

Local Authority:	Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council
Reference:	ASR24-2443
Date of issue	October 2024

Annual Status Report Appraisal Report

The Annual Status Report sets out new information on air quality obtained by Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council (NULBC) as part of the Review & Assessment process required under the Environment Act 1995 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021) and subsequent Regulations.

NULBC have four air quality management area (AQMA) within their jurisdiction. These are AQMA 1 (Liverpool Road, Kidsgrove), AQMA 2 (Newcastle-under-Lyme Town Centre), AQMA 3 (Maybank-Wolstanton-Porthill) and AQMA 4 (Little Madeley). AQMA 4 has shown compliance with the UK objective for annual mean NO₂ for 8 years and as of September 2024, it is in its final stage of revocation. The revocation of AQMA 3, which has achieved compliance for 6 years, was proposed to a NULBC consultation in March 2024, and progress towards this is expected in future ASRs. AQMA 1 has shown compliance with the annual mean NO₂ for 4 years and should be revoked if this trend of compliance continues. AQMA 2 is exceeding the NO₂ annual mean concentration objective and therefore needs to remain in place. Information regarding an update to the AQAP has been included, stating that 'Consultation on a 2024-2029 AQAP will commence in 2024'. Progress on this should also be included in the 2025 ASR.

The revocation of an AQMA should be considered following three consecutive years of compliance with the relevant objective as evidenced through monitoring. Where there have been no exceedances for the past five years, local authorities must proceed with plans to revoke the AQMA. The LAQM Technical Guidance 2022 is clear in this respect:

"There should not be any declared AQMAs for which compliance with the relevant objective has been achieved for a consecutive five-year period." (Point 3.57, page 50).

Please be aware that unless a likely exceedance has been identified in the area, Defra will not appraise AQAPs for AQMAs that have been in compliance for five years. Local Authorities will instead be advised to revoke the AQMA.

AQMAs should identify areas where air quality objectives are not being met or are likely to be at risk of not meeting them. Keeping AQMAs in place longer than required risks diluting their meaning and impacting public trust in LAQM.

Local authorities that do not have an AQMA should continue to monitor for exceedances and should still have a local air quality strategy in place to ensure air quality remains a high-profile

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issue, thereby enabling a quick response should there be any deterioration in condition. See LAQM Statutory Policy Guidance 2022 for more information.

The Council monitors nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) using non-automatic (passive) monitoring across a network of 77 diffusion tube sites and 1 automatic monitoring site (site CM1) during 2023. Sites DTK1, DT3 and DT28 were closed in January 2023. NULBC did not undertake any PM monitoring in their jurisdiction during 2023. Almost all diffusion tube sites and automatic sites in NULBC measured concentrations below the UK air quality objective of 40 µg/m³ for NO₂ annual mean during 2023, except for DT76, which measured concentrations of 41.5 µg/m³ after distance correction calculations. These sites are both located in AQMA 2. The maximum concentrations measured at the automatic site for annual mean NO₂ was 26.5 µg/m³, below the air quality objective. Trends suggest that concentrations have increased between 2022 and 2023 at the majority of sites, but these remain concentrations in 2019.

The Council have developed a list of measures within the ASR for the current reporting year to further improve local air quality within Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council, including the roll out of low/zero emissions taxi charging infrastructure, the introduction of the 'air aware' initiative and the transitioning of the council fleet to zero/low emission vehicle technologies.

QA/QC procedures are robust and the laboratory, Staffordshire Scientific Services, and the analysis method, 20% TEA in water, have been clearly stated. A reference has been made suggesting the diffusion tube calendar was adhered to during 2023. The national bias adjusted factor (of 0.86) was applied to the 2023 diffusion tube data and an adequate explanation has been provided as to why it was used. Monitoring locations have been distance corrected where applicable, and clear calculations are displayed in the report. The automatic monitoring location within Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council recorded data capture of greater than 75% therefore it was not required to annualise any monitoring data.

On the basis of the evidence provided by the local authority the conclusions reached are **accepted** for all sources and pollutants, on the proviso that the grammatical and formatting errors in the report are corrected prior to publication on the council's website. ASRs are public facing documents that serve to keep local communities informed of the steps being taken by their local authority to improve air quality, and as such it is important that they are accessible and easy to read. Following the completion of this report, NULBC Council should submit an Annual Status Report in 2025 and progress with their revocations.

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Commentary

The report is well structured, detailed, and provides the information specified in the Guidance.

The following comments are designed to help inform future reports:

1. There are a few formatting issues where references can't be found e.g. 'Error! Bookmark not defined.'. This should be corrected before final submission.
2. The Revocation of AQMA 4 and 3 should be continued and progress on these should be included in next year's ASR.
3. Reference to the Public Health Outcomes Framework has been included which is commended.
4. The ASR has been signed off by the Director of Public Health, which is commended and should be continued in future reports.
5. Clear trend graphs have been included which is commended.
6. Comments from the previous year's appraisal response has been included in this year, which is commended and should be continued in future ASRs.
7. Maps of monitoring sites and AQMA boundaries have been provided, but they could be clearer. The base map could be altered or the labels should be a different colour/size so the diffusion tube locations and their labels can be seen more clearly.

This commentary is not designed to deal with every aspect of the report. It highlights a number of issues that should help the local authority either in completing the Annual Status Report adequately (if required) or in carrying out future Review & Assessment work.

Issues specifically related to this appraisal can be followed up by returning the attached comment form to Defra, Welsh Government, Scottish Government or DOE.

For any other queries please contact the Local Air Quality Management Helpdesk:

Telephone: 0800 0327 953

Email: LAQMHelpdesk@bureauveritas.com

The [Air Quality Hub](#) is now run by Defra, it is a free online information and knowledge sharing resource for local authority air quality professionals. Please consider onboarding on the Air Quality Hub to access a multitude of air quality resources and be kept up to date with local authority air quality activity and air quality news.

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Appraisal Response Comment Form

Contact Name:	
Contact Telephone number:	
Contact email address:	UKLAQMAppraisals@aecom.com

Comments on appraisal/Further information: