

**REPORT TO:** Environment and Urban Renewal PPB

**DATE:** 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Director of Public Health

**PORTFOLIO:** Environment and Urban Renewal and Health and Wellbeing

**SUBJECT:** Revocation of Halton's Air Quality Management Areas in Widnes Town Centre

**WARD(S)** Appleton and Central & West Bank

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to update members on proposals to revoke the current Air Quality Management Areas in Widnes town centre

2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That Members are invited to comment on the proposal to revoke the air quality management areas in Widnes and approve the proposal to proceed with a public consultation.**

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to regularly review and assess air quality in their area. Where air quality is found to exceed legal standards local authorities are under an obligation to introduce Air Quality Management Areas and publish an action plan to improve and safeguard air quality.

3.2 Halton's Air Quality Management Areas were originally declared in 2011 when routine monitoring identified exceedances of the limits for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>). The cause of the exceedances was considered to be emissions from road vehicles as a result of congestion within the town centre of Widnes. Since 2011 there have been notable improvements in traffic flows through the town centre as a result of the Mersey Gateway Bridge which opened in October 2017 and the reopening of the Silver Jubilee Bridge in February 2021. Further actions included changes to the sequencing of traffic lights to reduce congestion. Improvements in vehicle emission technology will also have contributed to the reduced levels. Maps showing the location of the two Air quality Management Areas are included as Appendix 1 to this report. Area 1 includes Parts of Deacon Road, Albert Road and Peel House Lane. Area 2 includes parts of Gerard Street and Milton Road.

3.3 The principal source of Nitrogen Dioxide is the burning of fossil fuels with road traffic accounting for the majority of emissions. Short-term exposure to concentrations of NO<sub>2</sub> can cause inflammation of the airways and increase susceptibility to respiratory infections and to allergens. NO<sub>2</sub> can exacerbate the symptoms of those already suffering from lung or heart conditions.

The Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010 require that the annual mean concentration of NO<sub>2</sub> must not exceed 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup> and that there should be no more than 18 exceedances of the hourly mean limit value (concentrations above 200 µg/m<sup>3</sup>) in a single year

3.4 Air quality is monitored within the air quality management area by two fixed automatic sites at Marzahn Way and Milton Road. Further monitoring of air quality across the borough is carried out at 13 non-automatic sites which include sites within the current air quality management areas.

Monitoring at the non automatic sites is undertaken by use of diffusion tubes fixed to lamp posts or street furniture. The diffusion tubes can easily be moved enabling monitoring to be undertaken anywhere in the borough.

3.5 Table 1 demonstrates the improvement in air quality between 2011 and to date while table 2 demonstrates the sustained improvement in air quality over the last 5 years.

**Table 1 Air Quality Management Areas NO<sub>2</sub> Levels at time of deceleration**

AQMA Name	Date of Declaration	Pollutants and Air Quality Objectives	Site Description	Level of NO <sub>2</sub> : Declaration	NO <sub>2</sub> : Current Year
Marzahn Way (WidnesNo 1)	01/03/2011	NO <sub>2</sub> Annual Mean	Roadside Residential Properties	49	27
Milton Road (WidnesNo2)	01/03/2011	NO <sub>2</sub> Annual Mean	Roadside Residential Properties	49	31

**Limit = 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup>**

**Table 2 Air Quality Management areas Diffusion tube data last 5 years**

Diffusion Tube ID	X OS Grid Ref (Easting)	Site Type	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
4	Milton Road	Road side	37.0	35.0	31.3	25.1	30.1
5	Milton Road	Road side	38.0	35.0	32.5	26.2	32.5
6	Milton Road	Road side	32.0	32.0	26.4	23.7	29.5
9	Peel House Lane	Road side	33.0	33.0	30.0	23.8	26.2
10	Peel House Lane	Kerbside	39.0	38.0	37.5	30.9	34.8
12	Deacon Road	Road side	32.0	30.0	27.2	21.2	23.8
13	Deacon Road	Road side	33.0	28.0	28.1	22.0	24.8

**Limit = 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup>**

- 3.6 Local authorities are under an obligation to produce an annual Air Quality Status Report setting out its approach to ensuring and monitoring air quality and the results of this monitoring. The latest Annual Air Quality Status report is available on the council's website. This report must be submitted to DEFRA each year for approval. This year's annual report sets out the proposal to revoke the air quality management areas. The latest report has been duly approved by DEFRA.

The report is available to the public at <https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/planning/air-and-land-pollution.aspx>

#### 4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Given the improvements in air quality it is proposed to revoke the air quality management areas as there are no further outstanding actions required to reduce emissions in those areas. Monitoring in those areas will however continue.
- 4.2 The original decision to implement the air quality management areas was taken by Executive Board. It is therefore considered appropriate to seek Executive Board approval for the revocation.

4.3 There is no formal statutory consultation process to revoke the air quality management areas however government guidance suggests public consultation is good practice. The Government must also be notified once the areas are revoked.

4.4 It is proposed to hold a 4 week public consultation beginning at the start of March 2023. The public will be invited to submit comments to a dedicated air quality mailbox. Information on air quality in the borough and the rationale for revoking the air quality management areas will be made available on the council website. The consultation will be publicised via all available media channels.

4.5 It is proposed to bring a further report to the Environment and Urban Renewal PPB with the outcome of the public consultation. At this point, and depending on the outcome of the consultation exercise, the PPB Board will be invited to recommend to Executive Board that the air quality management areas are revoked but that monitoring will continue in those areas.

## 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report

## 6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### 6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

None

### 6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None

### 6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Air quality within the air quality management areas has improved and is now within UK legal limits.

### 6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None

### 6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None

## 7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Although it is proposed to revoke the air quality management areas

monitoring of air quality will continue in those areas to ensure air quality remains within legal limits. There are therefore no significant risks from this proposal.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None.

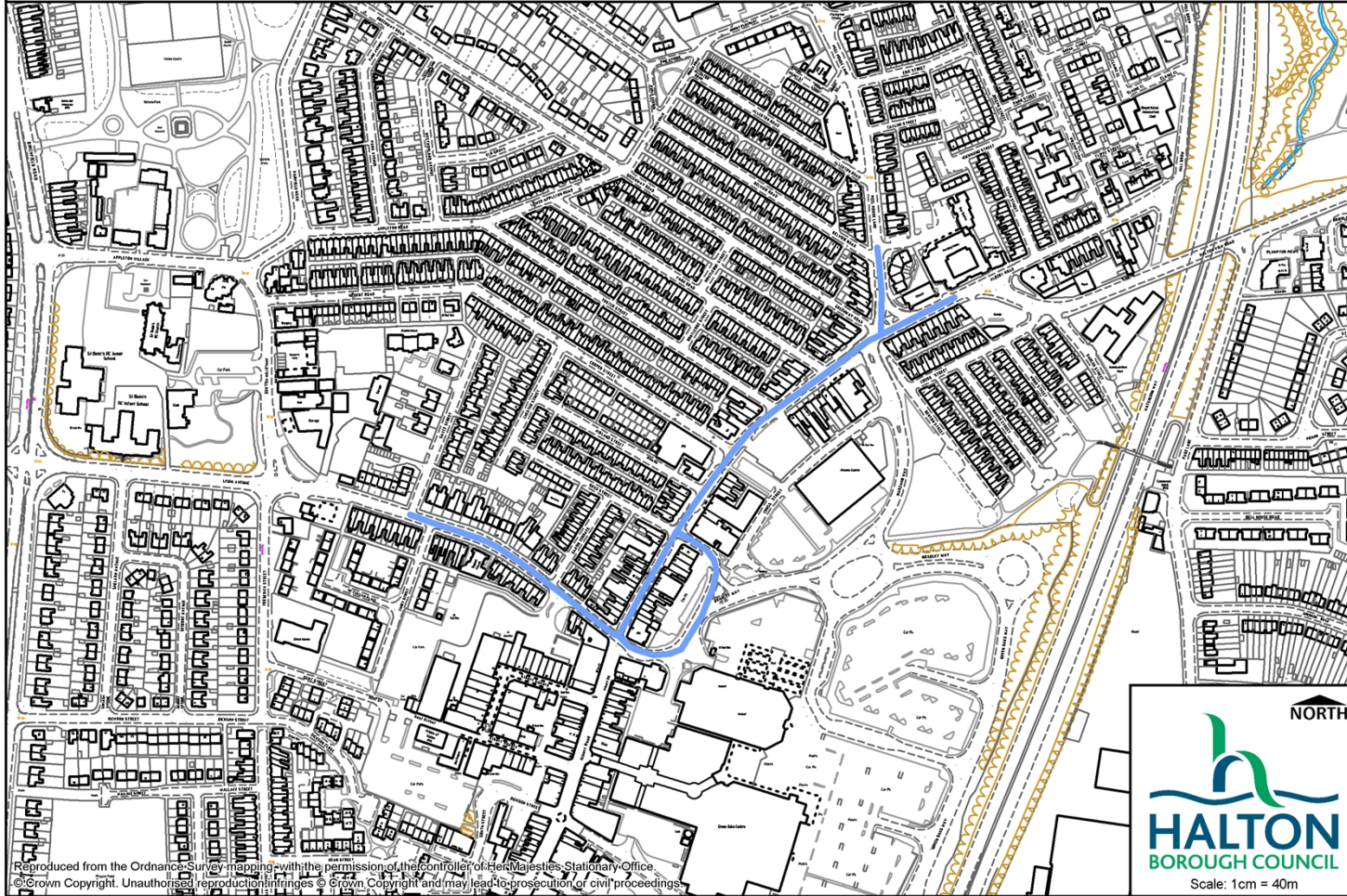
9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Regular monitoring has demonstrated an improvement in air quality within the air quality management areas

10.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.

# Air Quality Management Area 1



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NORTH

**HALTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Scale: 1cm = 40m

## Air Quality Management Area 2

