



Local Air Quality Strategy
Stoke-on-Trent City Council

2013

Executive Summary

This strategy replaces the Local Air Quality Strategy version 3.1 of 2002. It sets out how Stoke-on-Trent City Council will continue to work towards improving air quality in the city.

The council is committed to making the city a great place to live, study and work and recognises that good air quality is an essential part of achieving this.

The main pollutant of concern in the city is nitrogen dioxide, NO₂. Stoke-on-Trent, like other major cities, has areas where the NO₂ air quality objectives are being breached. Nitrogen dioxide is mostly associated with emissions from road vehicles.

Officers from various council departments work on air quality issues within an Air Quality Strategy Group, having an overall aim of improving air quality. The strategy group works with partners, neighbouring authorities and government agencies when writing or amending air quality action plans which clearly list the actions that need to be taken to improve air quality.

In summary, the Council will:

- Consult with partners and stakeholders with regard to Air Quality Action Plans.
- Consider all the options available to reduce pollutants and/or ensure vulnerable groups are not introduced to areas of poor air quality.
- Use both regulatory and non-regulatory powers to improve air quality.
- Consider the wider economic, social and environmental impacts of action plans.
- Require relative contributions to action from industry, transport and individuals that are cost-effective and proportionate.
- Periodically review Air Quality Action Plans and make amendments where necessary.

Contents

Executive Summary	3
1. Introduction	4
1.1 Air Quality Strategy	4
1.2 Air Quality in Stoke-on-Trent	4
1.3 A Mandate for Change.....	4
2. Legislative Background	5
2.1 Clean Air Acts of 1956, 1968 and 1993	5
2.2 Environment Act 1995	5
2.3 UK Air Quality Strategy	6
2.4 Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000, amended 2002	6
2.5 European Legislation	6
2.6 Planning Policy Statement 23: Planning and Pollution Control	7
3. Working together to Improve Air Quality	7
3.1 Air Quality Strategy Group	7
3.2 Council Partners and Neighbouring Authorities	8
3.3 Consultation.....	8
4. Local Air Quality Management (LAQM)	9
4.1 Review and Assessment	9
4.2 Air Quality Action Plans.....	10
Conclusion	11

1 Introduction

1.1 Air Quality Strategy

This strategy replaces the document entitled Stoke-on-Trent City Council Local Air Quality Strategy version 3.1, December 2002. It sets out how the council will continue to work towards improving air quality in the city by:

- Adopting a corporate approach.
- Considering all the options available.
- Using both regulatory and non-regulatory powers.
- Considering the wider economic, social and environmental impacts.
- Requiring relative contributions to a solution from industry, transport and individuals that are cost-effective and proportionate.

1.2 Air Quality in Stoke-on-Trent

Air quality has always been an important issue for those who live and work in the city or visit the area. In the 1950s it was common to see smoke billowing across the whole city from coal fired pottery kilns, steel blast furnaces and domestic heating.

Since then, due to the action by the council in response to the Clean Air Acts, the city is no longer filled with visible air pollution. The Acts gave local authorities powers to control emissions of dark smoke, grit, dust and fumes from industrial premises and furnaces and to declare "smoke control areas" in which emissions of smoke from domestic properties are regulated.

Whilst air pollution in the past was caused mainly by industry and domestic heating, today it is mostly associated with emissions from road vehicles. This is especially true of urban areas and Stoke-on-Trent is no exception.

1.3 A Mandate for Change

The council is committed to making Stoke-on-Trent a great place to live, study and work and recognise that good air quality is an essential part of achieving this.

The council are working with partners to deliver a four year plan to:

- Make Stoke-on-Trent the place to bring business.

- Support and develop existing business.
- Work with people to promote independence and healthy lives.
- Make Stoke-on-Trent a great city to live in.

The council believes that improving air quality will support the transformation of our city, produce a better quality of life and contribute to making our city an attractive location for businesses.

2 Legislative Background

2.1 Clean Air Acts of 1956, 1968 and 1993 ¹

During the 1950s national government decided that action was needed to drastically reduce the number of deaths resulting from smog (a combination of smoke and fog). The government introduced legislation to reduce the amount of smoke produced from industrial and domestic properties, by introducing the Clean Air Acts 1956 and 1968.

These Acts, together with other associated clean air legislation, were repealed and consolidated by the Clean Air Act 1993 which, together with regulations and Orders made under the Act, provide the current legislative controls. Control of smoke emissions may also help reduce emission of a wide range of other pollutants such as particles, sulphur dioxide, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) and polycyclic dioxins and difurans (PCDD/F) all of which may be present in smoke.

2.2 Environment Act 1995 ²

While the Clean Air Acts focused on emission sources, the Environment Act has a different approach by setting standards or targets for specific pollutants in air.

The Environment Act 1995 part IV section 80 requires the Secretary of State to prepare and publish a National Air Quality Strategy containing policies with respect to the assessment or management of air quality and include statements with respect to:

- Standards relating to the quality of air;
- Objectives for the restriction of the levels at which particular substances are present in the air; and

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1993/11/contents>

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/25/contents>

- Measures which are to be taken by local authorities and other persons for the purpose of achieving those objectives.

Section 82 of the Act requires each local authority to review air quality in its area from time to time and to report both current and likely future air quality.

Section 83 requires local authorities to designate an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) where air quality objectives are not being achieved.

Section 84 requires local authorities who have declared an AQMA to prepare an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) which sets out what actions it will take to work toward achieving air quality standards and objectives in the designated area.

2.3 UK Air Quality Strategy ³

The current Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland sets out air quality objectives and policy options to further improve air quality in the UK now and into the future. The strategy sets out a way forward for work and planning in air quality issues. It details the standards and objectives to be attained for various pollutants and suggests measures to be considered to help achieve them.

2.4 Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000 ⁴ amended 2002 ⁵

These regulations implement the objectives of the Air Quality Strategy and state the concentration of each pollutant, the relevant time period (as prescribed by regulations) and the date by which they should be achieved.

2.5 European Legislation

As a Member of the European Union (EU), the UK is required to achieve its requirement under European legislation. Any failure by the UK to meet EU air quality limit values and target values could result in the government being taken to the European Court to be subject to financial penalties.

³ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/tag/air-quality-strategy/>

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2000/928/contents/made>

⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2002/3043/contents/made>

The 2008 Ambient Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC) ⁶ replaced almost all previous European (EU) air quality legislation. The directive sets legally binding limits for concentrations in outdoor air of major air pollutants. The 2008 directive was made law in England through the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010. ⁷

2.6 The National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) set out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

Para 124 of the NPPF states that "Planning policies should sustain compliance with and contribute towards EU limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and the cumulative impacts on air quality from individual sites in local areas. Planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas is consistent with the local air quality action plan." ⁸

3 Working together to Improve Air Quality

3.1 Air Quality Strategy Group

The Air Quality Strategy Group is made up of officers from various council departments with responsibility for:

- Air Quality
- Planning Policy & Design
- Transportation Policy
- City Regeneration
- PR & Communications
- Education
- Climate Change

⁶ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:152:0001:0044:EN:PDF>

⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1001/contents/made>

⁸ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

The strategy group works to ensure that air quality in the city improves from direct and indirect actions.

In particular the group:

- Consult with partners and stakeholders with regard to Air Quality Action Plans.
- Consider all the options available to reduce pollutants.
- Use both regulatory and non-regulatory powers to improve air quality.
- Consider the wider economic, social and environmental impacts of action plans.
- Require relative contributions to action from industry, transport and individuals that are cost-effective and proportionate.
- Periodically review Air Quality Action Plans and make amendments where necessary.
- Publish progress on action plans on our website.⁹

3.2 Council Partners and Neighbouring Authorities

Stoke-on-Trent City Council will continue to work with partners and neighbouring authorities to:

- Ensure that actions taken by the council do not result in worsening of air quality in neighbouring authorities.
- Consider the joint benefit for partners and neighbouring authorities of actions that are proposed to improve air quality.
- Aim to ensure relative contributions to a solution that are cost-effective and proportionate for partners and neighbouring authorities.

3.3 Consultation

The council will exchange data and aim to consult with the following when writing or amending Air Quality Action Plans:

- The Secretary of State
- The Environment Agency

⁹ <http://www.stoke.gov.uk/ccm/content/environment/environmental-health/pollution/air-quality/air-quality-review-and-assessment.en>

- The Highways Agency
- The County Highways Authority
- Neighbouring local authorities
- Local businesses
- Local communities and residents groups
- The Primary Care Trust

Consultation periods will last no less than eight weeks, to ensure that all consultees have the opportunity to review the proposals and respond with comments for consideration.

4 Local Air Quality Management (LAQM)

4.1 Review and Assessment

The council began the process of LAQM in 1998, by assessing which pollutants were most likely to be of concern and which pollutants could be “screened out” because sources of those pollutants were not present in the city.

Once it had been established which pollutants needed to be monitored to assess whether national objectives were being met, monitoring was carried out in accordance with guidance from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

Local authorities are not required to meet the air quality objectives due to the influence of factors outside their control, but must demonstrate that they are working towards them through local actions. Periodically, each authority must also review and re-assess air quality in their area and report on the findings and the outcomes from their actions to Defra.

Where air quality does not meet the objectives set in the Air Quality (England) Regulations, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is declared. The Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) becomes the mechanism for improving the local air quality and the plan forms the statutory element of the local air quality management process. Once an AQMA has been declared there is a statutory duty for the local authority to produce an AQAP to pursue achievement of the relevant air quality objective(s).

The main pollutant of concern in Stoke-on-Trent is nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). Nitrogen dioxide is mostly associated with emissions from road vehicles. Nitrogen oxides are formed at high temperature during combustion processes from the oxidation of nitrogen in the air and any nitrogenous components of the fuel or other material being burned. NO₂ is an irritant gas that can aggravate the respiratory system through inflammation of lung tissue and the airways. The groups of people most vulnerable to these effects are young children and asthmatics.

The council have undertaken all stages of the LAQM process and published results which are available on the authority's website.¹⁰

The most recent reports appear in full, with previous rounds of the review and assessment process summarised as a table at the front of each document.

Details of the council's current AQMA(s) can be found on on-line at stoke.gov.uk.¹¹

4.2 Air Quality Action Plans

An Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) has to be published for each Air Quality Management Area declared in the city and will be subject to an annual review process.

An AQAP details:

- The pollutants to be reduced.
- An indication of the source of each pollutant.
- What the council and other agencies will do to reduce the pollutant.
- The emission reductions expected, including concentration, if possible.
- The timescale for implementing each proposal.

Whilst AQAPs contain specific actions, it is recognised that some of the success in improving air quality involves lifestyle changes and personal commitment to live, work and travel in different ways. There is on-going support for the principles to encourage less car usage, reduce congestion, promote walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

¹⁰ <http://www.stoke.gov.uk/ccm/content/environment/environmental-health/pollution/air-quality/air-quality-review-and-assessment.en>

¹¹ <http://www.stoke.gov.uk/ccm/content/environment/environmental-health/pollution/air-quality/air-quality-management-areas.en>

It is a requirement of the action planning process to regularly review and report progress and achievements to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

Conclusion

Stoke-on-Trent City Council will continue to operate an air quality monitoring regime and fulfil Defra's reporting requirements. The council will publish copies of reports on-line. Environmental Protection will take the lead in measuring improvements in air quality and continue to work with colleagues in other council departments, partner agencies and neighbouring authorities, with the overall aim of improving air quality.

The council believes that improving air quality fully supports the transformation of the city, produces a better quality of life for the people who live and work in the city or visit the area and contributes to making Stoke on Trent an attractive location for businesses.