

Air Quality Action Plan

Non-Technical Summary

Background

Air is the mixture of gases that we breathe. Good air quality is essential for our health, quality of life and the environment. Air becomes polluted when it contains substances which can have a harmful effect on the health of people, animals and vegetation. Many of our everyday activities – for example driving, cooking, heating our houses – consume energy and can cause pollution.

Exeter City Council measures air pollution so that we can check whether it may be having a harmful effect on the health of people or the environment. We compare the levels of air pollution that we find to national objectives, set by government and the European Union. These objectives have been designed to protect health and the environment. If measured levels are below the objective then there is no significant effect from the pollution. Where levels are above the objective, there may start to be an effect and action should be taken where possible to reduce the measured levels of pollution.

In Exeter only one type of air pollution has been measured at levels that are above the objective. This is nitrogen dioxide pollution (NO₂). Investigations by the Council have found that in Exeter it is mainly caused by exhaust fumes from road traffic. As you would expect, the levels are high beside the busiest roads. Slow moving, congested traffic also releases more pollution so levels are generally higher where junctions or other factors cause traffic queues. Generally older and larger vehicles release more pollution, and diesel cars are worse than petrol ones, but this relationship is not always simple.

Because levels of NO₂ have been measured that are above the objective level the Council has made part of the city an Air Quality Management Area. The Area covers all the roads where we think that traffic pollution is causing high levels of NO₂. Where we think that houses or flats are affected by levels above the objective then these are included inside the area as well. There is a map showing the area on the next page.

Air Quality Action Plan

Exeter City Council has written an Air Quality Action Plan which explains the things that we and Devon County Council are doing to tackle congestion and which will also reduce NO₂ pollution levels. Because of the new housing developments on the edge of Exeter, traffic levels in the city are likely to increase over the next 15 years. The Action Plan describes some of the measures that will try to reduce the effect of the new and existing traffic. A list of these measures is shown here, with a summary of what each one will involve.

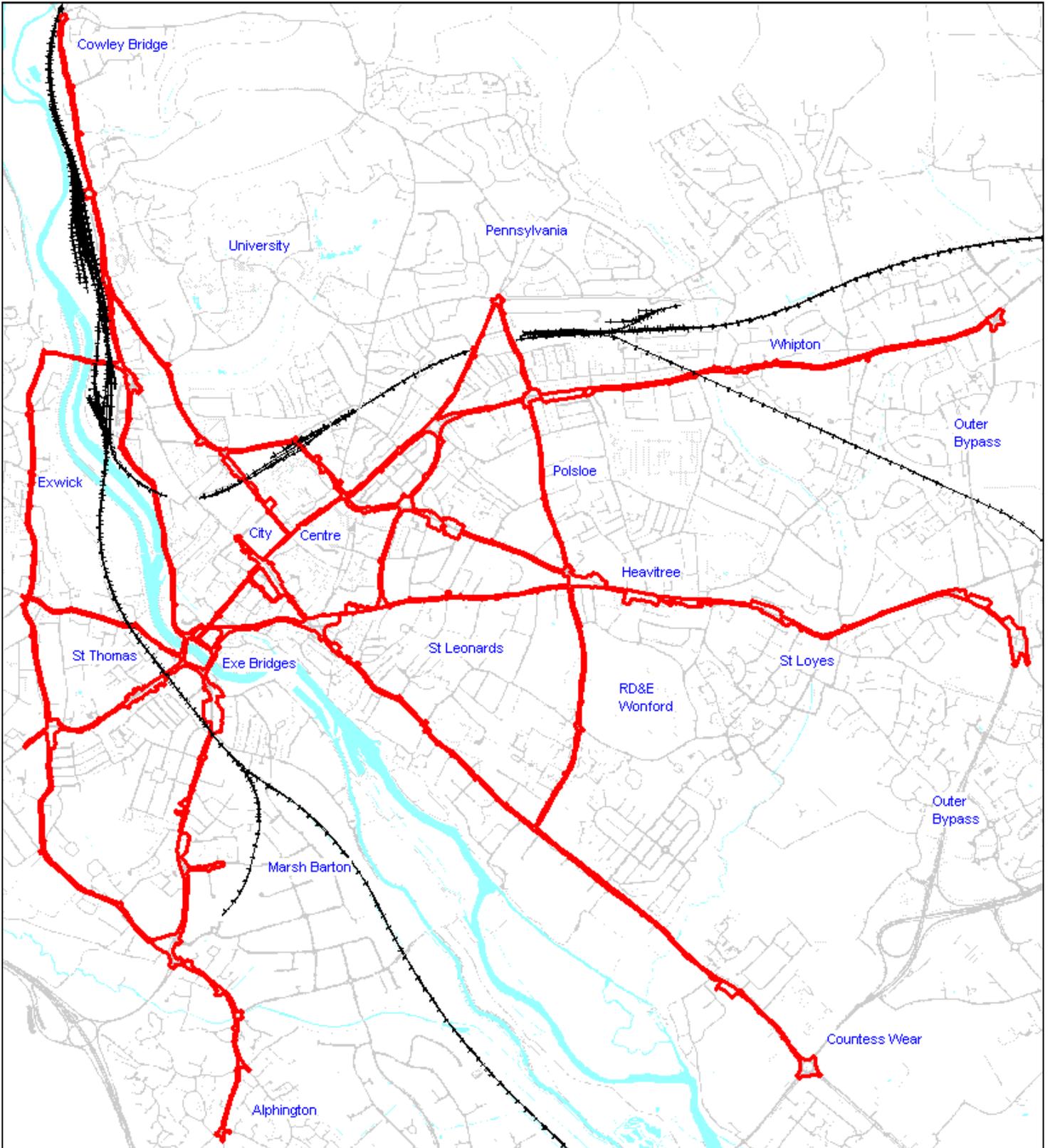
1. Exeter City Council Vehicles and Travel

This measure will try to reduce the amount of NO₂ released by Council vehicles and by staff travelling on Council business. This will involve using vehicles which release less pollution, reducing the number of journeys made by car and eco-driver training for Council staff.

2. Publicity and Increasing Awareness

This measure includes Travel Devon roadshows and other events, which encourage people to use greener travel, like car sharing, cycling etc. Devon County Council will also help people to find ways to use public transport to replace their regular car journeys.

A Map of the Exeter Air Quality Management Area



This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Exeter City Council 10025345, 2012.

3. Increase cycling

Devon County Council will extend the network of cycle routes connecting areas of housing with the areas where people work, making cycling easier and safer. They will also provide cycle training and advice.

4. Increase walking

The Councils will create new walking routes and introduce better signs to encourage people to walk short trips instead of using the car.

5. Support Car Clubs and Car Sharing

Car clubs buy and keep cars in the local community which can be used by members of the club. This gives people access to a car for occasional trips without having to buy and run their own. Car sharing is when two or more people travelling in the same direction share a car journey rather than all driving separately. Both these things will be encouraged, and developers building new houses will be asked to contribute towards expanding car clubs into the new developments.

6. Travel Plans

Devon County Council will encourage schools, colleges and workplaces to develop a Travel Plan. This is a way of supporting and encouraging people to travel to the school, college or workplace using greener travel like cycling or public transport. The Council also wants to make it easier to change between different types of green travel on the same journey, for example combining using the bus and train.

7. Devon Metro

This is a plan to improve the rail network in and around Exeter. It includes new stations at Marsh Barton and in the new housing areas to the east of the city. The plan is also to make trains run more often on the routes through Exeter so that they become a more attractive option for journeys into and around the city. This scheme will require a large investment in new stations, changes to the railway lines etc.

8. Increase Bus Journeys and make sure Buses cause Less Pollution

This measure will increase the use of buses by improving the bus route network and introducing new facilities for bus passengers like smart ticketing. This is where passengers use a pre-paid card to pay for their specific journey rather than having to buy either a normal ticket or a travel card. Because buses are large vehicles they release more pollution than a car would. It is important to make sure that buses are as green as possible so that an increase in the number of buses on the roads does not actually increase pollution.

9. Bus Route to Cranbrook

Devon County Council have planned a new dedicated bus service between Cranbrook, the new developments on the eastern edge of Exeter, the city centre and Marsh Barton.

10. Park and Ride

The Park and Ride routes into Exeter will be extended. There will be a new site off the A30 in Alphington and the Matford site will be expanded. At the same time, facilities for park and ride users will be upgraded, including smart ticketing.

11. Roads

There will need to be new roads and junctions built to give access to new development around Exeter. These will be designed to reduce queues and congestion. Devon County Council will also look at how they can cut queues at current congestion hotspots.

12. Car Parking

This involves work in the city centre to reduce queues for car parks. Exeter City Council and Devon County Council will also look at whether charging for car parking spaces could raise money for further transport improvements.

13. Electric and Greener Vehicles

Exeter City Council and Devon County Council will encourage the use of electric vehicles and other greener fuel technologies. We will provide charging points and ask developers of new sites to do the same.

14. Freight Transport

Because larger vehicles release more pollution, special steps need to be taken to try to cut the pollution caused by freight transport into and out of the city. This will involve reducing the amount of time that goods vehicles sit in queuing traffic and working with freight operators to make their vehicles greener.

All of the measures listed above here are included in the new Air Quality Action Plan but have been taken from other plans that Exeter City Council and Devon County Council already have. They will all help improve air pollution, but have not been designed just to do that. This is good because the measures are more likely to go ahead if they have lots of benefits (such as improving congestion as well as air quality).

Exeter City Council has also chosen some new things which we can do to improve air quality, as well as the things listed above. These new measures are written in the next part of the Action Plan and are listed and explained here:

15. Low Emissions Strategy

Exeter City Council has been given money by government to write a Low Emissions Strategy for the city. This is a detailed plan which explains how we will take every realistic opportunity to cut the amount of traffic pollution in the city. For example it will look at how the Council can encourage businesses to use greener transport, or to travel less and it will find ways to make new development cause as little new pollution as possible.

16. The Health Effects of Air Pollution

We will try to understand what effect the levels of air pollution measured in Exeter are having on people's health. We will look at ways to help vulnerable people, who may be affected more than others by poor air quality. This measure will take a lot of research to get answers, and the Council will need help from health professionals to make any changes.

17. Global Warming

Carbon dioxide released by activity in the city is contributing to global warming. The City Council has plans to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide the city produces, and many of the actions that are proposed will also cut air pollution. For example encouraging people to walk and cycle instead of using the car will cut NO₂ pollution as well as carbon dioxide. We want to make sure that these win-win situations are recognised and highlighted. There are a few measures that might be good for carbon dioxide, but bad for air quality though, and we must also make sure that these do not go ahead without further thought about their effects.

18. Understanding Air Pollution – Devon County Council, Exeter City Council and Developers

At the moment air quality may not be given as much importance as it should be when decisions are made about new development, or the Councils make new plans and policies. This part of the Action Plan proposes a better way of understanding the effect of schemes on air pollution levels, and giving air quality more importance.

19. Understanding Air Pollution – Community

The City Council also wants to make people in the community more aware of air pollution and its effects. It will use different media to do this and try to encourage local communities that are involved in planning future development in their areas to think about air quality as part of their work.

Further Information and Progress

The full version of the Air Quality Action Plan is on the Council's website to download. The Council also writes a report every year which shows the latest air quality monitoring results. We will also report every year on progress with implementing the Action Plan. All these can be found at:

<http://www.exeter.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4292&listid=4261>

The website also has general information about air pollution, and this will be improved as part of the Action Plan work. If you have any questions about air pollution, or what we are doing, or you want to get involved, please contact:

Alex Bulleid
01392 265474
environmental.protection@exeter.gov.uk