

West Yorkshire Low Emission Strategy Review – Summary, Recommendations and draft Delivery Plan

This summary presents the initial findings of a benchmarking review to evaluate the delivery of the West Yorkshire Low Emission Strategy (WYLES) since adoption by the partner councils and Combined Authority in 2016/17.

The WYLES covers all road traffic emissions but has a focus on local air quality management. Managing air quality falls within the remit of local authorities. The WYLES commits the West Yorkshire partner councils to reducing local transport emissions, especially nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter. The WYLES sets out a series of actions to address air quality challenges caused by transport emissions.

Benchmarking Review Approach

The benchmarking review considered projects in delivery or completed by all partners since WYLES adoption that relate to the 10 strategic objectives of WYLES. The review considered project objectives, delivery outputs, timeframes, governance and working arrangements and funding streams.

The 10 strategic objectives of WYLES.

1. A Clean Air Zone will be introduced within the Leeds district, and elsewhere where necessary, to control emissions from the most polluting vehicles.
2. We will work with West Yorkshire bus operators to accelerate investment in newer buses, emission abatement technology and alternative fuels and technologies to reduce emissions through the implementation of the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy and Bus 18 Project.
3. We will accelerate the uptake of plug-in electric cars and vans through improved electric vehicle charging infrastructure and the implementation of an Electric Vehicle Strategy.
4. We will introduce the Eco Stars fleet recognition scheme to support businesses, bus operators and public sector fleet managers to reduce emissions from their fleet operations.
5. We will work with our partners to develop infrastructure to support alternative fuels and technology for transport including: natural gas, biomethane, LNG and hydrogen.
6. We will support the taxi industry to help the transition to low emission vehicles including demonstrating economic benefits; supporting funding bids and considering policy incentives to promote the uptake of ultra-low emission taxis.
7. We will use the West Yorkshire Transport Strategy and Leeds City Region Strategic Economic Plan to help deliver the WYLES objectives, including improved cycling and walking provision; better public transport; low emission energy production and use, and sustainable infrastructure to deliver “Good Growth”.

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8. We will use the West Yorkshire Air Quality and Planning Technical Guide to deliver sustainable developments and deliver air quality improvements.
9. We will use our influence to promote low emission transport through the use of the West Yorkshire Low Emission Procurement Guide in the procurement of vehicles, goods and services and lead by example to reduce emissions from our own fleet operations.
10. We will continue to raise awareness of the impact of poor air quality with the public, policy makers and partners to improve air quality through changing behaviour, influencing policy, access funding and working together to deliver the objectives of this low emissions strategy.

The review approach and data collection were agreed and carried out by the WYLES Delivery Officer, through a WYLES Delivery Group which includes officers from all the West Yorkshire partner councils, Public Health England and the Combined Authority.

Key Findings

The review identified 23 schemes developed since the adoption of the WYLES where at least one of the strategic objectives of the WYLES formed part of the primary aims of the projects.

The WYLES review considered air quality related projects across all five districts in West Yorkshire. However, the scope of the review did not include any of the Clean Air Zone programmes under development as these are applicable to Bradford and Leeds only and are beyond the remit of the WYLES.

Projects contributing to the WYLES objectives were identified in all five West Yorkshire districts. However, the review highlighted some challenges in relation to the delivery of the WYLES and related projects.

The initial findings of the benchmarking review have suggested the following:

Awareness and Knowledge

- Inconsistent levels of awareness and knowledge of the WYLES with stakeholders and decision makers, with implications for investment decisions (see Investment).
- Inconsistent awareness, understanding and implementation of the WYLES Technical Planning Guide and WYLES Procurement Guide across the partner councils.

Coordination and targeted delivery

- There is some good practice and delivery but there are issues in how the partners are organised and resourced to deliver.
- Projects tended to be developed in isolation and lacked a coordinated approach, rather than to a consistent, region-wide plan.
- There were a variety of drivers behind projects, not necessarily originating from the WYLES itself, resulting in a lack of consistency.

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- Following the focus on developing and adopting the WYLES, officer working groups and collaboration had not been maintained to the same level of resource and commitment – the reasons for this were multifaceted but linked to competing priorities.
- The funding and appointment of a WYLES Delivery Officer role is a response to strengthening WYLES coordination

Investment

- WYLES delivery has relied on existing resources accessed by Air Quality/ Environmental Health sections of the partner councils, supplemented by grant funding. Revenue funding is limited and has competing priorities.
- Levels of investment in air quality projects varied significantly between the partner Councils - although all partners councils were investing in air quality improvements the level of investment is inconsistent
- The Combined Authority has made available funding through Integrated Transport Block and other grants e.g. Clean Bus Technology Fund, Ultra Low Emission Vehicle Taxi Infrastructure Scheme.
- Bradford and Leeds will benefit from Clean Air Zone investment by Defra (this was not considered as part of the review as it is applicable to Bradford and Leeds only).
- Future access to resources, capital and especially revenue funding, is identified as a risk across the partner councils.

Monitoring and evaluation

- There is a limited understanding of the impact of the schemes and programmes on Air Quality improvement - this hindered the review's assessment of the impact of the WYLES delivery as a whole.
- Air quality improvement is often used as a justification and outcome of other programmes and projects – but the review found that air quality data is not generally considered in scheme evaluation.
- It is not always possible to measure direct improvement of air quality, however for the purpose of this review, other evidence can be, and has been, used to measure success, such as the Public Health England methodology for assessing improvements in outdoor air quality and public health.

Draft Recommendations

Draft recommendations have been developed from the initial benchmarking findings:

1. Develop a Delivery Plan to accelerate WYLES delivery;
2. Develop opportunities for partnership and collaborative working, led by the WYLES Delivery Officer to support WYLES delivery;
3. Identify successful initiatives from outside the region with potential for application in West Yorkshire;

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4. Work with partners to influence the implementation of new projects to support the delivery of WYLES aims where appropriate;
5. Strengthen air quality monitoring and evaluation, collating and assessing evidence to monitor progress against WYLES aims;
6. Implement a Communications Plan to raise the profile and understanding of WYLES;
7. Develop a project pipeline for air quality improvement schemes in line with the WYLES aims and explore funding opportunities for delivery.

Preliminary Delivery Plan

A preliminary Delivery plan has been developed by the partner councils which applies the initial findings and draft recommendations of the WYLES review, setting out a series of suggested prioritised activities for enhancing and accelerating the implementation of the WYLES (Table 1).

This draft plan is the first step in the development of a detailed delivery plan, which is proposed to be developed by a WYLES Delivery Group encompassing all of the partner councils including the Combined Authority, and overseen by the Zero Emissions Transport Working Group.

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Table 1: Draft Delivery Plan - Suggested prioritised activities for further development

	Action Area	Task	Summary	Delivery Timeframe	Delivery & Funding Mechanisms
1	Awareness and Knowledge	Communications and Engagement Plan	Develop an air quality communication and engagement plan to increase awareness and understanding of the WYLES, to include external and internal stakeholder.	Spring 2020	To be developed by WYLES Delivery Officer
2		West Yorkshire Air Quality Campaign and Engagement Programme	Deliver an external communication and engagement programme to raise awareness and promote air quality schemes and initiatives.	Tbc – funding dependant	Submitted bid to DEFRA Local Air Quality Grant Scheme (Outcome expected Spring 2020)
3		EcoStars Fleet Recognition Scheme	Continue EcoStars scheme working with freight operators to reduced emissions via fuel efficiency, fleet renewal and driving practices.	3 year scheme to 21/22	Local Transport Plan ITB programme 2019-22
4	Investment	Air Quality Scheme Pipeline	Develop a pipeline of projects and initiatives to support WYLES implementation. Live document, used to prioritise activities and identify funding streams for delivery. To be developed alongside Zero Carbon workstreams.	Ongoing	To be developed by WYLES Delivery Group
5		Identify funding streams	Investigate potential funding streams for implementation of WYLES.	Ongoing	To be developed by WYLES Delivery Officer
6	Monitoring and evaluation	Air Quality Sensor	Procure five real time, mobile air quality sensors to support scheme design, monitoring and evaluation.	3 year scheme to 21/22	Local Transport Plan ITB programme 2019-22
7		Air Quality Evidence	Promote good practice for air quality improvement assessments in scheme design, monitoring and evaluation where air quality objectives are set.	Ongoing	To be developed by WYLES Delivery Officer
8	Coordination and targeted delivery	Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure	Support the development of an Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Plan to support uptake of electric vehicles.	Spring /Summer 2020	Local Transport Plan ITB programme 2019-22
9		Bus Network Air Quality Improvements	Work with Combined Authority and Bus Operators through the West Yorkshire Bus Alliance to support air quality improvements in the WY bus network.	Ongoing	To be delivered by WYLES Delivery Group
10		Land Use Planning	Develop and agree good practices regarding the implementation and monitoring of the WYLES Planning Technical Guide and consistent use of the updated version of the guide.	Summer 2020	To be delivered by WYLES Delivery Officer
11		Procurement	Support implementation of West Yorkshire Low Emission Procurement Guide in partner Councils and Combined Authority.	Summer 2020	To be delivered by WYLES Delivery Officer