

**SWYDDFA CYMORTH Y CABINET
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Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CM46745

Dyddiad / Date: 6th December 2021

Councillor Ramesh Patel
Chairperson
Environmental Scrutiny Committee
County Hall
Atlantic Wharf
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Annwyl/Dear Councillor Patel,

Environmental Scrutiny Committee, 11 November 2021 – Air Quality Annual Progress Report 2021

Thank you for your letter following the meeting of the Environmental Scrutiny Committee on 11 November 2021. Each of the Committee's three recommendations are addressed in the attached appendix (Appendix A). The Committee also made a number of specific requests, which are addressed below:

- **That clarification be sought from Cardiff Bus as to whether any bus routes to the west of the city had been prioritised for the retrofitted buses, particularly any in areas around Ely, which has previously been identified as having an air quality issue.**

The bid to the UK Government Department of Transport Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) fund and the subsequent award of grant funding for the buses specified the routes on which the vehicles are to be used. This was agreed at the time of the bid and initially targeted high impact routes in the City Centre Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)/Castle Street and Stephenson Court AQMA on Newport Road. Cardiff Bus has confirmed that the routes in question have had to be assessed for battery life and these journeys are now built into the charging services contract that has been agreed with the supplier to ensure that the vehicles are charged appropriately and able to operate the route distance each day. Cardiff Bus has also had specially designed rotas in place for the electric buses since September 2021, which limit the number of drivers who drive them in order to get the best out of the battery life, as recommended by the manufacturer.

GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog. Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

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It is therefore not possible to re-allocate this batch of electric buses to routes that serve the west of the city. However, as a benefit to the Ely Bridge area, the arrival of the electric fleet will result in the removal of the Euro3 articulated bus fleet, which will be replaced by the current mixture of Euro4 and Euro6 emission standard double decker buses, which should have a positive impact on air quality.

We will continue to work with Cardiff Bus and all bus operators in Cardiff to identify further funding opportunities to deliver an ever-increasing number of zero emission buses.

- **That the Committee consider the ‘Nextbike’ scheme at a future meeting to examine its success, particularly in light of the unfortunate vandalism, and what is planned to address this.**

Cabinet Members and relevant officers would be happy to provide the Committee with an update on the Nextbike scheme to outline the work that is being progressed with partners to resolve the vandalism issues and ensure the continued success of the scheme in Cardiff.

- **That the Committee receive sight of Natwest’s Green Cities report developed in conjunction with experts from the University of Southampton, as well as information on how Cardiff compares with the other 9 Core Cities in the Core Cities Group in relation to air pollution.**

Enquires have been made with the main contributor to the NatWest Green Cities report, Professor William Powrie of Southampton University, who has confirmed that a report was not actually produced, with the findings being published as part of a [press release](#) that was issued on 10 November 2021. Professor Powrie also confirmed that the metrics used were all drawn from publicly available, mainly government, data and were as follows:

- public green space per person;
- car ownership and % ULEV;
- cycle commuting and car commuting;
- electricity use and green energy production;
- waste produced and % recycled; and
- air pollution for a range of contaminants.

Cities were ranked in each of these six categories and a score was assigned to the rank. The overall scores were then combined to produce the final league table that was published in which Cardiff was ranked third of 25 UK cities.

In terms of air quality comparisons with other UK Core Cities, as was highlighted at the Committee meeting on 11 November 2021, caution needs to be taken when doing so due to the differences in geographical, meteorological, population and transportation conditions that are particular to each city. Looking at reported data for 2020, currently, only Glasgow, Manchester, Newcastle, and Nottingham have publicly available data from their 2021 progress reports. To provide a simplistic

comparison, the average NO₂ concentration captured by non-automated diffusion tubes in each city is provided below:

Core City	2020 Average NO₂ from Diffusion Tube Network ugm³
Cardiff	20
Glasgow	19
Manchester	27
Newcastle	26
Nottingham	34

- **That the Committee receive the detailed analysis that was reported to have been undertaken, on the impact on air pollution and levels of NO₂ in the surrounding streets and roads around Castle Street resulting from traffic displacement from the road closure during the pandemic.**

As outlined previously to the Committee, the Cabinet had to consider a range of factors in coming to its decision regarding the reopening of Castle Street and was concerned primarily with air quality modelling data that was produced to support any decision. The results of the modelling were made public as part of the report to Cabinet in June 2021 ([Appendix 4](#)), which contained the updated modelled analysis data and maps of the data. These results detailed that the option to continue to have Castle Street closed to general traffic resulted in increases in NO₂ concentrations in surrounding residential areas. While the modelled rise in surrounding areas is within legal limits, there are clear concerns that any rise of air pollution in residential areas, in favour of achieving lower levels of pollution on non-residential Castle Street, was one that needed to be carefully considered before the Cabinet took any decision. This is particularly important as many of these residential areas already have poor levels of air quality and it is evidenced that there is no safe limit of NO₂ pollution.

Monitoring has taken place throughout the period of the closure of Castle Street to general traffic. However, it is difficult to provide a direct comparison of these values to pre-closure levels as there was a meaningful change in travel behaviour throughout 2020 and the early parts of 2021 when national restrictions were still place as part of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which – as reported in the Air Quality Annual Progress Report 2021 – has impacted on pollution levels across the city. The results will be reported in the 2022 annual progress report once all data from 2021 have been obtained, verified, and fully ratified in accordance the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) reporting requirements.

Furthermore, the Council wants to gather more data on traffic flows across the city centre as commuters return to work and visitor numbers return to normal with the easing of restrictions due to the pandemic. This up-to-date data on traffic flows will then be used to inform plans to further reduce air pollution and congestion in the city and inform on a permanent decision on the future of Castle Street, which will be subject to further Welsh Government approval.

We hope that the information provided assists in addressing the various requests and recommendations made by the Committee.

Yn gywir
Yours sincerely

Caro Wild

Cynghorydd / Councillor Caro Wild
Aelod Cabinet dros Gynllunio Strategol a Thrafnidiaeth
Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning & Transport

Michael Michael

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