

Committees: Port Health and Environmental Services Health and Wellbeing Board Planning and Transportation	Date: 7 May 2024 3 May 2024 16 May 2024
Subject: Draft Air Quality Strategy 2025 to 2030	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	Leading Sustainable Environment. Providing Excellent Services. Diverse Engaged Communities.
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
Report of: Bob Roberts, Executive Director (Interim), Environment	PHES for decision H&WB and P&T for information
Report author: Ruth Calderwood, Air Quality Manager	

Summary

As part of its statutory duties for Air Quality Management, the City of London Corporation is required to measure air quality and, if concentrations are higher than set standards, develop, and implement an action plan to bring levels of pollution down.

The City Corporation has had an air quality action plan in place since 2002. In 2011, the action plan was incorporated into an Air Quality Strategy. The current strategy is for the period 2019 to 2024. This draft strategy covers 2025 to 2030 and includes new data, new targets, and new responsibilities for helping to reduce emissions of very fine particles (PM_{2.5}). The draft strategy supports the outcomes of the Corporate Plan 2024 to 2029, Climate Action Strategy, Transport Strategy, City Plan and Procurement Strategy.

The current Air Quality Strategy, supported by national and regional action, has delivered around a 40% reduction in the pollutants nitrogen dioxide and fine particles (PM₁₀). The national standards for PM₁₀ are met across the Square Mile, and the annual mean standard for nitrogen dioxide is only exceeded adjacent to the busiest roads. With continued action, it is likely that the national standard for nitrogen dioxide will also be met everywhere in the next 2 to 3 years.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) issues health-based air quality guidelines to help governments manage the impact of air pollution on health. National air quality standards are based on WHO guidelines issued in 2005. Since then, there has been a significant amount of evidence about the adverse health effects of air pollution. This led to new air quality guidelines being published in 2021.

The new guidelines are much tighter than the ones issued in 2005. They have not yet been incorporated into national legislation or adopted by the Mayor of London. It is however recommended that the City Corporation Air Quality Strategy 2025 to 2030 works towards

the achievement of the latest WHO air quality guidelines, rather than the national standards, and thereby continues with its efforts to improve air quality in the Square Mile. By doing so, it will deliver better health outcomes and directly support the new Corporate Plan outcome *Leading Sustainable Environments, Providing Excellent Services and Diverse Engaged Communities*. It will also provide a robust set of data for the Corporate Plan performance measure '*Progress towards World Health Organisation Air Quality Guidelines*'.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Approve the aims of the draft Air Quality Strategy which set a direction of travel towards achievement of the 2021 World Health Organisation Air Quality Guidelines
- Approve the draft Air Quality Strategy 2025 to 2030 for public consultation, subject to comments received at the meeting.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London Corporation has a statutory duty to assist the Mayor of London and the UK government in taking action to reduce levels of air pollution. This is to ensure that concentrations of pollutants meet health-based standards as soon as possible. The City Corporation also has a responsibility to protect public health.
2. Action taken by the City Corporation is detailed in its Air Quality Strategy. The current Air Quality Strategy 2019 – 2024 includes measures being taken to fulfil statutory responsibilities, and for reducing the health impact of air pollution on residents, workers, and visitors to the Square Mile. Due to statutory requirements, the focus has largely been on the pollutants nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), a product of combustion, and fine particles (PM₁₀), of which there are many sources.
3. Owing to the success of previous strategies, along with national and regional action, air quality in the Square Mile has dramatically improved. In 2022, just 7% of the publicly accessible area breached the national standards for NO₂, down from 70% in 2018. With continued action, it is likely that the national standard for NO₂ will be met everywhere in the next 2 to 3 years. The national standards for PM₁₀ are now met everywhere in the Square Mile, and by a significant margin. For further information on concentrations and origins of air pollution in the Square Mile see Appendix 1.

Air quality standards and guidelines

4. Current national air quality standards for NO₂ and PM₁₀ were originally set in European Directives and transposed into domestic legislation. They are based on guidelines set by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2005.
5. As research has advanced, more focus has been placed on the pollutant PM_{2.5} as this has been shown to have the greatest impact on health. The Environment Act 2021

set new national standards for PM_{2.5} to be met by 2040, with interim targets set for 2028. Guidance has been issued which includes new responsibilities for local government to assist with national efforts to reduce emissions of this pollutant. These measures have been incorporated into the draft strategy.

6. Ongoing research has linked air pollution to an increasing number of diseases. This has led to the World Health Organisation issuing new Air Quality Guidelines in 2021. The guidelines are designed to offer quantitative health-based recommendations for managing air quality. They are not legally binding, but they do provide an evidence-based tool to inform legislation and policy in WHO Member States, of which the United Kingdom is one. In addition to new guidelines, interim targets have been set to guide the reduction of air pollution towards the achievement of the guidelines. No target dates have been set by the WHO for achievement of the interim targets or guidelines.
7. Table 1 details the current national standards and WHO Air Quality Guidelines with interim targets. It also includes the aims in the draft Air Quality Strategy. The aims go beyond the current national standards for NO₂ and PM₁₀, whilst also committing to support action to achieve the new national standard for PM_{2.5} ten years early.
8. For nitrogen dioxide, the proposed aim within the strategy timeline is to achieve the second WHO interim target in over 90% of the publicly accessible space by 2030. This demonstrates a direction of travel towards the final WHO guideline. This aim has been set as it takes into account current levels of NO₂, whilst considering the amount of influence the City Corporation has on levels of air pollution in the Square Mile (see Appendix 1). For PM₁₀, the WHO air quality guideline itself is recommended as, despite the City Corporation having little direct influence over levels of this pollutant, much of the Square Mile already meets the guideline.

Table 1

Pollutant (annual mean (µg/m ³))	National Standard (µg/m ³)	2021 WHO Guidelines (µg/m ³)				Final Guideline	Draft Air Quality Strategy aims (µg/m ³)	Current levels in the Square Mile (µg/m ³)
		Interim Target						
		1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th			
Nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂)	40	40	30	20	-	10	30**	20 to 52
PM ₁₀	40	70	50	30	20	15	15***	15 to 18
PM _{2.5}	10*	35	25	15	10	5	10***	12

* To be met by 2040

** Over 90% of the Square Mile to meet this target by 2030

*** To support national and regional action to meet these targets by 2030

Draft Air Quality Strategy

9. The draft strategy includes 27 actions to be delivered under the headings: Air Quality Monitoring; Leading by Example; Collaborating with Partners; Reducing Emissions and Public Health and Raising Awareness. Annual reports will be published demonstrating progress with each action.
10. Delivery of the strategy will see the management of emissions of pollutants from construction sites; new developments being low emission; action to tackle unnecessary vehicle engine idling and the best practice of our partners being rewarded. Additional powers will continue to be sought to manage remaining sources of pollution; research into new technologies supported and consideration given to managing pollutants associated with diesel standby generator plant. Attention will also be given to activities that emit relatively high levels of PM_{2.5}, such as commercial cooking.
11. Much of the strategy will be delivered by partnership work with external organisations. This is due to the amount of air pollution measured in the Square Mile that comes from beyond the boundary (see Appendix 1).
12. An important aspect of the work is engagement with communities such as schools, residents, and businesses, raising awareness about the health impacts of air pollution and what steps can be taken to help to deliver the aims of the strategy. The City Corporation is also part of a pan London project to raise awareness about the impact of poor indoor air quality on health.
13. The draft Air Quality Strategy is underpinned by a wealth of monitoring data and a large database of emissions of pollutants. This information is used to shape action, and to provide robust evidence to demonstrate the success of City Corporation action to improve air quality.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

14. Air quality policy is supported by the Climate Action Strategy, Transport Strategy, Procurement Strategy, and draft City Plan.
15. The work on air quality supports the new Corporate Plan outcomes:
 - Leading sustainable environment
 - Providing excellent services
 - Diverse engaged communities

Financial implications

16. No new funding is being requested to deliver the Air Quality Strategy. Most of the work is delivered by the Air Quality Team of three Officers plus one Manager. External funding is sought for specific projects where available.

Resource implications

17. The strategy will be delivered using existing resources

Legal implications

18. None

Risk implications

19. Air quality is listed as a Corporate risk. The most recent Deep Dive into the risk was presented to Audit and Risk Management Committee in January 2021.

Equalities implications

20. Action to improve air quality has a positive impact on all sections of the population. The benefit is greatest for children and the elderly as they are more susceptible to the health impacts of air pollution. There is also a positive impact on individuals whose lives are affected by asthma and other respiratory and cardiovascular conditions.

Security implications

21. None

Conclusion

22. The City Corporation has produced a draft Air Quality Strategy 2025 to 2030 for consultation. This strategy follows on from the current Air Quality Strategy 2019 to 2024 and includes new data, new targets, and new responsibilities for helping to reduce emissions of PM_{2.5}.

23. Due to the success of previous strategies, along with regional and national action, air quality in the Square Mile has dramatically improved. In 2022 just 7% of the publicly accessible area breached the national standard for the pollutant nitrogen dioxide, down from 70% in 2018. The national standard for fine particles (PM₁₀) is now met everywhere.

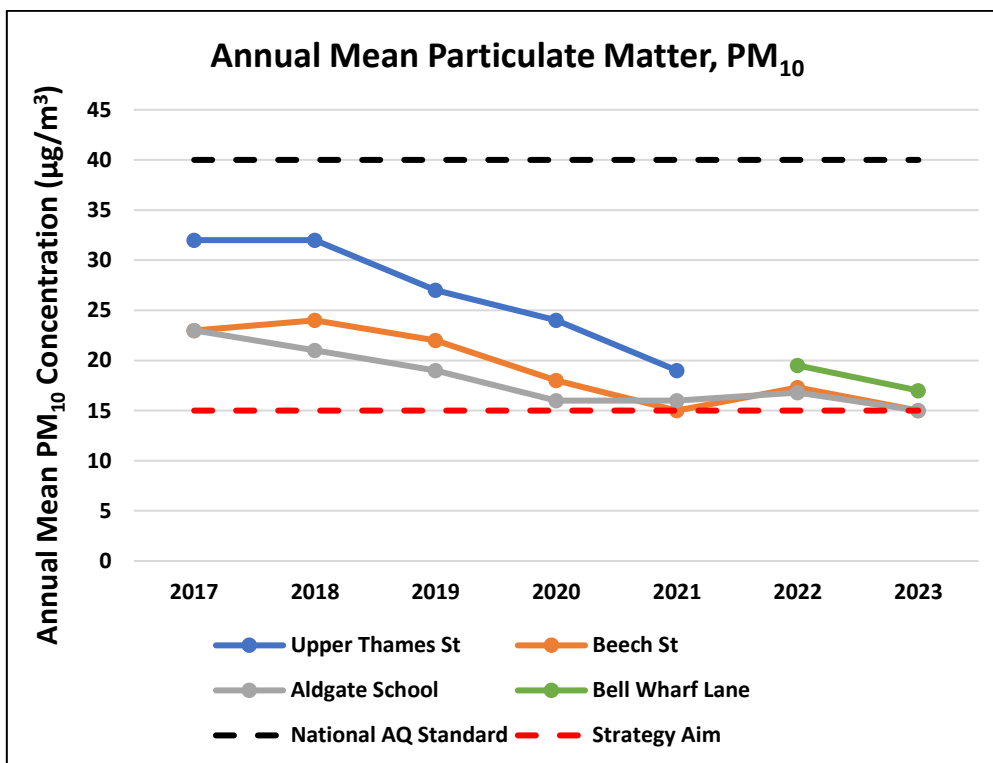
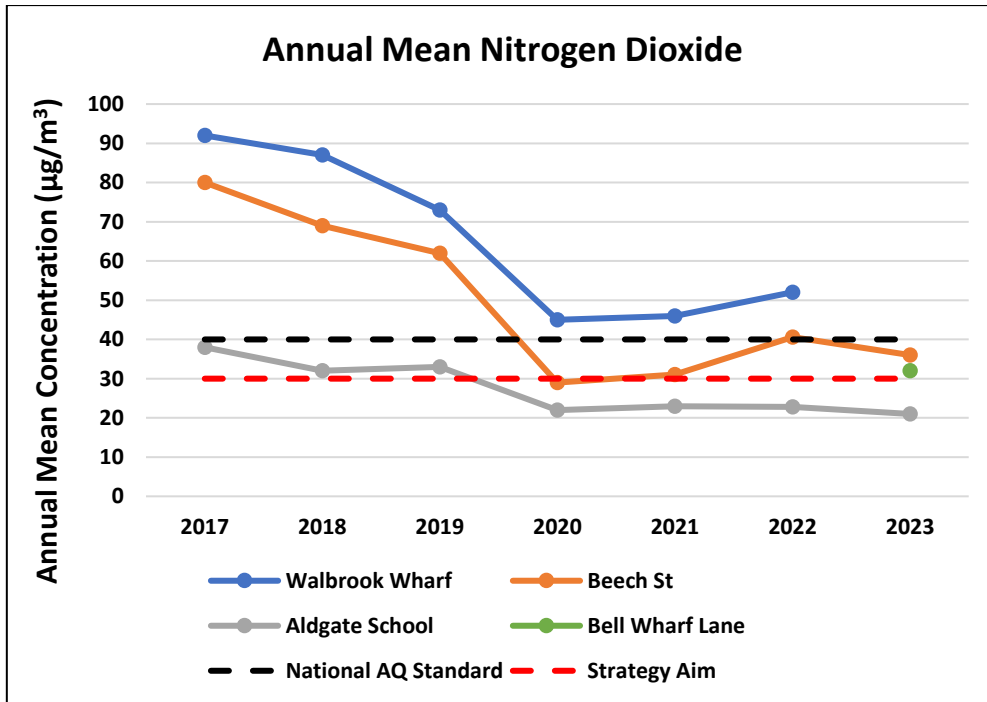
24. It is recommended that the City Corporation Air Quality Strategy 2025 to 2030 aligns itself with the latest WHO air quality guidelines, rather than the national standards, and thereby continues with its efforts to improve air quality in the Square Mile. By doing so, it will deliver better health outcomes and support the Corporate Plan outcomes *Leading Sustainable Environments, Providing Excellent Services and Diverse Engaged Communities*. It will also provide a robust set of data for the Corporate Plan performance measure '*Progress towards World Health Organisation Air Quality Guidelines*'.

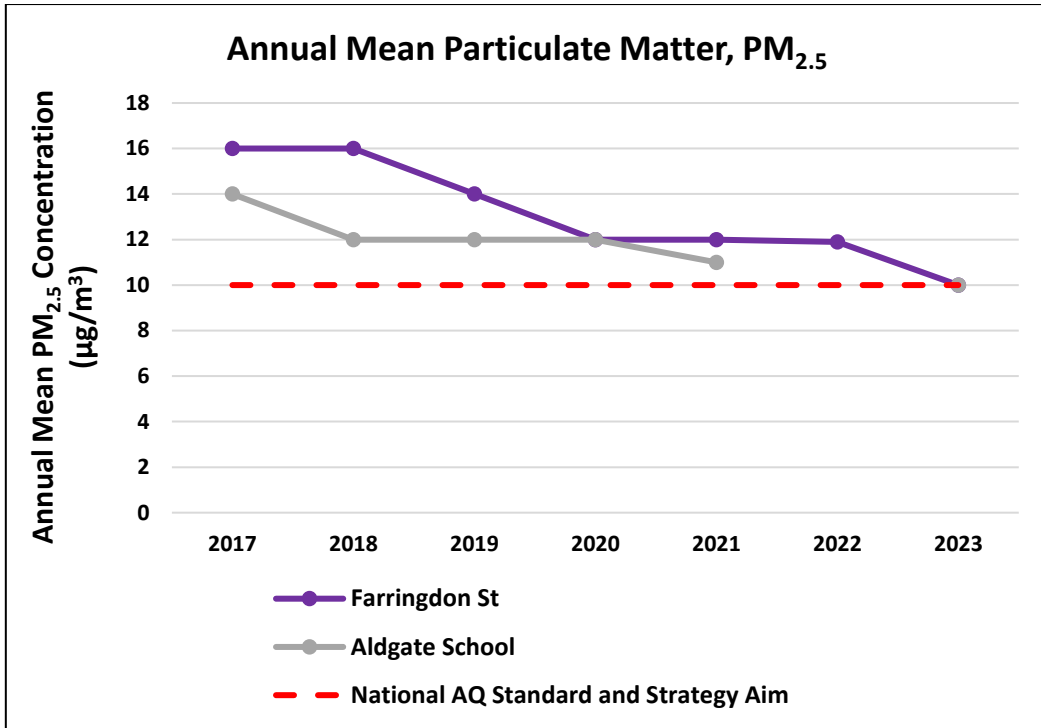
Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Air quality data
- Appendix 2 – Draft Air Quality Strategy 2025 to 2030

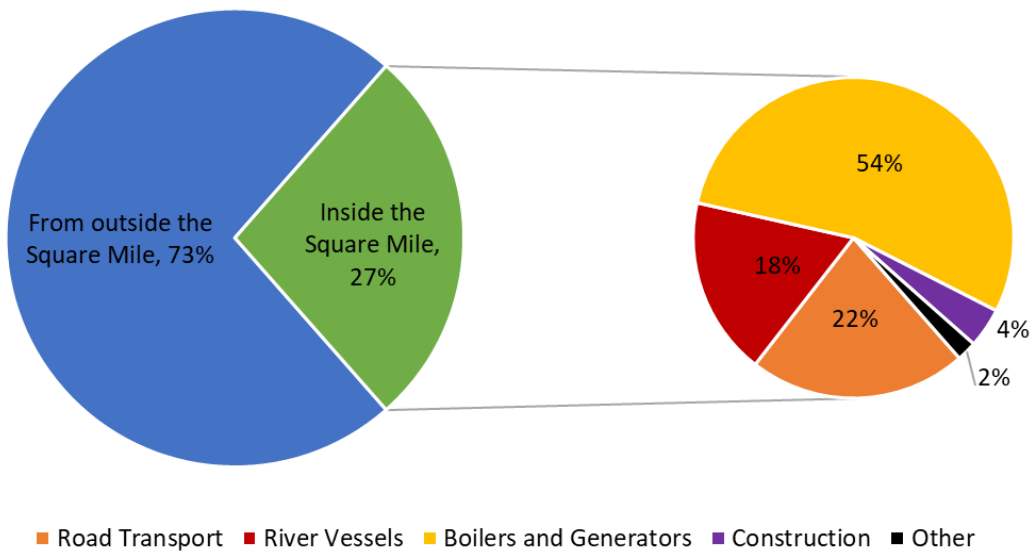
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Appendix 1: Air Quality Data

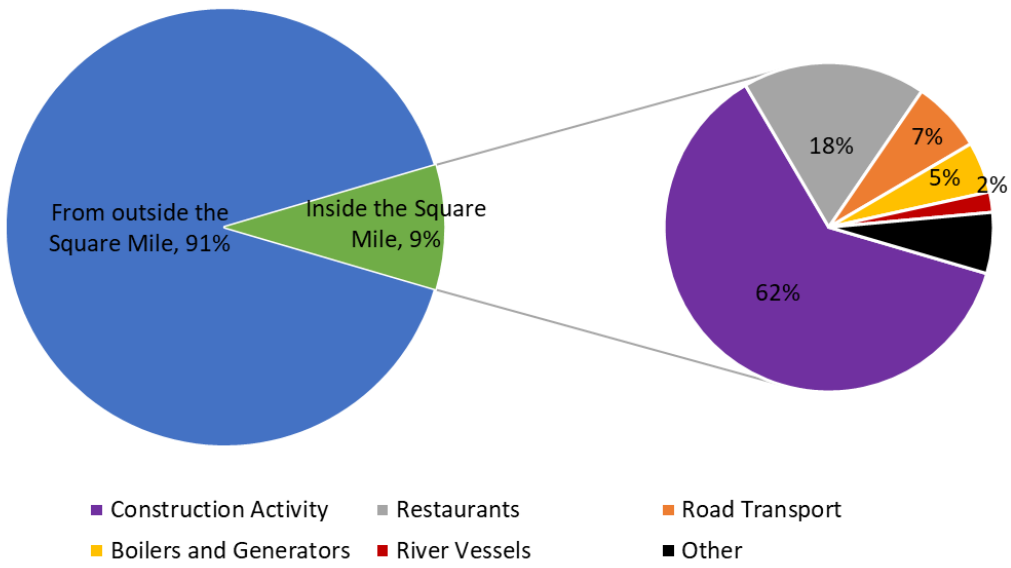




Source of Nitrogen Oxides



Source of PM₁₀



Source of PM_{2.5}

