

Cabinet Meeting: Monday, 30 June 2025

Question from: Jane Pugh

Question to: Councillor Durrans, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Public Services and Communities

QUESTION

My question to Cabinet on Monday April 14th 2025 had regard to the fact that Sowerby Bridge has high levels of respiratory conditions such as Asthma and COPD. I looked at this website recommended in your response: The DEFRA UK AIR website <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/air-pollution/> However, this only gives average readings for counties and some towns, so wasn't very helpful for me.

I looked at Calderdale's Air Quality Annual Status Report. Of the seven monitors in AQMA No.2 (Sowerby Bridge), two were in exceedance of the annual mean air quality objective in 2023. The highest concentration at a location of relevant exposure was recorded at site SB1 (41.8µg/m³) and concentrations increased at all but one of the diffusion tubes in the AQMA relative to 2022.

Even outside the Sowerby Bridge AQMA, the trends show that the NO₂ concentrations were higher at all but one of the diffusion tubes in 2023 than in 2021.

When I looked at the Air Quality Action Plan I found different results for 2023 of the concentrations of NO₂ showing that the concentration levels were exceeded and require significant reductions.

Calderdale's Let's Clear The Air campaign only focuses on transportation-related emissions, which is only part of the problem in Sowerby Bridge. I am very concerned that emissions from the approved small waste incinerator plant in Belmont would make the air quality in Sowerby Bridge worse, as did Government Inspector Woolcock.

How could the Cabinet support the recommendation to approve the Environmental Permit for an incinerator which would only add to the poor air quality in Sowerby Bridge?

Response

In 2023 there were 59 diffusion tubes strategically located across the borough to capture a reflection of the highest levels of NO₂ which primarily come from road traffic sources. Of the 59 tubes deployed, only 9 exceeded the national level of 40µg/m³.

Comparison of the 2021 results compared with 2023 does not allow an accurate conclusion on any trends to be drawn, as there is no way of calculating the effects on road traffic reduction from the pandemic compared with 2023. As such it is better to

compare results from pre the pandemic in 2019 with those post pandemic (2023) which shows a general decrease in NO₂ levels.

'Let's Clear the Air' campaign focuses on transportation-related emissions rather than industry because industrial sectors that have the potential to cause harmful pollution are tightly regulated through existing legislation frameworks such as the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016. As such the focus was on transportation where small behavioural changes and sustainable transport can bring about a positive impact on air quality.

There seems to be a discrepancy between the SB3 monitoring figures between the ASR and the AQAP. This will be investigated and corrected.