

## Motion to Council, October 14<sup>th</sup> 2025.

Oct 2nd 2025

Cllr Lynn Wetenhall

### This Council notes that:

1. According to the World Health Organisation's (WHO)s latest guidelines the annual mean concentration of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), a potent pollutant affecting human health, should not exceed 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. The UK has set a legal limit at 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. This means that whilst one NO<sub>2</sub> monitoring site in Exeter continues to breach UK law, **92% of Exeter's monitoring sites don't meet the WHO guidelines<sup>1</sup>.**
2. Devon's Director of Public Health is clear on the dangers of air pollution from traffic, pointing out that there are long term impacts on a wide range of health conditions<sup>2</sup>. As the Director points out it is now accepted that there is no safe level of NO<sub>2</sub>.
3. Exeter City Council is responsible for Air quality monitoring, and the production of an annual Air Quality Status report and an Air Quality Action Plan which sets out measures that will improve air quality.
4. Regular movement along a road with high pollution levels impacts on health<sup>3</sup>. **Several roads which are used regularly by pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, have very high levels of NO<sub>2</sub><sup>4</sup>.** Many of these are also residential roads. For example, in 2023 ECC monitoring data recorded: Honiton Road 35.4 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, Alphington St 34.3µg/m<sup>3</sup>, Red Cow Village 31.7; Fore St, Heavitree 30.6 µg/m<sup>3</sup>;York Road 26.9 Cowley Bridge Road 25.9; Longbrook Street 20 µg/m<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on Air Quality Status Report 2024 figures,

<sup>2</sup> Email to ECC from DCC Director Public Health, June 2024.

*There is clear international evidence for a 'dose response effect' where on average a 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup> increase in NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations (previous day) was significantly associated with increased risk of total (0.46%), cardiovascular (0.37%), and respiratory (0.47%) mortality. The concentration-response curves were almost linear, even below the current WHO air quality guidelines (There is no 'safe' level, with disagreement between UK Government's higher limits, and the World Health Organisation as to appropriate and achievable limits). Around 1 in 20 deaths in Exeter were attributable to air pollution (NB. old modelling, updated 2022, data now available states 3.1%).*

*We need to be clear there are acute and chronic effects of air pollution, including nitrogen dioxide; exceedance is only one part of a complex picture. Long-term exposure can cause chronic conditions through systemic inflammation, whilst acute episodes can exacerbate existing conditions, such as asthma. Exposure to traffic pollution can create overall effects, such as reduction in lung function in population, with an increase in prevalence of, for example, children with clinically relevant declines.*

*It should be borne in mind that there are a number of other pollutants from vehicles that can cause additional harms such as, of those studied, benzene or particulate matter. Whether NO<sub>2</sub> is a good proxy is open to debate, particularly when the proportion of PM is increasing due to heavier electric vehicles."*

<sup>3</sup> <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/air-pollution/effects?view=short-term>

<sup>4</sup> Figures from Air Quality Status Report 2024.

5. People deserve to have clear information about the risks posed by walking, cycling or driving on roads in Exeter with high levels of NO<sub>2</sub> pollution. This will enable people to understand air pollution levels and their health impacts, helping them make informed choices about travel routes. Currently, such information is not easily accessible or clear on any Council webpages.
6. **Woodburning stoves and open fires in homes create small air particles (PM) which pose a serious health risk to those in the home and add to external pollution.**
7. **Black mould and damp** cause significant health issues to those living with it and pollute internal living environment. Awaab's Law<sup>5</sup> is a new law that comes into force on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2025. It requires social landlords to fix reported damp, mould and emergency repairs within strict timeframes. However, damp and mould can affect all types of housing and tenures. The City Council's webpages make no reference to the health risks posed by mould and damp in the home

**Therefore this Council resolves that:**

- The Council's webpages are updated to provide:
  - **full and transparent information about air pollution levels on specific roads and the health impacts of living on or regularly using those roads** whether as a pedestrian, cyclist or motorist.
  - **Information on alternative walking and cycling routes or travel modes for known regular commuter and school run routes**, avoiding the most polluted roads.
  - **Fuller Information on the health impacts of air pollution from all sources**, both inside the home (for wood burners, open fires, mould and damp) and outside and actions to take to reduce these impacts