

Overview & Scrutiny Management Board

2 February 2021



Report of: Chief Executive

Title: Clean Air Zone update

Purpose of the report

- This report provides a written update for Scrutiny that covers the background, current position and developments of Bristol's Clean Air Zone proposals through the provision of draft technical data/information to enable Scrutiny to assess the current draft data and provide input in to the final report which will be taken to Cabinet for decision on the 25th February
- The report shares two DRAFT reports with Scrutiny ahead of finalisation and approval, which have been shared with the Government's Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) for consideration and review. These documents remain as drafts and are shared with Scrutiny in advance of them being finalised and are subject to change. They are indicative and will only be finalised after a period of review and refinement with JAQU and the project team.
- A presentation will also be given to provide an update on the public Consultation that took place between the 8 October and 13 December 2020, prior to the final report being concluded for inclusion in the Full Business Case.



1. Background

After substantial discussions between Bristol City Council and the government's Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU), and calls between the Mayor and the Minister, progress has been made towards a clean air plan for Bristol. This includes a new timetable, recognising the progress made towards alternative options for achieving cleaner air. Subsequently, on 20 August 2020, Government issued Bristol City Council with a new [Direction](#) regarding the implementation of a Local plan for a Clean Air Zone in Bristol.).

The Direction and associated letter of 13 March 2020 preceded the passing of the Coronavirus Act 2020, meaning that the implications of pandemic management policies had not been considered in setting the submission dates. Since then, Bristol City Council has been working closely with JAQU to understand the wider impacts of the global coronavirus pandemic on this programme of work.

In continuing discussions with JAQU throughout this period, Bristol City Council has continued to assess the situation and monitor the impacts of COVID-19. In April 2020 JAQU issued a statement from the Joint Heads of Department confirming that no Clean Air Zones would be implemented before January 2021. This was in recognition of the challenges and unknown entities that the situation presented.

Despite the challenges that the first lockdown (which commenced on the 23 March 2020) presented, council officers made significant progress in continuing with the additional required modelling and technical assessments as set out in the letter from Minister Pow on the 13th March 2020. These were all submitted in line with the requirements placed upon us.

Following the submission of the required information and subsequent discussions with JAQU officers, the Council was issued with a new [Direction](#) on 20 August 2020 which required the Council to:

'Implement the local plan for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) compliance, specifying a Medium Charging Clean Air Zone Class C with small Charging Clean Air Zone Class D and additional measures, subject to provision of further evidence to be submitted to the Secretary of State in accordance with Article 5'.

'To be implemented as soon as possible and at least in time to bring forward compliance to 2023.'

This superseded the previous Direction of the 13 March 2020, which required the Council to submit a Full Business Case (FBC) by the 18 September 2020 and to provide all required modelling by 10 April 2020 (later extended to June to allow for further analysis to take place as requested by JAQU

This new Direction was as a direct result of intense engagement with JAQU which has continued in order to satisfy both parties that the Bristol Clean Air Zone is the right strategic fit for Bristol and that will meet the legal requirements.

COVID-19:

An Outline Business Case (OBC) that was submitted to JAQU in November 2019 included a set of proposals that offered the most appropriate measures for Bristol at that time and that were

aligned with the Mayor's strategic vision for the future development and direction of the city. However, the situation changed dramatically, without warning, due to the global pandemic caused by COVID-19.

The council has reviewed the impact of the pandemic and the inevitable change to the project baseline that this presents. The methodologies, modelling and assumptions that had been used up until the outbreak of COVID-19 became outdated. As such, consideration needed to be given to how we moved forward in a way that delivered cleaner air and improved health benefits to Bristol, recognising the unprecedented times we are in while also seeking to support economic recovery.

Officers have been in continual dialogue with JAQU to consider the most suitable manner in which Bristol can respond to the pandemic and take into account the new environment. In a short space of time and with the help of enabling legislation from Government, we were able to make some radical changes to some of the most polluting areas in Bristol. Baldwin Street and Bristol Bridge were closed to through traffic other than buses, motorbikes and taxis to help insulate and promote local bus services and encourage residents to adopt public transport and active modes of travel. This was particularly important during the pandemic to create extra capacity on buses and space for social distancing. Other measures included new segregated cycle routes on Park Row, Upper Maudlin St and Lewin's Mead. These routes improved cycle access to the central hospital and Bristol University and our plans for the autumn and winter will expand the area of focus to our local neighbourhoods, improving livability and air quality while protecting local businesses.

New proposals that will be put forward separate to the CAZ, will seek to build on these measures and develop further schemes to ensure we are successful in improving air quality on our most polluted corridors, making schemes permanent or extended as required.

The need to take account of the changes that have occurred inevitably means that the baseline data changed as a result of changed traffic patterns, and altered travel behaviours; these changes needed to be factored into the evidence base for future decision making. In order to do this a new three-staged modelling approach was agreed with JAQU to update the baseline and provide the most current evidence to make decisions.

A methodology was adopted that carried out modelling and sensitivity testing (reports that test the modelling results against different scenarios) as well as capturing real time information from existing air quality monitoring units and the automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) data.

The preferred outcome would be not to have a charging zone if the evidence supported this, and the Mayor gave a call to action to the city to encourage a continuation of the travel and traffic behaviors experienced during lockdown which led to less pollution and clean air.

There has been a great deal of behavioural, lifestyle and working changes, such as working from home and therefore not needing to travel into the city centre and organisations quickly adapting to new technology to allow people to work and operate in different ways. We are now in lockdown 3 which will have meant a further change again and we continue to monitor traffic levels. There may well be further periods of lockdown but the measures implemented must suit the average volumes i.e. out of a lockdown period. This must be considered alongside technical modelling data and consultation feedback to provide an overall picture of what is required to reach compliance in the shortest possible time.

This will be fully assessed by JAQU following receipt of the full business case on or before the 26 February 2021. The full business case will go to Cabinet for consideration on the 25 February 2021. Recommendations will be based on the finalised technical data following review by JAQU as well as consultation responses and EQUIA

Any income derived from a charging zone must be directed back into schemes to improve air quality in the City and mitigate any impacts of diversionary trips around the edge of the zone, this may include the roll out of liveable neighbourhoods.

Consultation:

Consultation began on the 8th of October and due to the implications of lockdown 2, it was extended to 13th December 2020. Two charging options were consulted on; a standalone small CAZ D and medium CAZ C with a small CAZ D in case either option are required. The consultation included all aspects of the possible schemes such as charge levels, timings, mitigations and exemptions.

Meanwhile, engagement has continued to take place with our key stakeholders including Business West and colleagues from the University Bristol NHS Trust.

2. Reports:

Two reports have been submitted for JAQU to review; a Draft Technical Note (TN) – Bristol Street Space Schemes (SSS) and Small CAZ D Report, and a Draft Traffic Volumes Report.

The Draft TN shows the impact of the recently implemented Street Space Schemes (SSS) on the original baseline for the project. It also includes a comparison with the previously proposed schemes, providing insight into the likely impact of the new SSS and Fast Track measures. This was to enable decisions to be made; whether two zones are still required, if a charging zone is required would the smaller zone alone be adequate in achieving the overall aim of the project; adherence with the legal direction to reach compliance in the shortest time possible, or whether no charging zone is now required to reach compliance.

The Draft TN touches on the impact of Covid-19 on traffic behavior and patterns, seeking to assess if this would be enough to warrant the implementation of non- charging measures. It also aligns with the Mayor's preferred approach to achieve compliance without imposing a vehicle charge if possible and ensures compliance with the legal direction. Provisional conclusions are drawn which indicate that, according to the data available at this time, a smaller zone may still be required to reach compliance in the shortest time. The Street Space Schemes have clearly made a positive impact on air quality in the central area and this is borne out by the modelling. However as the schemes do not specifically target more polluting vehicles, it would appear further measures may be required. While we have seen a demonstrable fall in traffic, particularly in the central area, we have not had a sufficiently long period of normal traffic flows to fully understand the long term benefits. This is particularly relevant when considering public transport where we still have significant capacity reductions. Final recommendations on this will be made once the technical teams at JAQU have reviewed all the evidence and are satisfied that they have all the information they need in order to make a decision.

A separate piece of work also took place to review traffic levels pre, during and post lockdowns which is also attached to this report, regarding traffic volumes. It covers the first two lockdown periods as this was applicable at the time that the data was submitted to JAQU. A team of experts reviewed the data available from ANPR cameras and air quality monitoring data to see what patterns occurred with traffic behavior and traffic levels throughout the pandemic and compared this to 2019 data. Conclusions were drawn as to what this data showed with the ultimate decision on the next steps again being made by JAQU. This report will be finalised once the review is completed and feedback is received from JAQU.

Both reports are in draft form as they are currently with JAQU for review and comments, therefore there may be changes or refinements made to the reports. When the review period is complete recommendations will be considered and included within the full business case.

3. Timeline:

We have completed the three stage modelling process and have submitted this draft information to JAQU for consideration. This is to be reviewed by 2 panels – the D-IRP (Delivery Independent Review Panel) and the T-IRP (Technical Independent Review Panel) and follow up refinements and qualifications will continue to be made to the reports until they satisfy the requirements of the Panels and JAQU.

In summary:

- The D-IRP (Delivery Independent Review Panel) took place on the 20th January 2021 and we await the outcome of that review. We are unable to state when this will be signed off as it depends on the questions and/or clarifications required
- The Draft TN and Draft Traffic Volumes report will be reviewed by T-IRP on the 26 January 2021. We are unable to state when this will be signed off as it depends on the questions and/or clarifications required
- Full Business Case to be submitted to Cabinet on 25 February 2021 prior to it being submitted to Government before 26 February 2021
- A CAZ to be in place by 29 October 2021 at the latest, assuming that evidence demonstrate that this is required
- The full business case will be brought to OSMB prior to consideration by Cabinet, following publication of documents

Appendices;

Appendix 1 Bristol SSS and Small CAZ D DRAFT Report Jan 21

Appendix 2 CAZ Programme Board Report - DRAFT Traffic Volume changes