



Comhairle Cathrach  
& Contae **Luimnigh**

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**Limerick** City  
& County Council

## Air Quality Report for Limerick

May 2021

## **Introduction**

Limerick City and County Council currently has air quality monitors operating at three locations in the metropolitan area of Limerick to provide live indicative air quality data to the public. These monitors are located in Mungret, Castletroy and O'Connell Street.

The monitors measure particulate matter and gases, including nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO) and ozone (O<sub>3</sub>). Real time data from these monitors can be accessed at [www.airqweb.com](http://www.airqweb.com).

The monitors were removed on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2021 and were in the UK for servicing and calibration through March 2021. A replacement particulate matter monitor was installed in Mungret to allow for continued data collection. The PM monitors for Castletroy and O Connell ST and the gas monitor for Castletroy were reinstalled on the 6<sup>th</sup> April. The gas monitors at Mungret and O'Connell St were reinstalled on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April.

The following report is a presentation of the results of that monitoring.

### ***Particulate matter***

Particulate matter (PM) which is commonly used as an indicator of dust particles in air, including total suspended particulates, PM<sub>10</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>1</sub>.

PM<sub>10</sub> is particulate matter 10 microns or less in diameter, PM<sub>2.5</sub> is particulate matter 2.5 microns or less in diameter and PM<sub>1</sub> is particulate matter 1 micron or less. PM<sub>2.5</sub> is generally described as fine particulates. As a comparison, the width of a human hair is around 100 microns so approximately 40 PM<sub>2.5</sub> will fit along its width.

The particulate matter indices that are of primary concern for human health are PM<sub>10</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>1</sub>. These are the sub-fraction of particles, which can penetrate into the alveoli (air sacs) in the lungs. Chronic exposure to particles contributes to the risk of developing cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, as well as of lung cancer.

### ***Nitrogen dioxide***

Nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) is produced during combustion at high temperatures with the main sources in Ireland being vehicles and power stations. Short-term exposure to NO<sub>2</sub> is linked to adverse respiratory

effects including airway inflammation in healthy people and increased respiratory symptoms in asthmatics. Long-term exposure is associated with increased risk of respiratory infections in children.

### ***Sulphur dioxide***

Sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) is a gas, which is formed when sulphur-containing fuels (e.g. coal and oil) are burned in power stations, domestically and elsewhere. Impacts of high concentrations of SO<sub>2</sub> include temporary breathing difficulties for those that suffer from respiratory conditions such as asthma. Long-term exposure to SO<sub>2</sub> can aggravate existing cardiovascular disease and respiratory illness.

### ***Carbon monoxide***

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless gas, formed from incomplete oxidation during combustion of fuel. Outdoor sources of CO are mainly from vehicles with concentrations generally highest in areas of traffic congestion. CO enters the bloodstream through the lungs and impairs the delivery of oxygen to the body's organs and tissues. The health impact of CO concentrations in ambient air is most serious for those suffering cardiovascular disease such as angina.

### ***Ozone***

Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) is formed as a secondary pollutant in the troposphere from the chemical reaction of NO<sub>x</sub> (the two pollutants nitric oxide, NO, and nitrogen dioxide, NO<sub>2</sub>), CO and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the presence of sunlight. Ozone can also be present in the troposphere due to downward flux from the ozone-rich stratosphere, where it occurs naturally and has a role in absorbing harmful UV radiation. Ground-level ozone is depleted through reactions with traffic-emitted pollutants and so levels of ozone are higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

Ozone irritates the eyes, nose, throat and lungs. It can destroy throat and lung tissue leading to a decrease in lung function and respiratory symptoms such as coughing, shortness of breath, aggravated asthma and other lung diseases.

## Air Quality Standards

The CAFE (Clean Air for Europe) Directive sets air quality standards for member states in Europe and has been transposed into Irish legislation by the **Air Quality Standards Regulations**. The limit values for particulates are given below.

Pollutant	Objective	Averaging Period	Limit Value	Basis of Application of the Limit Value	Limit Value Attainment Date
PM <sub>10</sub>	Protection of human health	24-hours	50 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Not to be exceeded more than 35 times in a calendar year	1 Jan 2005
	Protection of human health	Calendar year	40 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Annual mean	1 Jan 2005
PM <sub>2.5</sub>	Protection of human health	Calendar year	25 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Annual mean	1 Jan 2005
	Protection of human health	Calendar year	20 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Annual mean	1 Jan 2020
NO <sub>2</sub>	Protection of human health	1-hour	200 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Not to be exceeded more than 18 times in a calendar year	1 Jan 2010
	Protection of human health	Calendar year	40 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Not to be exceeded more than 18 times in a calendar year	1 Jan 2010
SO <sub>2</sub>	Protection of human health	1-hour	150 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Not to be exceeded more than 24 times in a calendar year	1 Jan 2005
	Protection of human health	24-hours	125 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Not to be exceeded more than 3 times in a calendar year	1 Jan 2005
CO	Protection of human health	Maximum 8-hour mean*	10mg/m <sup>3</sup>	60% of the hourly running 8-hour averages	1 Jan 2005

\*The maximum daily 8-hour mean concentration is selected by examining eight-hour running averages, calculated from hourly data.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) provides air quality guidelines as follows:

Pollutant	Averaging period	Guideline
PM10	Calendar year	20 µg/m <sup>3</sup>
	24-hours	50 µg/m <sup>3</sup>
PM2.5	Calendar year	10 µg/m <sup>3</sup>
	24-hours	25 µg/m <sup>3</sup>
NO <sub>2</sub>	Calendar year	40 µg/m <sup>3</sup>
	1-hour	200 µg/m <sup>3</sup>
SO <sub>2</sub>	24-hour	20 µg/m <sup>3</sup>
	10-minutes	500 µg/m <sup>3</sup>
Ozone	8-hour	100 µg/m <sup>3</sup>

## Air Quality in May

The graphs on the following pages show the 24-hourly mean values of Total Particulates, PM<sub>10</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub>, PM<sub>1</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, CO and ozone for the month of May at the three monitoring sites.

The monitoring results for particulate matter have been filtered out where the humidity at the station has been measured as greater than 85 %, as per a recommendation by the EPA<sup>1</sup>. The relevant air quality standards or WHO guideline values for PM<sub>10</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub> and CO also indicated. There are no standards currently set for Total Particulates, PM<sub>1</sub> and ozone.

Our air quality monitors were recently serviced and reinstalled on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Since that time, somewhat anomalous results for particulates have been noted from the Mungret and O'Connell Street Monitors. As a result, particulate measurements for Mungret and O'Connell Street for the months of April and May may not be reliable. These two monitors have been scheduled to be returned to the manufacturer for further investigation.

Further information on air quality and health can be found at <http://www.epa.ie/air/quality/index/#d.en.51478>.

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<sup>1</sup> Limerick City and County Council included humidity and temperature sensors to the monitoring suite on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

The long-term mean values for particulate matter and gases (NO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, CO and ozone) since the monitors were installed are shown in the table below and compared with the annual mean limits and guidelines.

Parameter	Location	Measured long term mean ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )	WHO annual mean guidelines ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )	EU CAFÉ Directive annual mean limit ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )
Total Particulates May 2020 – May 2021 O Connell St Castletroy Mungret	O'Connell St	21 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	None specified	None specified
	Castletroy	10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		
	Mungret	14 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		
PM <sub>10</sub> May 2020 – May 2021 O Connell St Castletroy Mungret	O'Connell St	14 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	20 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
	Castletroy	7 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		
	Mungret	10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		
PM <sub>2.5</sub> May 2020 – May 2021 O Connell St Castletroy Mungret	O'Connell St	8 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	20 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
	Castletroy	5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		
	Mungret	6 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		
PM <sub>1</sub> May 2020 – May 2021 O Connell St Castletroy Mungret	O'Connell St	4 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	None specified	None specified
	Castletroy	3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		
	Mungret	3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		
NO <sub>2</sub> May 2020 – May 2021 O Connell St Castletroy Mungret	O'Connell St	24 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
	Castletroy	10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		
	Mungret	10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		
SO <sub>2</sub> May 2020 – May 2021 O Connell St Castletroy Mungret	O'Connell St	10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	None specified
	Castletroy	5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		
	Mungret	6 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		
CO May 2020 – May 2021 O Connell St Castletroy Mungret	O'Connell St	0.14 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	None specified	None specified
	Castletroy	0.08 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		
	Mungret	0.19 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		
Ozone May 2020 – May 2021 O Connell St Castletroy Mungret	O'Connell St	44 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	None specified	None specified
	Castletroy	50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		
	Mungret	50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$		

The maximum daily mean values for particulate matter, for May, are shown in the table below and compared with the WHO air quality guidelines where they exist.

<b>Pollutant</b>	<b>Total Particulates</b>	<b>PM<sub>10</sub></b>	<b>PM<sub>2.5</sub></b>	<b>PM<sub>1</sub></b>
<b>Averaging period</b>	-	<b>24-hours</b>	<b>24-hours</b>	-
<b>Guideline</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>50 µg/m<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>25 µg/m<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>None</b>
Maximum May '21 O'Connell Street	17 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 11/05/21	14 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 09/05/21	12 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 09/05/21	7 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 09/05/21
Maximum May '21 Castletroy	16 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 08/05/21	13 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 08/05/21	11 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 08/05/21	7 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 08/05/21
Maximum May '21 - Mungret	60 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 09/05/21	45 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 09/05/21	28 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 09/05/21	10 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 08/05/21

There were exceedances of the WHO guideline values for PM 2.5 at Mungret on the 09/05/21

The maximum recorded short-term mean values for gases (NO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub> and ozone), for May, are shown in the table below and compared with the WHO air quality guidelines.

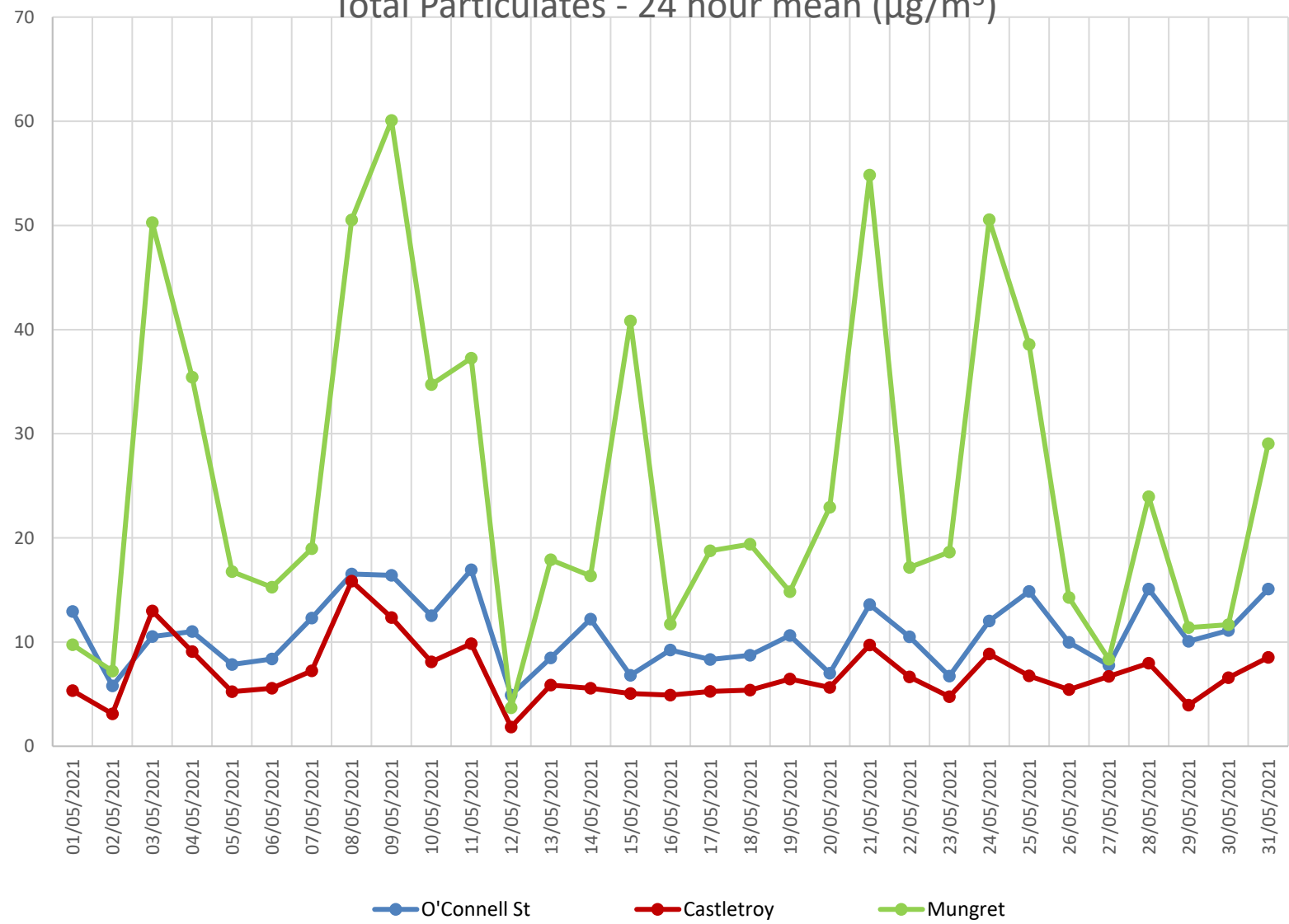
<b>Pollutant</b>	<b>NO<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>SO<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>Ozone</b>
<b>Averaging period</b>	<b>1-hour</b>	<b>10-minutes<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>8-hours</b>
<b>Guideline</b>	<b>200 µg/m<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>500 µg/m<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>100 µg/m<sup>3</sup></b>
Maximum May '21 - O'Connell Street	70 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 08:15-09:15, 27/05/21	84 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 05:30-05:45, 25/05/21	84 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 09:15-17:15, 31/05/21
Maximum May '21 - Castletroy	36 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 06:45-07:45, 05/05/21	33 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 15:15-15:30, 28/05/21	102 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 09:30-17:30, 31/05/21
Maximum May 21 - Mungret	28 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 08:30-09:30, 12/05/21	177 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 18:15-18:30, 26/05/21	80 µg/m <sup>3</sup> 08:15- 16:15, 31 /05/21

There were exceedances of the WHO guideline values for Ozone at Castletroy on the 31/05/21.

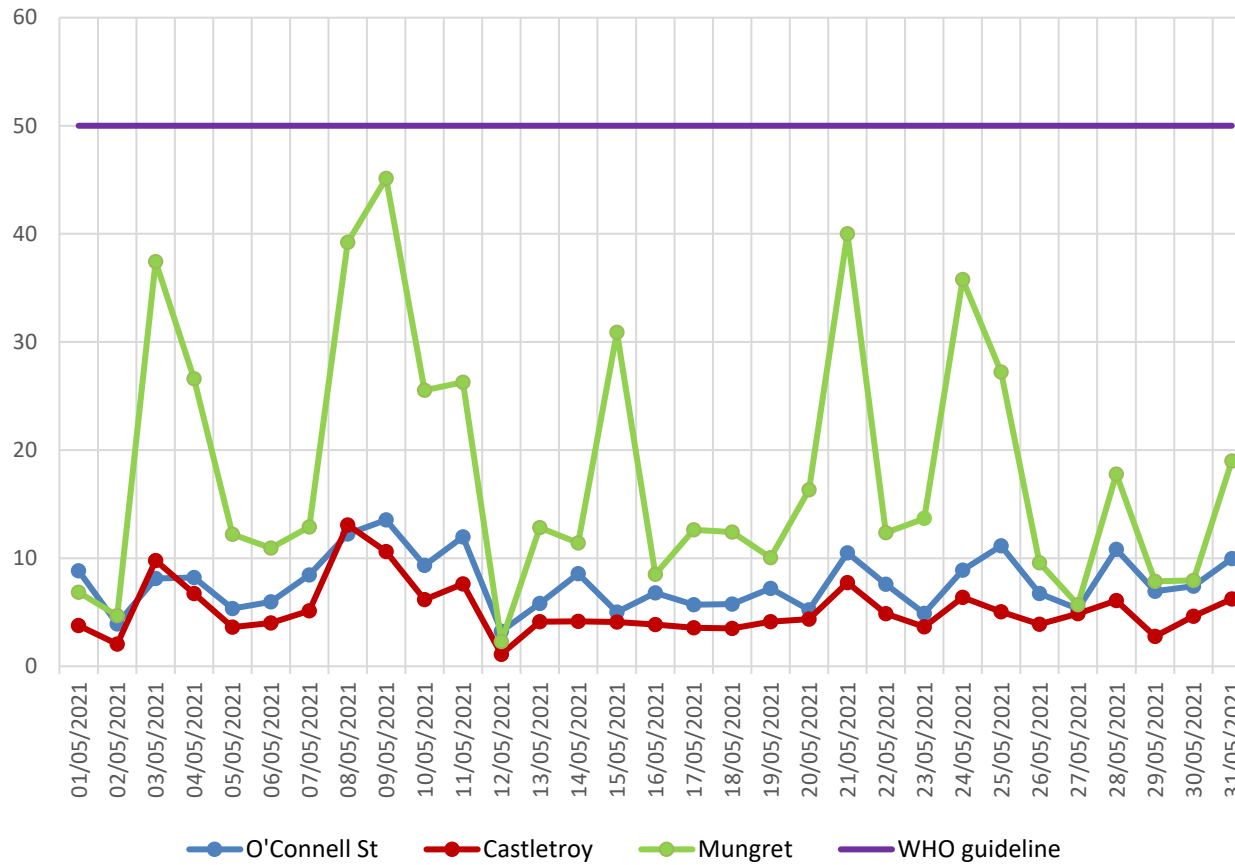
<sup>2</sup> Measurements of SO<sub>2</sub> are averaged over 15-minute periods by the gas monitors. An exceedance is inferred where the measured 15-minutes average value from the gas monitors is greater than the 10-minutes WHO guideline value for SO<sub>2</sub>.



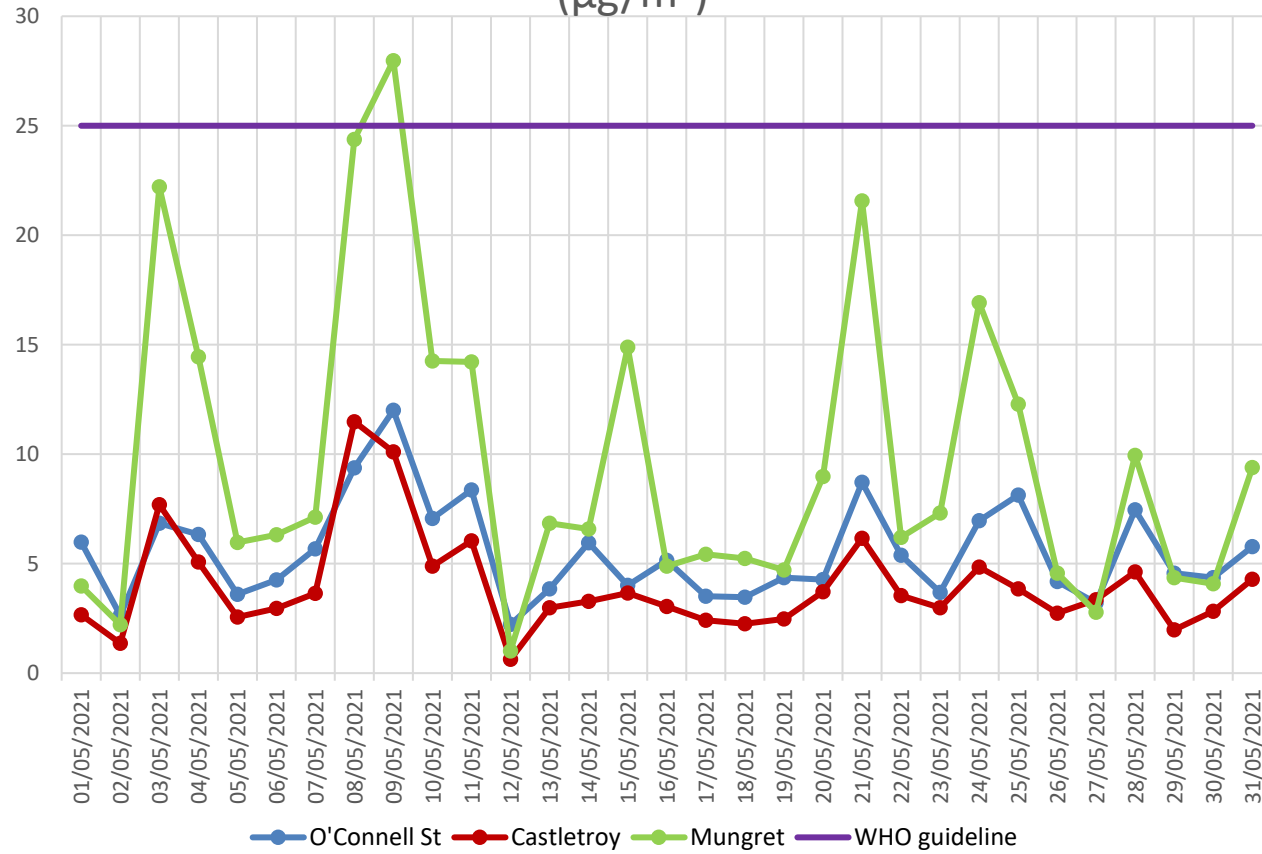
Total Particulates - 24 hour mean ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )



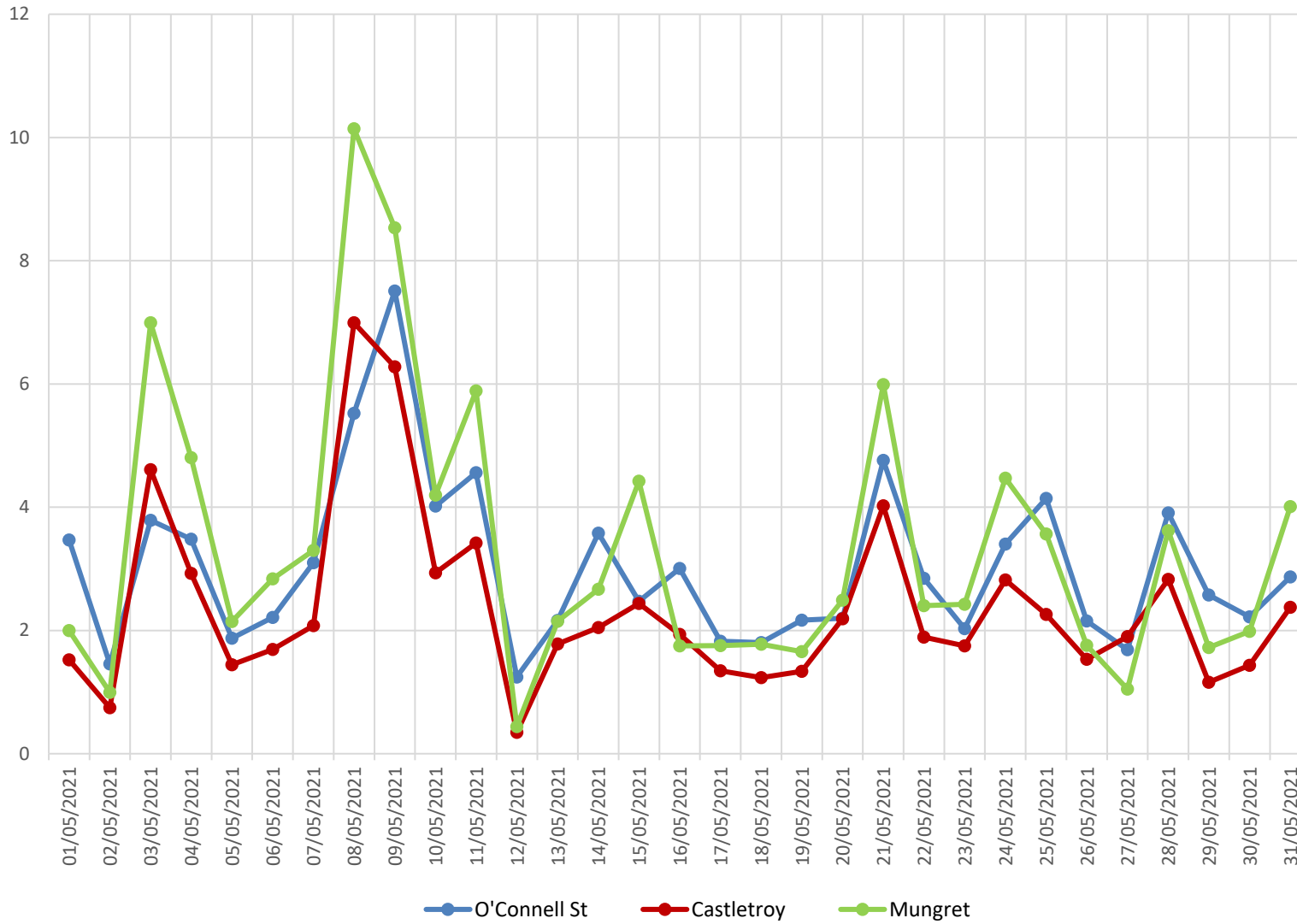
# Particulate Matter < 10 microns (PM10) 24 hour mean ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )



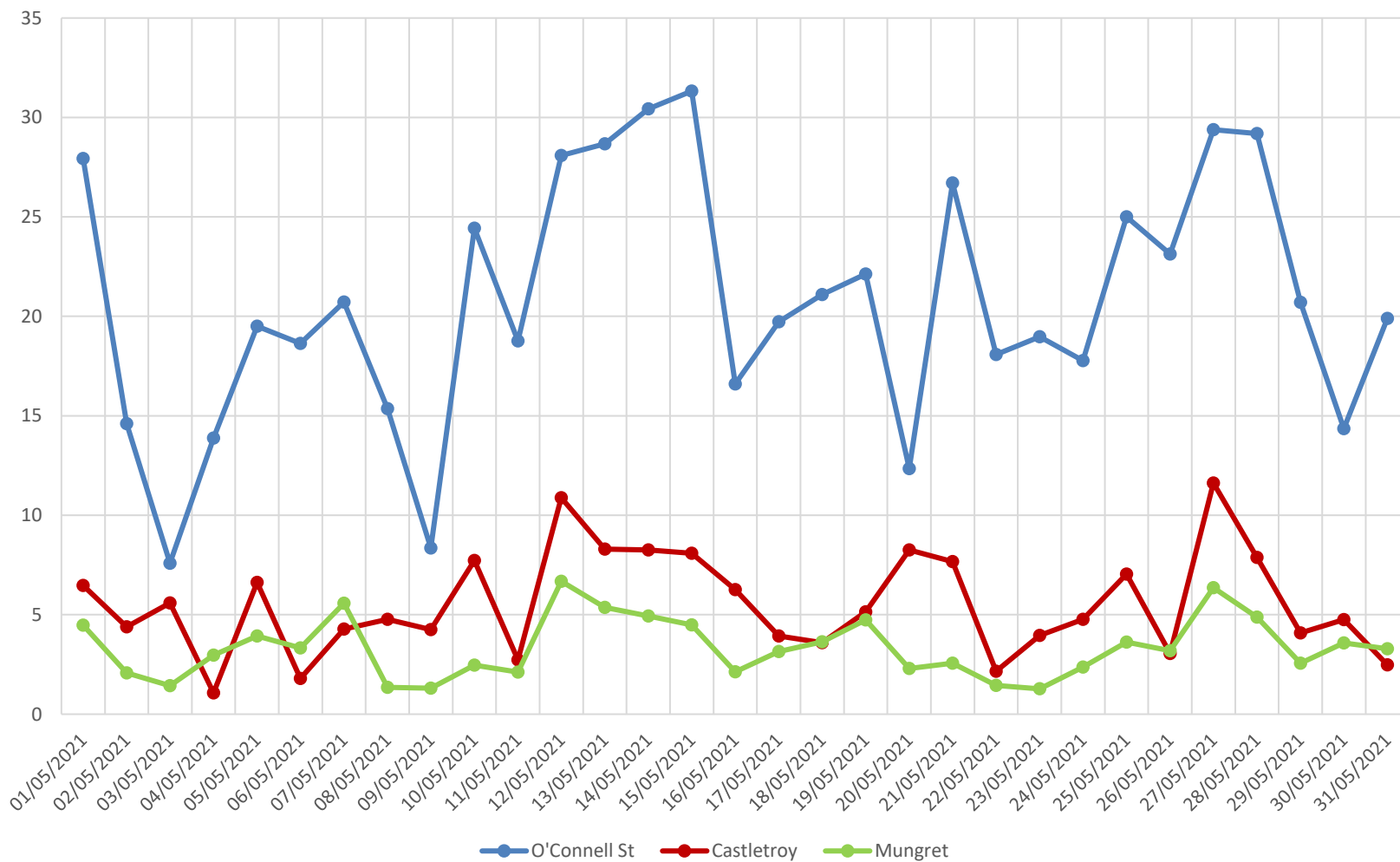
# Particulate Matter < 2.5 micron (PM2.5) 24 hour mean ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )



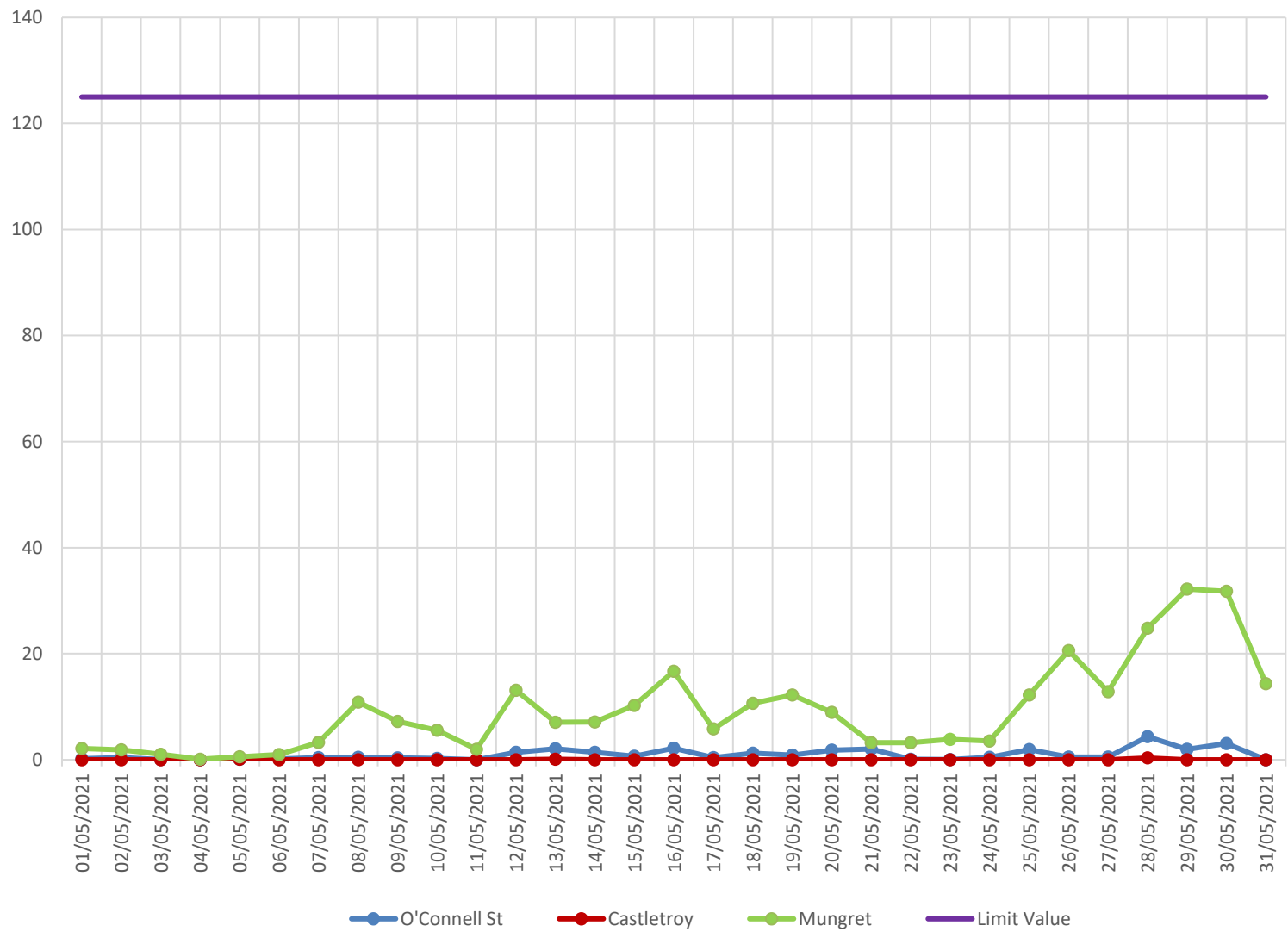
Particulate Matter < 1 micron (PM1) 24 hour mean ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )



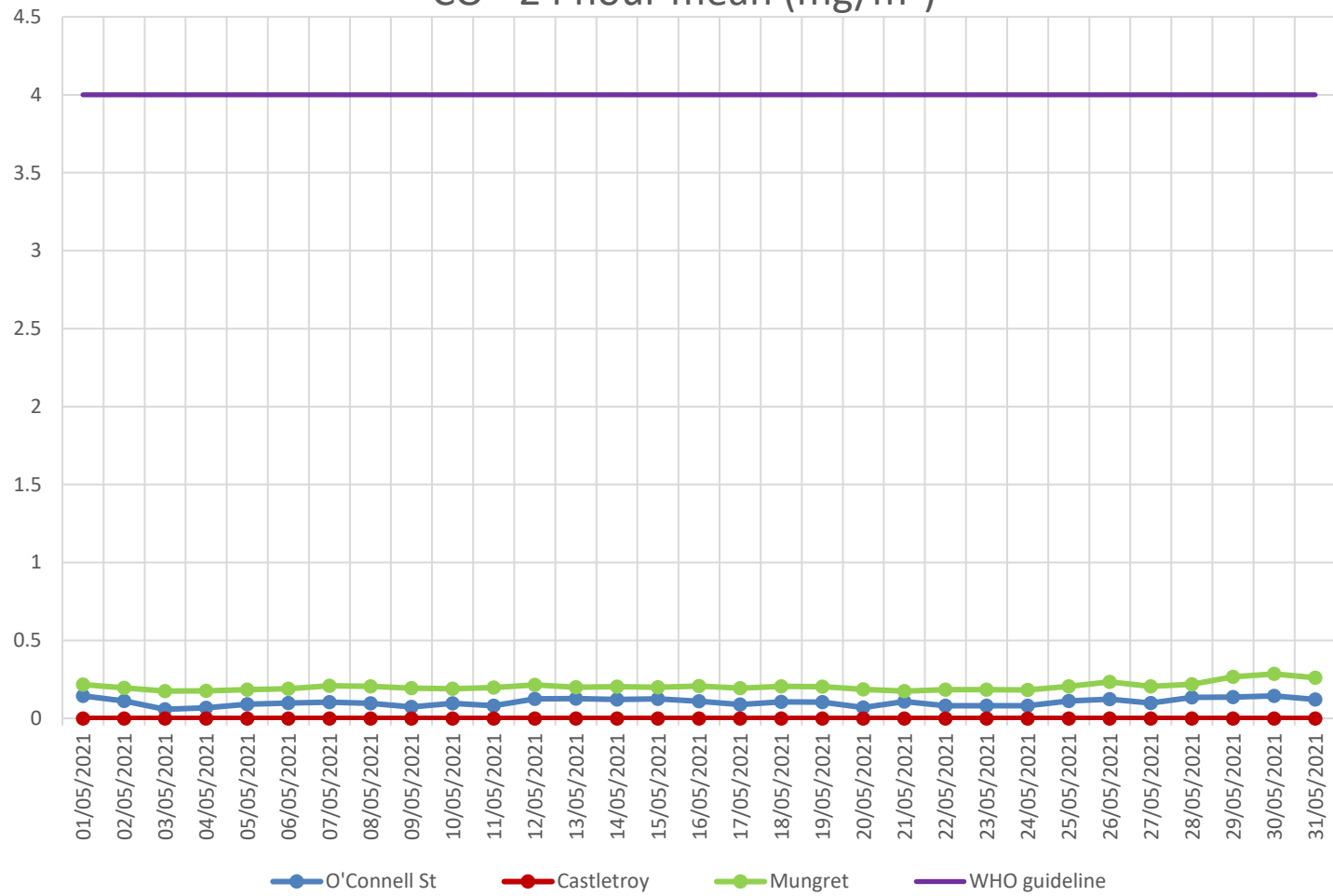
NO2 - 24 hour mean ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ )



# SO<sub>2</sub> - 24 hour mean (µg/m<sup>3</sup>)



# CO - 24 hour mean (mg/m<sup>3</sup>)



Ozone - 24 hour mean (ug/m<sup>3</sup>)

