

Cabinet

4 October 2022

Air Quality Action Plan: Chideock

Portfolio Holder: Cllr L Miller, Customer and Community Services

Local Councillor(s): Cllr S Christopher

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Report Status: Public

1. Brief Summary:

- 1.1 The Local Air Quality Management regime places a statutory obligation on Local Authorities to review and assess air quality in their areas, and to determine whether national air quality objectives are likely to be achieved. Where an exceedance of an objective occurs, the Local Authority must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and prepare an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) setting out measures it intends to put in place to achieve the objectives. Air quality throughout the Dorset Council area is generally very good, mainly due to our predominantly rural environment. However, sections of the A35 trunk road that run through Chideock are close to or exceed the objective level for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂).
- 1.2 This report details the revised Air Quality Action Plan for Chideock which received approval from Defra in June 2022. The plan outlines the actions that Dorset Council, together with stakeholders, will deliver to reduce air pollution concentrations and exposure. The actions will have a positive impact on air quality in general, however it is recognised that the specific issue in Chideock is related to emissions from vehicles on a trunk road over which the Council has no direct control.

2. Recommendation:

- 2.1 For Cabinet to approve and adopt the Air Quality Action Plan for Chideock.

3. Reasons for Recommendations:

- 3.1 The Air Quality Action Plan is required as part of the Council's statutory duty within the Local Air Quality Management framework.
- 3.2 The Council is committed to improving the air quality and it is important to consider the cost effectiveness and feasibility of different measures.
- 3.3 The Environment Act 2021 includes provision for additional air quality objectives related to particulate matter which have not been previously included in the national framework. The proposed AQAP reflects this addition.

4. Report

- 4.1 Under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995, Local Authorities are required to review, assess and report annually against Air Quality Objectives (AQO), to Defra. Where AQO's are not achieved, the Authority must declare an AQMA. Following declaration, the Authority must then develop an AQAP which sets out the local measures to be implemented in pursuit of achieving the air quality objectives. An AQMA was declared in Chideock in 2007. The associated AQAP was produced in 2008.
- 4.2 A review of the AQAP has been overdue and progress has been hampered for a number of reasons including the reprioritising of work required during the period of Covid restrictions. The revised AQAP has been produced in association with our consultants who have been working with us on this matter for a number of years and are familiar with the history and specific challenges around Chideock.
- 4.3 Chideock has an AQMA due to exceedances of the annual mean Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), with the main source of emissions being from road traffic. This is exacerbated by the gradient at this location (vehicles accelerating away from the village are under greater load with resulting higher emissions); by congestion (volume and idling) and the canyon-like nature of the road (i.e. properties close to the carriageway resulting in reduced pollutant dispersion at the building facades). Levels have been reducing due to cleaner vehicle technology and the use of electric vehicles but there remain locations where levels are relatively high.
- 4.4 The A35 is part of the Strategic Road Network. National Highways has undertaken significant supporting work by investigating a number of potential measures at Chideock. These are given below but have been discounted by National Highways at this time.

- 4.4.1 The use of single lane traffic flows. Modelling showed that this proposal would lead to unacceptable levels of congestion, with queue lengths over 4km in both the eastbound and westbound directions. There would be increases in travel times of 467% in the eastbound and 373% in the westbound direction.
- 4.4.2 There have been calls for a bypass in Chideock for many years. This measure would need to be a Government decision through the Road Investment Strategy. It is unlikely that it could be implemented in a realistic period to positively affect the AQO. There are significant cost and planning implications. It is not seen as a proportionate measure.
- 4.4.3 Charging zones have also been investigated. National Highways is not permitted to implement charging zones on the Strategic Road Network (by Government) and as such this measure has been discounted.
- 4.4.4 Eco-barriers (green screens etc.) have been considered, but properties are too close to the road for them to be physically placed on the footpath.
- 4.5 Because of the nature of the road, the proximity of houses to the carriageway and the gradient at this location, the air quality issues at Chideock are not easy to resolve.
- 4.6 The Action Plan describes measures to reduce air pollution at Chideock. However, air pollution elsewhere can have health impacts. There is no 'safe level' for air pollutants including particulates such as PM_{2.5}. Therefore this plan provides actions specific to Chideock and also more strategic measures affecting the whole council area.

5. The Process

- 5.1 Defra provide clear guidance for Local Authorities to develop effective action plans. This includes engagement of key stakeholders to review measures in place, evaluate further measures, and look to reduce air pollution emissions through a range of policies and actions.
- 5.2 This Plan was developed in conjunction with Air Quality Consultants Ltd and with other stakeholders including:
- Environmental Health
 - Public Health Dorset

- Economic Growth and Infrastructure including Highways and Planning
- National Highways
- Chideock Parish Council

5.3 As an Air Quality Partner who is legally required to assist with implementing relevant actions within the plan, National Highways is key to meeting Air Quality Objectives at this location. In addition, as an aim is for wider collaboration and reductions in emissions more generally across Dorset, public health, transport, planning and climate change colleagues have also been invaluable in drafting the plan.

6. Consultation Results

6.1 A public consultation on the draft Action Plan and other air quality issues ran from 29 November 2021 to 23 January 2022. 171 responses were received of which over 95% were from Dorset Council residents. The general themes of the responses together with officer comments are given in Appendix A .

6.4 The findings from the consultation were considered by Place and Resources Overview Committee at their meeting on 21 April 2022. The findings showed that residents had a genuine concern for the air quality within Dorset especially in relation to traffic as the main source of pollution and that not enough was being done locally to improve air quality.

6.5 From the five measures set out within the draft Action Plan, there were two highlighted by the respondents as of high importance. These were to continue the collaborative work with National Highways to improve air quality on the A35 in Chideock and to develop policies to support better air quality. There was no strong feeling either way on whether the draft plan would provide a good basis to improve air quality in the Dorset Council area.

6.6 Chideock Parish Council provided a full and valuable response to the consultation and subsequently met with officers to discuss issues. Additional actions were included in the plan as a result.

6.7 Comments from Place and Resources Overview Committee were incorporated into the draft Action Plan and the Committee recommended that it was submitted to Defra for approval.

7. Actions

7.1 The draft AQAP was required to be submitted to Defra. It was approved by them in June 2022 and their comments reflected in the final draft before Cabinet today. Appendix E gives Defra's response to the draft action plan.

7.2 The AQAP includes the following actions;

7.2.1 Action 1 - Continue collaborative work with National Highways to investigate, and where appropriate implement, direct measures to improve air quality on the A35 in Chideock. National Highways have fully investigated a number of measures. Dorset Council will report on any changes seen with the permanent speed reduction measure which is being implemented.

7.2.2 Action 2 - Promote behaviour change away from single occupancy private vehicle use. Access to efficient public transport will be of high importance in reducing demand for cars, including the provision of buses and bus priority measures in urban areas. Chideock Parish Council have raised the possibility of an off-road pedestrian/cycle link between Chideock and Bridport, which may have the potential to take some traffic off the road network. The feasibility of this option will be investigated.

7.2.3 Action 3 - Promote the use of alternatively fuelled vehicles. The primary objective here is the reduction of carbon and local pollutant emissions from transport. However, this measure does not deliver congestion reduction, or increased levels of physical activity that are generated by measures to encourage active travel modes. Provision of suitable infrastructure to support low emission vehicles is critical to their introduction. The Dorset Council Transport Action Plan contains longer term actions (2023 onwards) to encourage the use of ultra-low emission public transport vehicles (including taxis), particularly smaller buses and to encourage low carbon freight and logistics (freight strategy to be reviewed and amended by 2022). These longer-term actions are supported.

7.2.4 Action 4 - Develop policies to support better air quality. For the planning process, a regulatory framework is in place for new and existing developments to minimise emissions. i.e. a requirement to implement or support actions that make a positive contribution to improving air quality. Air quality assessments for applications are undertaken where air quality is of specific concern. This action will enable us to review of current wording of Policy ENV12 in the new Local Plan, to ensure that air quality gains a high prominence. It also enables the production of a guidance document for developers on air

quality, which could take the form of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Good design principles that will reduce emissions (or exposure) can also be included within the SPD. The scope of the guidance could potentially be broadened to incorporate climate change.

7.2.5 Action 5 - Control domestic emissions by promoting low emission plant and fuels. Open fires and wood-burning stoves have risen in popularity. Being an additional form of heating in both urban and rural areas; for a minority they may be the sole heat source. In addition, there has been a growth of biomass boilers for home heating. This increase in burning solid fuels in our homes is having an impact on our air quality and now makes up the single largest contributor to UK wide particulate matter emissions.

7.2.6 Chideock has a long-standing air quality issue which has been given attention in recent years by the Council (including the predecessor council) and by National Highways, both of which have engaged with communities and Elected Representatives to explore improving air quality. The Parish Council have been particularly active in voicing concerns and engaging with stakeholders. As a result further measures have been included:

- Explore feasibility of targeted road signage to reduce traffic burden through the village.
- Explore feasibility of a proposed footpath/cycleway between Chideock and Bridport.
- Deliver targeted awareness raising for residents on air pollution impacts and how the Local Plan; planning objectives and climate change actions work to minimise harmful pollutants.
- Better promotion of the electric charging point within the village.
- Support Chideock Parish Council to progress initiatives identified by themselves including working with the University of Bristol on a particulate monitoring project.

8. Complimentary work to support the action plan

8.1 The Council has recently been successful in a bid for grant funding from Defra. There is increasing local public concern about PM_{2.5} in Dorset, and that, at present, there is little information in relation to current concentrations and how they vary across the area. The project is for two years and in two parts. Firstly, to carry out a 12-month monitoring programme in selected locations, starting Autumn 2022. This will provide information on the emission sources and concentration profiles over the year. The second part of the project, a survey and public awareness raising campaign, will run in

parallel to the monitoring and support work being undertaken at a national level. The campaign will encourage solid fuel users to make positive changes to their appliances and use, ensuring that appliances meet relevant standards so that efficiency is increased and particulate emissions reduced.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no immediate financial implications. As policies and plans are further developed any financial implications will be reported.

10. Environmental Implications

- 10.1 The proposed measures will have a positive impact on climate objectives. Air quality and climate emergency actions are often interlinked.

11. Wellbeing and Health Implications

- 11.1 Children and older people are more susceptible to the effects of air pollution. In early life exposure can affect lung function and growth. For older people it can increase the risk of heart problems and stroke. People with existing health conditions are susceptible to the effects of poor air quality.
- 11.2 Exposure to poor air quality can exacerbate symptoms of asthma and cardiovascular disease. It also increases the risk of heart problems and stroke for those with existing cardiovascular and respiratory conditions.
- 11.3 Exposure to poor air quality can affect a foetus within the first few weeks, with evidence emerging for resulting low birth weights and premature birth. Therefore, pregnant women are also particularly susceptible to air pollution.
- 11.4 Although air pollution can be harmful to everyone, people who live in more polluted areas are more affected. This tends to include low-income communities as they are more likely to live in areas with poorer air quality due to lower value properties often being in more congested areas. They are also more likely to fit other criteria which indicate poorer health in general, making them more susceptible.
- 11.5 The measures contained in the AQAP seek to reduce air pollution and should have a positive effect on wellbeing and health. Close working will continue with Public Health Dorset to identify opportunities to improve the health of communities by reducing air pollution.

12. Other

- 12.1 The production of an AQAP is a statutory duty under the Environment Act 2021.
- 12.2 Addressing air quality issues involves a number of council services and wider stakeholders. Officers will ensure that appropriate liaison continues to ensure an effective approach.

13. Risk Assessment

- 13.1 Having considered the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

The Council's current Air Quality Action Plan for Chideock is overdue for review. New legislation (Environment Act 2021) provides a statutory responsibility that Action Plans must be reviewed on a 5-year basis. The approval of this Action Plan will satisfy this requirement.

Residual Risk: Low

14. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 14.1 Completed and appended to this report. There are no negative impacts identified.

15. Report and Appendices

- 15.1 Appendix A - Dorset Council Air Quality Action Plan: Chideock
- 15.2 Appendix B – Response to Public Consultation
- 15.3 Appendix C – Reasons for Not Pursuing Action Plan Measures
- 15.4 Appendix D – Chideock Air Quality Assessment 2019
- 15.5 Appendix E – Defra Approval Report and Appraisal
- 15.6 Appendix F - EQIA

16. Background Papers

- 15.1 [Transport action plan - Dorset Council](#)
- 15.2 [Dorset Council Local Plan - Dorset Council](#)
- 15.3 [Environment Act 1995 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- 15.4 [Environment Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- 15.5 [LAQM-TG16-April-21-v1.pdf \(defra.gov.uk\)](#)