

GREATER MANCHESTER CLEAN AIR PLAN UPDATE REPORT

Report of the Director of Place Management

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the progress of developing a Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan. It provides an overview of the preferred Greater Manchester approach of an Investment Led Clean Air Plan and the appraisal of that approach against the Government's most recent direction to implement a category 'C' Clean Air Zone (which charges non-compliant buses, taxis, HGV'S minibuses, coaches and LGV's- vans). This approach is summarised in the attached report (Appendix A) . which was considered by the GM Air Quality Administration Committee on the 20th December 2023.
- 1.2. Greater Manchester has created several committees to support the joint approach to clean air including:
 - 1.2.1. The GM Air Quality Administration Committee, which is a joint committee, created by the ten Greater Manchester local authorities and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.
 - 1.2.2. The GM Clean Air Charging Authorities Committee, which is a joint committee created by the ten Greater Manchester local authorities to enable joint decisions to be taken as required by the Constituent Authorities as charging authorities in relation to the Greater Manchester Clean Air Zone.
 - 1.2.3. The GM Clean Air Scrutiny Committee reviews the decisions made, or other actions taken by the Clean Air Quality Administration Committee and the Charging Authorities Committee, including decisions delegated by it to officers and sub-committees.

2. Background

- 2.1. In July 2019 the Secretary of State issued a direction under section 85 of the Environment Act 1995 requiring the 10 GM local authorities to implement the local plan for NO2 compliance for the areas for which they were responsible, including a Charging Clean Air Zone Class C with additional measures, but with an obligation to provide further options appraisal information to demonstrate the applicable class of charging clean air zone and other matters to provide assurance that the local plan would deliver compliance in the shortest possible time and by 2024 at the latest.
- 2.2. Following that direction further information was supplied to the Secretary of State and the particular measures in the local clean air plan were developed.

2.3. The Secretary of State subsequently issued a direction to the ten GM local authorities in March 2020 that required them to take steps to implement the local clean air plan for NO₂ compliance so that compliance with the legal limit for nitrogen dioxide is achieved in the shortest possible time, and by 2024 at the latest, and so that exposure to levels above the legal limit for nitrogen dioxide are reduced as quickly as possible. That local plan involved a Charging Clean Air Zone Class C with additional measures, once any necessary public consultation had been completed in respect of the scheme.

2.4. This consultation was completed in 2020, and in 2021 a Greater Manchester Charging Zone C was proposed to make the necessary improvements however there was strong concern expressed around the impact of Covid etc and the potential social and economic costs. This led to an alternative proposal in 2022 of an investment led approach which considered all the information and evidence gathered, so that the GM Authorities understood the consequences that COVID-19 had on vehicle owners and trades which would have been affected by the proposed GM CAP.

2.5. On 8th February 2022 *The Environment Act 1995 (Greater Manchester) Air Quality Direction 2022*¹ (the Direction) was issued. The Direction requires that the GM local authorities:

- review the measures specified in the existing Plan; and
- determine whether to propose any changes to the detailed design of those measures, or any additional measures.

2.6. The GM authorities must ensure that the Plan with any proposed changes will secure that:

- compliance with the legal limit value for NO₂ is achieved in the shortest possible time and by no later than 2026; and
- exposure to levels above the legal limit for NO₂ is reduced as quickly as possible.

2.7. This Direction revoked the Direction dated March 2020 which required the ten Greater Manchester Local Authorities to implement a Category C Clean Air Zone to achieve compliance with the legal limit value for NO₂ in the shortest possible time and by 2024 at the latest.

2.8. Since then, there has been significant work to model and appraise the revised approach. This work was delayed by the need to reconsider the proposed approach following concerns about the real-life impacts of bus retrofitting.

3. Greater Manchester Investment Led Clean Air Plan proposal.

3.1. The investment led proposal was developed to focus on encouraging people to change to cleaner vehicles by the provision of grants either for retrofit or the purchase of new compliant or zero emission vehicles.

3.2. In 2023 advice was received from Government that there were some issues with the retrofitting of vehicles and no further grants should be awarded until these issues were investigated and resolved.

¹ [The Environment Act 1995 \(Greater Manchester\) Air Quality Direction 2022 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/111111)

- 3.3. The proposed plan includes grants for buses and taxis to purchase cleaner vehicles.
- 3.4. The revised plan has been assisted by the introduction of bus franchising that allows Greater Manchester to control the type of buses and which routes they are used on. There has also been significant investment in zero emission buses via the ZEBRA bid for the Stockport area and a combination of clean air grants and CRSTS (City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement) funding for the rest of Greater Manchester.
- 3.5. It should be noted that the Stockport ZEBRA scheme was previously assumed to be delivered early within the 2025 Do Minimum. However, delays to the programme are now projecting a slight delay and that the ZEBs operating out of the Stockport depot will not be operational until Autumn 2025.
- 3.6. The introduction of appropriate emission standards for taxis as part of their licensing procedures in Greater Manchester will encourage drivers to utilise the new grants proposed for private hire and hackney taxis.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1. The report attached at appendix 1 was supported at the GM Air Quality Administration Committee in December and the various documents described in the report have been submitted to Government and their comments are awaited. If the proposed plan is accepted by Central Government as an appropriate approach to improving air quality in Greater Manchester, then there will be a public consultation on the proposals before the plan is finally accepted.
- 4.2. The report does identify that additional funding from Government will be required to implement the proposed Investment Led Approach.
- 4.3. It is proposed to hold an all-Member briefing on both bus franchising and the GM Clean Air Plan on 29th January 2024.
- 4.4. As part of the proposals Stockport Council is expected to amend the vehicle emission standards for taxis as part of the licensing requirements and is due to be considered at the next licensing committee. This amendment would require any vehicle owners relicensing their existing vehicles during 2025 to be licensing a compliant vehicle (minimum of Euro VI diesel or Euro IV petrol)." This requirement is already in place for any new vehicles coming onto the fleet.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. The implications of the Clean Air Plan are identified in the report and do not indicate an increased cost to the council.

6. Legal Implications and Risks

- 6.1. The legal implications and risks are covered in the report from TfGM. Initial risk register set out in Clean Air Plan OBC (March 2019).

7. Human Resource Impact

- 7.1. Not applicable

8. Equality Impact

8.1. An equality impact assessment has been carried out by TfGM in respects of the proposed approach.

9. Environmental Impact

9.1. The GM CAP is a place-based solution to tackle roadside NO2 which will have a positive impact on carbon.

10. Recommendations

10.1. Members are requested to comment on and note the proposed approach to improving air quality in Greater Manchester.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Sue Stevenson on telephone number Tel: 0161-474-4351 or alternatively email sue.stevenson@stockport.gov.uk