strategy has been designed to communicate our vision for improving air quality in Wirral over the next four years.

Air quality in Wirral has improved significantly since the 1980's, however, there are no safe levels of exposure to air pollution. This first air quality strategy for Wirral has been produced following a successful local air quality conference at which all partners agreed that to improve local people's health and wellbeing we can, and should, go further to reduce air pollution. It also meets the new mandated requirement from Government that all local authorities must now have an air quality strategy for their area.

We know there are inequalities within the borough for health outcomes and that air quality is poorest in areas that have the highest density of population, which are also our areas of highest deprivation. Reducing emission of air pollution and reducing exposure to it, will help to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities in our borough.

This strategy covers the whole borough and outlines our collective approach to improving air quality in Wirral. It highlights the excellent work we are already doing locally to improve air quality in Wirral but also focuses on the key actions we need to collectively take to drive further improvements. The strategy focuses on improving outdoor air quality and also importantly improving the quality of the air indoors within people's homes, schools, and workplaces.

As the Chair of the Environment, Climate and Transport Committee, the Director of Public Health and the Director of Neighbourhoods, we are proud to present this strategy, which has been produced with input from a wide range of stakeholders, and members of the public, to ensure that it represents what is important to our community. It will help us to focus on, and deliver, the actions required, both by the council and by working with partners and stakeholders, to continue to make improvements to our air quality.

Dave Bradburn
Director of Public Health

Councillor Elizabeth Grey
Chair of Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee

Jason Gooding
Director of Neighbourhoods

Introduction

We can and must go further and faster to minimise the impact of air pollution on our health and the local environment.

Why is air pollution an issue?

Air pollution is the greatest environmental threat to health, and it was the focus of the 2022 Chief Medical Officer's Report. Air pollution can have negative effects on health throughout our lives, from pre-birth to old age. Short term exposure can make respiratory conditions such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease worse. Long-term exposure can cause respiratory and cardiovascular disease, cancer, depression, dementia, diabetes, and can affect foetal development.

Deaths in England linked to air pollution are estimated to be between 26,000 and 38,000 each year. Although air pollution can be harmful to everyone, the most susceptible to the effects of air pollution are typically the young, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions. It particularly affects people living in more densely populated and polluted areas that are often areas of higher deprivation, which can widen health inequalities.

Government policies, alongside research and guidance from organisations such as the World Health Organisation, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and the Chief Medical Officer for England, tell us that there are no safe levels for exposure to air pollution and global and national exposure threshold target levels are being reduced to reflect this. We can and must go further and faster to minimise the impact of air pollution on our health and the local environment.

The World Health Organisation has updated their health-based air quality guideline concentrations, due to a much stronger body of evidence showing how air pollution affects health at lower concentrations. The Government has set legal limits, known as air quality objectives, for air pollution; new lower objective levels have recently been introduced for particulate matter. Local authorities (LAs) in England have duties regarding local air quality management and must regularly review and assess air quality to determine whether objectives are likely to be achieved. As part of these duties all LAs in England are now required to produce an air quality strategy.

As improvements in outdoor air pollution levels occur, indoor air pollution is becoming an increasing proportion of the problem. We spend most of our time indoors, whether we are at work, studying or enjoying leisure activities but we have little control over the air pollution we are exposed to in these settings. Indoor pollution has not been as well studied as outdoor pollution and this should now be a local and national priority, with focus on the reduction of emissions of health harming pollutants indoors.

Air quality and health: vulnerable communities: health inequalities

To inform the development of this strategy, the Wirral Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on Air Quality was recently updated and recognised that individuals most susceptible to negative health impacts of air pollution exposure are likely to be among the most vulnerable people in society, in some cases with limited power to alter social circumstances or individual-level risk. Taking measures to improve air quality will have positive health benefits, helping to reduce health inequalities across the borough.

Air quality and climate change

Air quality and climate change are inextricably related. Many common air pollutants are also greenhouse gases and therefore reducing air pollution will lessen the warming effect on our climate. Poor air quality and climate change have a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of both humans and the natural environment. This strategy aligns with local and regional actions being taken to address the ecological and climate crisis that we face, by helping to cut climate damaging air pollution locally, in line with global targets. The strategy will sit alongside Wirral's environment and climate emergency plan and strengthen the response without duplicating actions.

Why develop a strategy?

Air quality in Wirral has improved significantly since the 1980's and key pollutants currently do not exceed legal limits. However, there are no safe levels of exposure to air pollution reducing emission of air pollution and reducing exposure air of poor quality will help to improve the health and wellbeing of people locally. We also know air quality is poorest in areas that have the highest density of population, which are also our areas of highest deprivation. Improving air quality in these areas will therefore help reduce health inequalities in our borough. It is our vision that all people in Wirral to be able to breathe the cleanest air possible and we have developed this strategy by collaborating with stakeholders across Wirral and local people to ensure that it meets and addresses local needs.

We know that not all air pollution in Wirral is generated in Wirral, as pollutants can travel long distances and combine with each other to create different pollutants. We will continue to work with regional and national government to tackle these emissions on a wider scale. Liverpool City Region has an Air Quality Action Plan (December 2020) and central government has produced an updated Air Quality Strategy Framework for Local Authority Delivery (2023). We also need to ensure that our actions to reduce air pollution in our borough do not result in unintended negative consequences.

The implementation of this strategy will support the vision of the Wirral Plan 2021-2026, and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 which focus on making the borough a more equitable and fairer place to live, work, and visit, reducing inequalities across Wirral.

The strategic goals of the Wirral Plan are:

- Sustainable Environment;
- Brighter Futures;
- Inclusive Economy;
- Safe and Pleasant Communities;
- Active and Healthy Lives.

We want to use this opportunity to outline the significant work that is already being undertaken across the council and by local partners with positive impacts on air quality. We will highlight how we can build on this partnership working, and we have identified five areas for future collective action.

This strategy:

- States our vision and our mission for Wirral including the priority areas for action we have identified.
- Describes the current position regarding air quality in Wirral.
- Details the long-term vision for each priority area, including the work we have done and the work we will do, to action these priorities.

Our Vision

We want all people in Wirral to be able to breathe the cleanest air possible.

Our Mission

We will turn this vision into a reality by focusing on the key priorities, which will make the biggest difference in reducing emissions and helping to protect the health and wellbeing of our residents, workers, and visitors, and to reduce health inequalities.

Our Priorities

Reduce emissions from transport

Improve indoor air quality

Reduce the impact from housing development and regeneration

Reduce domestic, commercial, industrial and agricultural emissions

Raise public awareness and encourage behaviour change

Where we are now

63
monitoring sites for Nitrogen Dioxide

7
monitoring locations for particulate matter

0
exceedances of the legal limits for air pollution and air quality management areas

97%
of residents are less than 400m from public transport links (ONS data)

Local Plan
minimum of 13,360 net additional dwellings

4.9%
of deaths attributed to air pollution in Wirral. England average is **5.5%**, the Northwest average is **5.3%**

No change
in particulate levels for 5 years

No change
in significant effects concluded by air quality modelling on local regeneration schemes

8 category A1
54 category A2 and B
industrial processes permitted to operate in Wirral

10%
increase in pedestrian activity in 2022-23 compared to 2021-22

53
schools have achieved the **Eco-schools green flag**

10
schools achieved **Modeshift STARS accreditation**, a national award scheme for schools

Priorities

Reduce emissions from transport

- Develop the Road Safety Plan
- Develop electric vehicle infrastructure
- Council Green Fleet Strategy and Sustainable Procurement Strategy
- Tackle vehicle engine idling
- Increase active travel
- Embed sustainable travel into regeneration
- Opportunities for new transport technology

Improve indoor air quality

- Raise awareness of indoor air pollution
- Include advice on ventilation in energy efficiency information
- Identify and engage with vulnerable populations and the hard to reach
- Link the risk posed by adverse weather and its contribution to indoor air pollution
- Opportunities to influence planning and development
- Seek partnership opportunties to embed key messages

Reduce the impact from housing development and regeneration

- Seek opportunities to influence planning and development
- Support the development of green infrastructure
- Parking standards in sustainable locations
- Electric Vehicle Standards in Building Regulations
- Reduce emissions from non-road mobile machinery

Reduce domestic, commercial, industrial and agricultural emissions

- Permitted industrial and commercial processes including surveillance, updating permits and information sharing
- Raise awareness about the harms of burning fuels and associated health impacts
- Reduce burning waste on allotments
- Extend smoke control areas
- Engage with the farming industry

Raise public awareness and encourage behaviour change

- Co-ordinated Communications Plan
- Digital platforms for information, advice, and interaction with communities
- Use enhanced data and monitoring to inform the public and assess effectiveness of interventions and behaviour change

Reduce emissions from transport

The 2022 Chief Medical Officer's Report states that "Road vehicles have been sources of some of the most important air pollutants, especially $PM_{2.5}$ and NO_2, which are of health concern, particularly in urban areas where there is large population exposure."

Road transportation is one of the main sources of pollution in Wirral. Data shows that across the Liverpool City Region, emissions from transport account for approximately 30% of Nitrogen Oxides (NOX) and particulate matter (PM_{10}) emissions. Wirral's transport system therefore has an impact on our communities' health, because of exposure to emissions. This can also impact our economy, by harming productivity and increasing costs to society through medical and social care. Older people, children, those with pre-existing health conditions, and those on lower incomes are most likely to be affected by the problems associated with poor air quality from vehicle emissions. Car use and public transport are part of our daily routine. Moving to public transport and encouraging those that can, to actively travel will provide wide benefits to both air quality and health.

There have been considerable reductions in road vehicle emissions, as more stringent regulations on Euro engineering standards for road vehicles have been introduced, and as electric and hydrogen vehicles, with zero exhaust pipe emission are more commonly used. Newer technologies, such as regenerative braking, will further reduce particulate emission linked to brake wear. Non-exhaust emissions linked to tyre and road wear will however continue, meaning that they will become a larger proportion of road transport emissions, as exhaust emissions continue to reduce. Investment by Central Government, into research on how these emissions can be prevented or reduced is ongoing.

Activities around ports, including shipping movement and the movement of vehicles to and from the ports, can also impact on the air pollution levels in Wirral. However, we will engage in partnership working with the ports, neighbouring local authorities, and other external stakeholders to improve air quality through our respective strategies, as this is the key to the success of reducing vehicle emissions. Actions will align with the Liverpool City Region five-year Climate Action Plan, which seeks to deliver outcomes including last mile zero emissions deliveries and reduced trips. This strategy will align with the emerging Liverpool City Region Fourth Local Transport Plan, to ensure there is a consistent approach, which reduces the need to travel, reduces reliance on the use of private vehicles, and more specifically, reduces the use of vehicles for short journeys.

What we are already doing...

- ✔ Targeting action to reduce particulate matter emissions from road traffic.
- ✔ Developing an Electric Vehicle Strategy to promote the use of electric vehicles and other low emission technology for both commercial and domestic use and help the council to further develop the charging network.
- ✔ Targeting engagement, through the Mind Your Business Project, to improve economical driving styles that reduce emissions.
- ✔ Encouraging a modal shift to active travel, through the active travel strategy.
- ✔ Providing advice to support individuals and businesses to switch to less polluting vehicles, when a vehicle is still required.
- ✔ Working with transport providers to improve emissions standards of public transport across the borough, including a review of our own fleet and the roll out of electric trains across the Liverpool City Region.
- ✔ Encouraging a modal shift towards more sustainable forms of transport, including the installation of electric vehicle charging points.
- ✔ Applying for and accepting suitable grant funding to aide improvement of our networks.
- ✔ Ensuring regular exchanges of information between relevant departments and stakeholders relating to air quality information and traffic information, for any changes on the road network.
- ✔ Checking to ensure that licensed vehicles operating in Wirral comply with emissions standards.
- ✔ Protecting existing trees and incorporating new planting along transport routes through the delivery of the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy.
- ✔ Developing a parking strategy which will help to manage traffic (particularly through main centres)
- ✔ Installing sensors to monitor active travel within the borough.
- ✔ Providing active travel routes that are safe and convenient which are separated from motor vehicles.

What we will do next...

Develop the Wirral Road Safety Plan to further improve road safety in Wirral, creating safer and vibrant communities so more people choose to walk and cycle.

Explore the opportunities from real time outdoor air quality monitoring and data capture to help inform measures to reduce exposure to pollutants.

Develop Wirral Council Green Fleet Strategy and Sustainable Procurement Strategy.

Work with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to explore opportunities for further funding to support electric charging infrastructure across the borough.

Tackle vehicle idling using anti-idling campaigns and enforcement, where appropriate.

Develop an Active Travel Strategy to set out an implementation plan of active travel routes for the borough.

Embed sustainable transport into the regeneration programme of the borough to reduce car dependency and enable increased numbers of journeys to be carried out using public transport and active travel modes.

Investigate opportunities with partner organisations regarding the use of hydrogen technology within transport.

"Air Quality is so important to me, because if the air's not good now, it will be so bad in the future and make us all so unhealthy."

Primary School Child during
School Clean Air Day Conference 2023

Case Study: Spotlight on Schools

Children are one of the most vulnerable groups to the effects of air pollution. The Chief Medical Officer states that local authorities are central in the response to air pollution. His report recommends supporting reducing air pollution concentrations locally, particularly near schools and healthcare settings and that shifting to active travel where possible has direct health wins as well as reducing air pollution from vehicles.

In supporting schools to improve the air quality around their settings, we have:

- ✔ Recruited an active travel officer to roll out Modeshift STARS accreditation to target schools.
- ✔ Continued to provide road safety and active travel support to all schools to assist with a reduction in parked cars and an increase in walking, scooting and cycling.
- ✔ Delivered 6 School Street pilots across the Wirral, 3 of which were made permanent in May 2023. The remaining ones are undergoing monitoring, in line with the timeframe for the experimental traffic regulation order.
- ✔ Continued to provide school crossing patrols, to enable people to choose active travel modes on their journey to and from school.
- ✔ Continued to facilitate and co-ordinate the bikeability programme.
- ✔ Provided additional bike storage to facilitate active travel.
- ✔ Delivered an air quality project for schools, where they were challenged to develop a low-cost project to increase active travel to school and reduce local air pollution.
- ✔ Launched the junior travel ambassador programme, which promotes active travel.
- ✔ Worked with charities such as Sustrans, Living Streets and Asthma and Lung UK to help schools promote and increase active travel.

Improve indoor air quality

Health inequalities associated with air pollution do not stop at the entrance to our indoor environments. The Chief Medical Officer's Report 2022 focuses national attention to understanding and mitigating the risk from indoor air pollutants.

The World Health Organisation estimated in 2013 that active urban Europeans spend 85-90% of time indoors and those people most vulnerable to impacts of air pollution spend a larger proportion of their time indoors. Significant steps to reduce human exposure to outdoor air pollution since the 1980's, has meant research and understanding on indoor air quality has not kept pace.

Pollutants can be generated inside the home through tobacco smoke, burning of fuels in open fires or log burners, burning candles and unvented gas appliances or combustion equipment. In addition to these sources, chemicals are released from many household products, such as cleaning products and air fresheners. Textiles in the home and building materials can also release pollutants over long periods. Inadequate ventilation can compound this by allowing a build-up of pollutants in the indoor air. Poor ventilation can also be a cause of damp and mould, which further impacts indoor air quality. Outdoor air pollutants also move into indoor spaces, through air exchange, affecting indoor pollution levels.

Children have little choice about which school classrooms they attend, and people tend to live in the same dwelling or operate in the same workplaces for considerable amounts of their lives. Even the vehicles we use pose harm to health from exposure to pollution, while we use them for the daily commute.

Better understanding within communities is key to responding to indoor air pollution. Raising awareness regarding the health harms posed by indoor air pollution, is key to reducing the impacts of exposure.

What we are already doing...

- ✔ Delivering an Air Quality project over a 2-year period, focusing on emissions from domestic burning, funded by a government grant.
- ✔ Developing a targeted communications campaign to raise awareness of impacts from domestic fuel burning.
- ✔ Raising housing standards in the private rented sector, including houses in multiple occupation, to reduce health harms, particularly in the Selective Licensing Areas on the eastern side of the borough.
- ✔ Working with homeowners, tenants, social landlords and housing associations to tackle damp and mould issues when reported.
- ✔ Delivering an information campaign with landlords to raise awareness of damp and mould and how to deal with problems.
- ✔ Supporting households to undertake home energy efficiency works, using grant funding, alongside the installation of ventilation improvements where required.

What we will do next...

Join up the existing awareness raising activities under a co-ordinated communications strategy and delivery plan to raise awareness of air pollution across Wirral.

Ensure the advice provision for home energy efficiency particularly for those households not eligible for grants, includes advice on ventilation, so that if thermal insulation and air tightness is improved, it is not to the detriment of the building's ventilation.

Seek collaboration opportunities in partnership with public, private, and third sector organisations to embed key messages and promote indoor air quality actions to enhance our reach, in line with NICE guidance.

Work with the health system and wider partners to identify vulnerable populations most exposed to indoor air pollution and engage with them.

Provide training and development opportunities that enhance delivery of key messages to target vulnerable people most exposed to indoor air pollution harms.

Explore the opportunities from indoor air quality monitoring and data capture to help inform public messaging and understanding.

Link the risk posed by adverse weather (heatwaves) and its contribution to indoor air pollution.

Explore opportunities to influence planning and development to improve indoor air quality.

Reduce the impact from housing development and regeneration

Housing developments and area-based regeneration have the potential to bring new or increased sources of localised air pollution into an area, for example, through increases in vehicle activity, changes in vehicle access and pollutants generated through heating the homes. Equally, new developments can introduce newer, cleaner technologies, rather than reliance on older more polluting technologies. The Council is leading by example in the construction of its new buildings in Birkenhead. The buildings meets the 'Excellent' (Best Practice) category of the sustainability assessment method used to masterplan projects, infrastructure, and buildings by the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology (BREEAM).

Land use planning can have a critical role in air quality, as it can provide more sustainable transport links e.g. between the home, workplaces, educational, retail, and leisure facilities. Planning can also support people to move to active travel where possible, reducing the reliance on motor vehicles, which can reduce air pollution levels, providing a better living environment. The reduction in the use of motor vehicles also has wider health advantages, as those choosing to walk, wheel or cycle, will increase their activity levels, directly benefiting their health. Control of building processes during both demolition and construction activities can reduce air pollution, for example by applying dust management controls to reduce the release of particulates and dust.

The Wirral Local Plan 2021-2037 submission draft, expected in 2024, sets out a vision for how Wirral will change as a place from its adoption. The Plan focuses on developing mainly brownfield sites within the urban area, with higher density development supported where it is closer to public transport hubs and existing centres. Air pollution particularly affects people living in more densely populated and polluted areas, which are often areas of higher deprivation. Developments in populated areas, therefore, have the potential to widen health inequalities. These developments are required to meet the needs of the current and future population in Wirral. We are committed to taking actions to reduce as far as possible, the impact of these developments on air quality, particularly in areas that already have more pollution, to prevent increases in health inequalities across the borough. Air quality clauses within Local Plan policies are included to adequately address any air quality issues arising from development or neighbouring uses. Improving air quality reinforces the need for supporting policies including active travel to reduce the impact of traffic flows on local communities.

What we are already doing...

- ✔ Assessing potential impacts on air quality from transport arising from the implementation of the Local Plan by commissioning a borough wide air quality modelling exercise.
- ✔ Ensuring that the impact on air quality is considered during the planning process.
- ✔ Ensuring suitable Environmental and Health Impact Assessments are undertaken to accurately assess the impact relevant proposed developments will have on local air quality.
- ✔ Retaining and protecting existing trees in new developments and ensure adequate replacement where tree loss is unavoidable.
- ✔ Applying relevant guidance to the planning process, to reduce odour and dust from demolition and construction activities during development and regeneration work.
- ✔ Supporting the development of heat networks and require new development to connect to existing networks.
- ✔ Locating development to maximise access by a choice of transport mode.
- ✔ Ensuring extensive tree planting strategies are incorporated in new development.
- ✔ Incorporating inclusion of electric vehicle charging points in major developments where appropriate.

What we will do next...

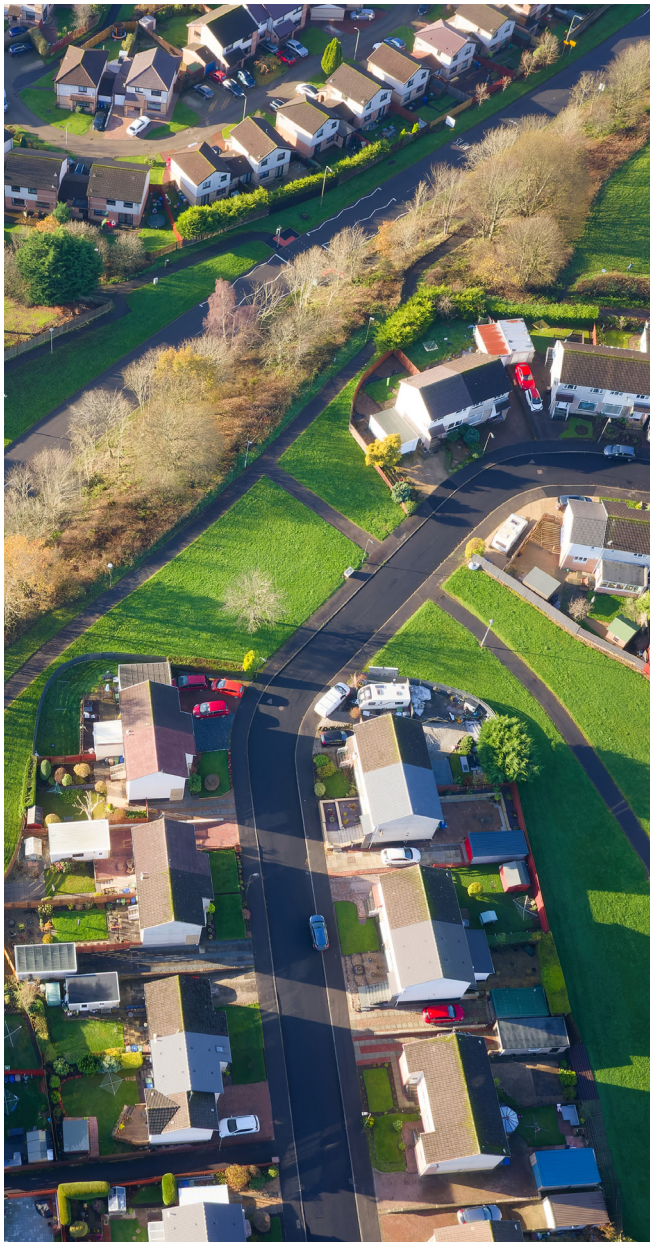
Explore opportunities to influence planning and development, by developing supplementary planning guidance incorporating best practice guidance focused on air quality (and sustainable development).

Explore opportunities to support the development of green infrastructure, considering sensitive locations such as nurseries, schools, GP surgeries, and hospitals.

Encourage flexible and innovative approaches to parking standards in sustainable locations.

Reinforce Electric Vehicle Standards in Building Regulations.

Investigate opportunities for reducing emissions from non-road mobile machinery.



Reduce domestic, commercial, industrial and agricultural emissions

Domestic wood-burning stoves and fireplaces have become popular in recent years and domestic burning accounted for 25% of the UK's total primary $PM_{2.5}$ emissions in 2020, with wood alone accounting for 17% of primary $PM_{2.5}$ emissions in 2020. Nationally, regulations have been introduced to restrict the sale of wet wood for domestic burning, limit the emission of sulphur and smoke from manufactured solid fuels, and phase out the sale of coal. Action is needed locally to tackle these emissions by raising awareness about safe burning practices, and using enforcement powers, when necessary, to reduce pollution from domestic sources. As well as impacting outdoor air quality, domestic burning can also impact on our indoor air quality.

The industrial sector is diverse, and there are numerous air pollutants, with potential impacts on health, linked to industrial activities. Nationally, there have been significant improvements to emission levels linked to industry. These improvements have been supported by regulations, which have encouraged a move to processes that generate fewer emissions or that have implemented best available techniques to reduce or remove pollutants before they are released. Changes to how electricity is generated has also reduced emission levels nationally, as more electricity is generated using renewable sources, such as wind and solar. These changes to UK industrial activity and the electricity generation means less pollution is released into the air.

Despite these national improvements, there is still a need for local action to ensure that pollutants emitted by Wirral based industry are controlled. Complex and large-scale processes are permitted by the Environment Agency and less complex, often smaller processes are usually permitted by the local authority, who have duties to regulate and inspect installations in line with permits and current guidance, ensuring all 'Part A2' and 'Part B' installations are compliant with the conditions of their permit.

Ammonia is a gas that reacts with other chemicals to form particulate matter. It can also have direct impacts on biodiversity (e.g. by acidifying soil). Emissions of ammonia have been steadily rising over recent years and agricultural activity is the main source of ammonia emission in the United Kingdom. Nationally, central government is taking action to tackle these emissions by consulting on issues such as bringing dairy and intensive beef farms within scope of environmental permitting regulations; consulting on new rules to reduce ammonia emissions from organic manure; and continuing funding to invest in slurry storage infrastructure to reduce ammonia emissions. Action, in the form of engagement, is needed at a local level to support the reduction of emissions.

What we are already doing...

- ✔ Regulating and inspecting installations in line with permits and current DEFRA LA-PPC / LA-IPPC guidance, ensuring all 'Part A2' and 'Part B' installations, which are regulated by the council are compliant with the conditions of their permit.
- ✔ Working closely with the Environment Agency, where any 'Part A1' installation is likely to detrimentally affect air quality.
- ✔ Providing advice on the control of air polluting emissions ensure that all relevant legislation is enforced for the control of emissions from industrial sources through inspection.
- ✔ Increasing officer capacity to facilitate the timely processing of applications and the routine inspection of facilities, undertaking enforcement where required.
- ✔ Providing advice on the control of air polluting emissions, ensuring that all relevant legislation is enforced for the control of emissions from domestic sources.
- ✔ Regularly updating and reminding allotment tenants to ensure bonfires are only used when necessary and providing advice on what should, and should not, be burned.

What we will do next...

Increase surveillance activity to support identification of unauthorised processes.

Review current permits in-line with new process "Best Available Techniques" and guidance notes that are currently being updated and released by DEFRA.

Review inter-departmental sharing of information regarding new process and change of use, to ensure robust systems are in place.

Investigate opportunities to raise awareness about the harms of burning fuels.

Raise awareness of health impacts from burning waste on allotments and investigate the potential for removing / reducing associated emissions.

Review the appropriateness of existing smoke control areas, with the intention of extending them borough wide.

Engage with farmers to encourage them to follow the Code of Good Agricultural Practice for Reducing Ammonia Emissions produced by DEFRA in collaboration with the farming industry.

Raise public awareness and encourage behaviour change

Wirral's air pollution levels are historically below the national averages and have not required Air Quality Management Areas to be formally established to control excessive levels of pollution. Due to Wirral's past performance in not breaching national emissions thresholds, the air quality debate has not been an urgently discussed priority amongst partners and stakeholders or with communities across the peninsula. Through this strategy, we are provided with new opportunities to increase awareness and encourage behaviour change.

Raising public awareness of both indoor and outdoor air pollution, using available guidance on community engagement and behaviour change, and targeting the most vulnerable groups will be key to improving health outcomes. Ensuring healthcare professionals are aware that information on air quality is available, what it means for patients and what actions are recommended, will also play an important role.

We will aim to use data to enhance, inform and guide discussions and engagement strategies to promote action to improve air quality.

The aim of this strategy is to renew the conversation around air quality with communities. We want to shift from a targeted and focused approach, which engaged small cohorts of people, to a broader borough wide conversation. We want the health and wellbeing benefits to be better understood by individuals to better inform choices, behaviours, and habits in everyday life. To help realise this ambition, we will promote the trusted expert voices from across the local health and care system in Wirral, to engage communities and help describe the added value to our health that action can bring.

Following on from Wirral declaring an environment and climate emergency on 15th July 2019, and connected to the increasing partnership working to tackle climate change challenges, we will aim to escalate the air quality conversation with all sectors and communities. We aim to raise awareness, promote positive change, and bring consensus across communities as we reduce air pollution levels even further than they currently are. As the Chief Medical Officer states in his report from 2022, once a change is made it can be self-sustaining and we can all reap the health benefits into the future.

What we are already doing...

- ✔ Employing an Air Quality project officer to drive and deliver awareness campaign on domestic burning to encourage behaviour change.
- ✔ Delivering a partnership workshop in summer 2023 bringing together public, private and third sector partners to help shape Wirral's Air Quality Strategy.
- ✔ Promoting Clean Air Day across Wirral annually.
- ✔ Implementing an Active Travel strategy and a road safety plan.
- ✔ Planning and implementing annual offers for eco schools and facilitating an eco-council.
- ✔ Delivering a multi-agency school project, to increase active travel and reduce local air pollution, including hosting an eco-schools conference to share the ideas.
- ✔ Partnership working to support external initiatives and identifying funding opportunities.
- ✔ Promoting the value of trees and their contribution to air quality improvement through the delivery of the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy community engagement policy and action plan.

What we will do next...

Obtain local insights from residents and relevant stakeholders, and investigate existing research, to identify best practice for communication methods.

Link to relevant Wirral strategies and develop a specific co-ordinated communications strategy and Implementation Plan for air quality.

Work with partners to develop digital platforms for air quality information, advice, and interaction with communities.

Link in new digital solutions with existing active travel apps.

Use enhanced data and monitoring to inform the public on the journey to better air quality.

Demonstrate through data and monitoring the effectiveness of interventions and behaviour change for better air quality.

How we will deliver the strategy

Implementation

This strategy sets out our collective approach to ensuring we have good air quality in Wirral. The strategy outlines what we aim to achieve and where we will focus our efforts for the next four years. In order to drive delivery against the agreed priorities we will develop a more detailed strategy implementation plan that sets out priority activities, key milestones, and outcome metrics. The implementation plan will be developed in partnership and will be owned by the Wirral Air Quality Steering Group. We will not duplicate existing work programmes but look to co-ordinate activity in order to drive improvements to air quality locally.

Governance

Delivery of this strategy will be overseen by the Wirral Air Quality Steering Group, which has representatives from numerous departments across the council, including Environmental Health, Public Health, Highways and Infrastructure, Transport infrastructure, Transport management, Licensing and Forward Planning, and strong links to NHS and wider local partners key to strategy delivery.

Annual updates on progress in delivering the strategy will be presented to the Environment, Climate and Transport Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board. Progress will also be reported within the Annual Air Quality Status Report, which is approved by DEFRA and published on the Wirral Council website.

Air Pollution Monitoring

The three main pollutants currently being monitored in Wirral are Nitrogen Dioxide, Particulate Matter 2.5 and Particulate Matter 10. We will continue to monitor and report on the air pollution levels across the borough and highlight any improvements made.

As part of the delivery of this strategy and evidencing the impact of our local work we will explore opportunities for increasing air quality monitoring across the borough, particularly real time monitoring. This will be focused upon better understanding inequalities in exposure to poor air quality within the borough and ensuring improvements in air quality locally reduce such inequalities. We are also working in partnership with Liverpool John Moores University to undertake additional monitoring and research on indoor air quality focusing on protecting the health of children and local people most vulnerable to the impacts of poor air quality.

Further details regarding the current monitoring locations in Wirral and the results of this monitoring can be found with the Annual Air Quality Status Report report, which is published on the Air Quality page of the council's website.

Taking a collaborative approach

Delivery of this strategy will be overseen by the Council's Air Quality Steering Group.

This steering group will work and engage with wider partners e.g. the NHS through sustainability plans, Chamber of Commerce, Schools, and the Community, Voluntary and Faith Sector.

Partnership working

Air quality is impacted by the work of all partners across Wirral as a place, as well as by the decisions and actions made by our local communities on a day-to-day basis. Within the Council alone, across numerous departments there are many strategies and initiatives that impact on air quality locally. This is before we consider the important role local NHS partners, businesses, the community, voluntary and faith sector and our local residents can also play. Bringing this work together, in a whole borough strategy delivered via a partnership approach, will enable us to focus on delivery of our collectively agreed priorities and maximise opportunities to drive improvements locally.

No one agency can deliver improvements to air quality in Wirral. A wide partnership approach is critical for the delivery of this strategy.

The wider partners who will be engaged in the delivery of this strategy are numerous and include

Working alongside other strategies

National

The Clean Air Strategy 2023

DEFRA Local Air Quality Management Policy Guidance 2022

Land Use, Planning and Development Control Guidance 2017

Regional

Liverpool City Region Air Quality Action Plan December 2020

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Plan 2019

Liverpool City Region Local Transport Plan (consultation in progress for updated plan 4)

Liverpool City Region Road Safety Strategy 2022

Liverpool City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Plan 2022/23-26/27

Liverpool City Region Five Year Climate Action Plan 2023-2028

Combined Authority Transport Plan (CATP) 2019

Liverpool City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 2022/2023-2026/2027

Liverpool City Region Transport Policy 4 submission draft 2023-2040

Local

Cool 2 Climate Change Strategy 2019

Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan

Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022

Active Travel Strategy (in development)

Health Protection Strategy 2023-2027

The Local Plan submission draft 2021-2027

Biodiversity Strategy (in development)

Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy 2020-30

Wirral Community Safety Strategy 2021-26

Wirral Plan 2021-26

Electric Vehicle Strategy (in development)

Further reading

Chief Medical Officers Annual Report 2022. Air Quality
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1124738/chief-medical-officers-annual-report-air-pollution-dec-2022.pdf

DEFRA Air quality appraisal: damage cost guidance, January 2023
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assess-the-impact-of-air-quality/air-quality-appraisal-damage-cost-guidance

Wirral Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on Air Quality 2022
https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/media/3688/air-quality-jsna-final-version-november-2022.pdf

National Air Quality Strategy 2019
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-air-strategy-2019

The Wirral Plan
https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/media/3634/wirral_plan_refresh-2022.pdf

Liverpool City Region Preliminary Air Quality Options Study 2019
(Unpublished AECOM, Merseytravel document)

WHO review of evidence on health aspects of air pollution
https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/341712

Local Air Quality Management Policy Guidance (PG22)
https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/LAQM-Policy-Guidance-2022.pdf

Air Quality Strategy Framework for Local Authorities
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-air-quality-strategy-for-england/air-quality-strategy-framework-for-local-authority-delivery

WHO Global Air Quality Guidelines
https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240034228

Health Matters: air pollution
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-air-pollution/health-matters-air-pollution#:~:text=Currently%2C%20there%20is%20no%20clear,to%20bring%20additional%20health%20benefits

Code of Good Agricultural Practice for Reducing Ammonia Emissions
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-good-agricultural-practice-for-reducing-ammonia-emissions/code-of-good-agricultural-practice-cogap-for-reducing-ammonia-emissions

Local Authority Pollution Control: General Guidance Manual
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-pollution-control-general-guidance-manual


WIRRAL