

Air Pollution

What is air pollution?

Air pollution is the release of chemicals or dust (particles) into the air that can cause illness in people or damage to the environment.

What is nitrogen dioxide?

Nitrogen dioxide is a gas found in vehicle exhaust fumes. Nitrogen dioxide can irritate the lungs and lower resistance to respiratory infections such as flu.

What are the national air quality objectives?

Air quality objectives have been set by the UK Government for different pollutants. They are based on the health effect of the pollutant and are aimed at reducing the harmful effect of pollution on health or quality of life. The objectives are based on European limits and need to be met by a specified date.

What is air quality like in Staffordshire Moorlands?

Air quality is generally good. Pollution concentrations tend to be low in most areas and the objectives for all pollutants except nitrogen dioxide are met. There are several areas where nitrogen dioxide annual mean objectives may not be met.

What can be done to improve air pollution?

The Government is looking to address this at a national level by implementing the measures outlined in the Air Quality Plan for nitrogen dioxide including legislation to improve emissions, reduce the uptake of diesel vehicles and using cleaner fuels such as LPG and electricity. There's more information here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-quality-plan-for-nitrogen-dioxide-no2-in-uk-2017>

Here in Staffordshire Moorlands, once the Council has declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) an action plan will be produced setting out how we will improve air quality. Actions could include improving public transport, increasing cycling and walking, reducing the number of vehicles travelling in the area and making sure that new developments have a lower impact on emissions.

How long will it take to solve the pollution problem?

Levels of some air pollutants, such as nitrogen dioxide, are not reducing as quickly as expected. It may take a number of years to meet the national objectives in some AQMA areas. The Government has a responsibility to meet air quality limits and may be subject to enforcement action by the Office for Environmental Protection, created under the Environmental Protection Act 2021, for failure to comply with environmental law.

Air Quality Management Areas

What is an Air Quality Management Area?

It is a defined area where levels of a particular pollutant are, or are likely to, exceed the objectives set in national air quality objectives. If this happens, it is a statutory duty to declare an AQMA. An action plan to improve air quality must then be prepared and measures undertaken to reduce air pollution.

Are there any other AQMAs in the country?

Over 500 AQMAs have already been declared across the country. A full list can be found here: <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/>

What are the implications for property values?

We are not aware of any reported affect on property values in the 500+ AQMAs already declared across the UK.

Impacts of air pollution

What are the impacts on health of high pollution?

If your health is generally good you are unlikely to experience any serious short-term health effects. On days where there are particularly high levels of pollution some people may notice that they cough more or become short of breath.

Children, elderly people and people with lung or heart conditions are most likely to be affected by high pollution. Exposure to very high levels of pollution over a long period may increase the risk of developing heart and lung disease, such as asthma or bronchitis, and cancer.

I suffer from asthma. How will this affect me?

People already susceptible to respiratory illness may feel the effects more acutely or at lower levels of pollution. Those with heart disease, asthma and bronchitis, especially young and elderly people, should try to avoid prolonged exposure to busy traffic and keep road facing windows closed during peak hours if possible.

Is it safe for children to play in the garden?

Yes. Pollutions levels exceeding the targets are predicted to be at the road facing side of a property. Levels will reduce significantly as you move away from the road. All rear gardens are predicted to be below action levels.

Where can I get more information?

Below are some useful links for information about air quality:

Air quality plan for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) in UK (2017) - which sets out the UK's approach to reducing roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-quality-plan-for-nitrogen-dioxide-no2-in-uk-2017>

UK Air Information Resource: <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/>

Government Air quality: Clean Air Strategy

2019: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-air-strategy-2019>

National Highways Air Quality Strategy:

<https://nationalhighways.co.uk/our-work/environment/air-quality-and-noise/air-quality/>

UK Health Security Agency:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency>

The Office for Environmental Protection

<https://www.theoep.org.uk>