Place Standard tool
Air Quality lens
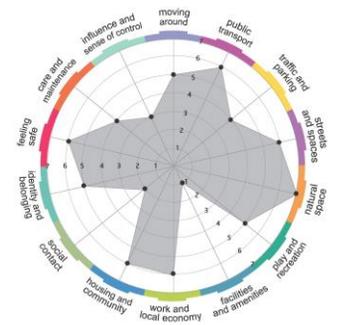
Introduction

This Air Quality lens is a resource to support the use of the Place Standard tool to help you:

• Think about air quality in your area, and what could change to improve it.
• Include additional prompts and information for the Place Standard tool, to support discussions on air quality.

The core Place Standard tool can be found at www.placestandard.scot

Background on Air Quality

There are areas of poor air quality in some of our towns, cities and neighbourhoods. Air pollution mainly affects children, the elderly, and those with underlying health issues such as asthma.

Given that most of Scotland's population live and work in urban environments, transport emissions are the most important, but not the only, source of air pollution affecting our health. Other sources include heating (such as wood burning stoves) and agriculture.

Air pollution produced in our urban areas also affects the wider environment, causing damage in other places. There is also a wealth of data to show that poor air quality is a more significant issue in already disadvantaged communities.

Tackling air pollution can be challenging, partly because it is invisible. It needs a partnership approach, involving the Government, its agencies, local authorities, business and industry, non-governmental organisations and the general public. Many of the solutions to poor air quality have wider benefits for climate change and noise, as well as making places more pleasant to spend time in.

The Place Standard tool provides a framework to structure a conversation between everyone involved in improving air quality.

Factors affecting air quality

Many factors influence air quality. Street design and the local transport mix can affect concentrations at street level, and how exposed people are to pollution.

For example, street canyons can make air quality worse in the local area by trapping pollutants at ground level.

Diagram illustrating Street canyon effect

wind direction

recirculating pollutants
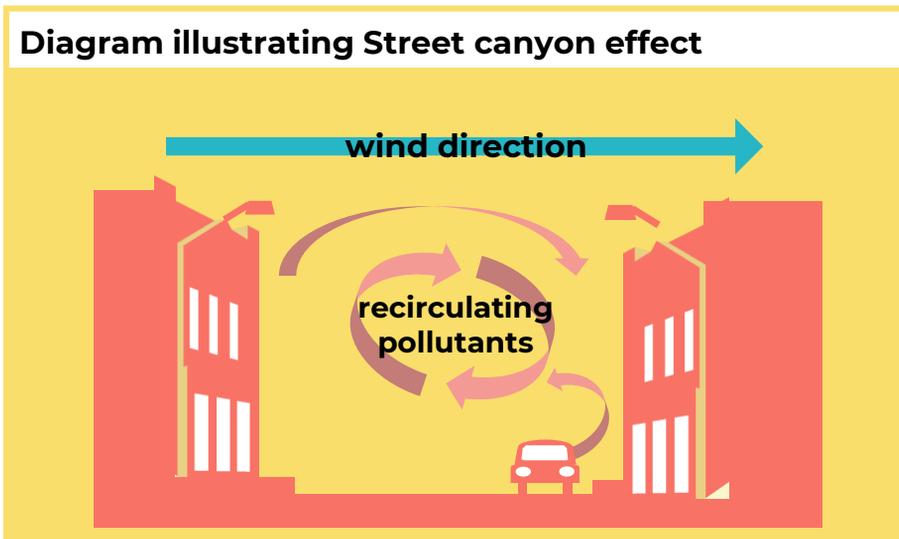
How we see our surroundings is also an important factor in how we use our streets, either for recreation or travel. People's views of air quality are important. If people feel there is a problem with air quality or congestion, they may avoid using certain streets or places.

Low Emission Zones

The four largest cities in Scotland (Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee) will introduce Low Emission Zones (LEZs) in 2022.

LEZs will restrict access on certain road spaces allowing only the cleanest vehicles, however there may still be air quality issues . It is therefore vital that other actions are put in place to increase walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport options, and to deliver wider improvements for your place.

Further information on LEZs can be found here:
https://www.lowemissionzones.scot/about

Where can I find further information on air quality?

Cleaner Air for Scotland 2' CAFS2 (2021) brings together Scottish Government policies which affect air quality into a single framework. It sets out a series of actions for improving air quality.

Information on how local authorities monitor and manage air quality can be found here: http://www.scottishairquality.scot/laqm/ Your local environmental health officer may be able to help with any queries.

The current Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) can be found here: http://www.scottishairquality.scot/laqm/aqma

You can also download an app for real time air quality information: http://www.scottishairquality.scot/stay-informed/apps

The following pages contain some additional prompts for use to encourage discussion about air quality when using the **Place Standard tool**.

The Place Standard tool - How clean is our air?
Additional prompts

Introduction
We are interested in your views on air quality.
You may wish to consider the following:

• What do you think the air quality is like in your area?
• What do you think are the main causes and effects of poor air quality in your area?
• How do you think air quality can be improved?
• What can you do to reduce the amount of pollution you generate or are exposed to?

Moving around
• Are you aware of the smell of street traffic exhaust?
• Do you avoid certain areas, streets or roads because of heavy traffic and poor air quality?
• Are you aware of any health problems (e.g. breathing difficulties or eye/nose/throat/skin irritation) caused by walking and cycling in busy areas?
• What could encourage people to leave their car at home and walk or cycle more?

Public Transport
• Is public transport clean, efficient and cost-effective to reduce private car-use?

Streets and Spaces
• Street canyons increase the amount of emissions and create poor street ventilation (see diagram below). Are you aware of street canyon effects in your area?
• What action can be taken to reduce emissions and improve street ventilation to make streets more pleasant and attractive for people to use?

Diagram illustrating street canyon effect

wind direction

recirculating
pollutants
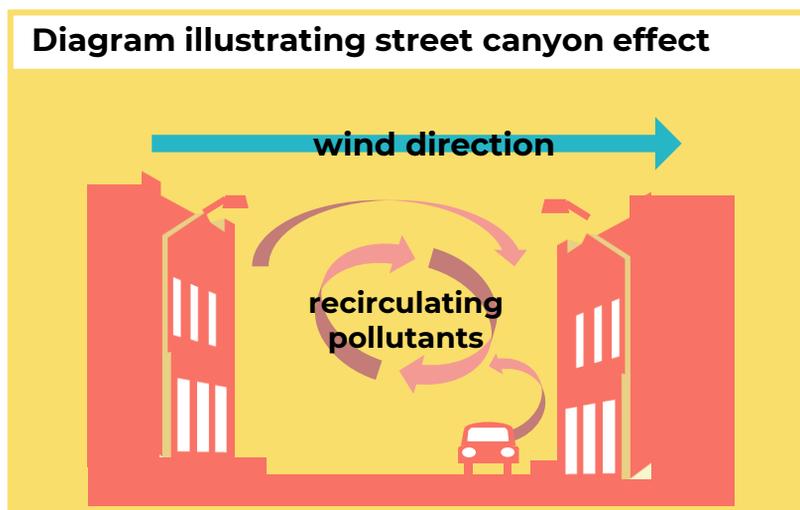
The Place Standard tool - How clean is our air?
Additional prompts

Natural Space
• Are natural spaces next near busy roads? Are they well used?

Play and Recreation
• Are play and recreation spaces near busy roads? Are they well used?
• Is there any screening (i.e. trees, hedges, etc.)?

Housing and Community
• Do new housing developments encourage walking and cycling?
• Are services and support within a reasonable distance and easy to access by
• walking, cycling or public transport?
• Are there facilities for electric cars to re-charge?
• Is there significant use of wood/coal burning stoves or biomass in the area?

Social Interaction
• Are quiet spaces with seats etc. located away from busy streets/roads?
• Are street-side café, food stalls etc. affected by traffic and traffic congestion?
• Does traffic have an effect on people stopping to talk to others or spend time here?

Influence and Sense of Control
• Do you feel able to contribute to decisions about air quality? Do you need more information?
• What would you do to improve air quality here, and how?

You can use these prompts to supplement those in the Place Standard tool to help encourage discussions on air quality.