

St Albans City and District Council

Air Quality Annual Status Report 2016

Executive Summary

Overall Conclusion

The 2015 air monitoring data illustrates that compliance with the annual national objective limit for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) was achieved.

Background

- The Council is required to publish an Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) as part of its responsibilities under the Environment Act 1995 Local Air Quality Management. This technical report, which includes various statistical data, has been prepared to fulfil this purpose.
- Since December 1997 each local authority in the UK has been carrying out a review and assessment of air quality in their area. This involves measuring air pollution and trying to predict how it will change in the next few years. The aim of the review is to make sure that the national air quality objectives will be achieved throughout the UK by the relevant deadlines. These objectives have been put in place to protect people's health and the environment.
- If a local authority finds any places where the objectives are not likely to be achieved, it must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) there. This area could be just one or two streets, or it could be much bigger. Then the local authority has to put together a plan to improve the air quality - a Local Air Quality Action Plan.
- There are 3 designated Air Quality Management Areas currently in force in St Albans District. These were declared as a result of exceeding the annual objective limit for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) (40 microgrammes per cubic metre) in previous years. The AQMA's are located close to the M25, close to the M1 and in a congested central road in St Albans.
- In St Albans District, the air quality objective is to achieve compliance with the annual objective limit for Nitrogen Dioxide, so that the AQMAs may be revoked. The ASR 2016, (which uses the full monitoring data set of 2015) illustrates that for 2015 compliance was achieved. If this continues to be the case in subsequent periods, we will be able to revoke our AQMAs.
- The main source of air pollution in St Albans is vehicle emissions including nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). For this reason Green Travel alternatives are the main focus for the Council's air quality improvement work. This includes:

- Promotion of cycling (Green Ring, cycle map):
 - Promotion of public transport (bus routes):
 - Car sharing (promotion of sharing websites):
 - Electric vehicles (charging points):
 - Clean bus technology (attracting grants):
 - Emissions modelling (to guide future traffic flow planning):
 - Freight management planning (to target emissions from freight movements in the City centre).
- St Albans is part of the Herts and Beds monitoring network and shares a resource for local air quality information and air quality data provision (see: www.airqualityhertsbeds.co.uk). All Local Authorities in this monitoring network use diffusion tubes to measure levels of NO₂. All results are posted on this website and are accessed by selecting the relevant Authority from a dropdown menu.
 - The 2015 monitoring data showed that measured concentrations of NO₂ were within annual mean objective limits. Maintaining this, and reducing congestion will be helped by:
 - Public use of public transport where available (helps reduce vehicle use and congestion):
 - Walking or cycling where possible:
 - Switching off vehicle engines when no movement is required (so-called anti-idling measures).

Impact Assessment

- It is not possible to quantify specifically the impact of small scale projects that the Council is working on with partners. Individual and cumulative air quality measures that reduce emissions, however, are beneficial to improving pollutant levels both within AQMA's and the District generally.

Projects Undertaken to Date

- The Council is working to an Action Plan ('Action Plan: August 2010 Update to the 2003 Air Quality Action Plan'). Measures so far undertaken include:
 - Various loading and parking restrictions in Victoria Street and Holywell Hill (easing congestion and helping buses to pass):
 - Retro-fitting buses with cleaner technologies to reduce emissions:

- New walking route signage.
- St Albans District Air Quality Action Plan is currently under review and new measures are being established to improve local air quality.

Future Work

Priorities for 2017 are:

- Completion of the Freight Management Plan and Instantaneous Emissions Modelling to inform and update the current Air Quality Action Plan. The aim is to reduce air pollutant concentrations in the City centre. Timescale: 2017.
- Continuing to monitor NO₂ concentrations and review the current monitoring network tube locations, possibly relocating them if necessary. Timescale: 2017.
- Completion of a review of existing parking restrictions. Timescale: 2017/19.
- Continuing to investigate local air quality nuisance complaints and inspect permitted process emissions. Timescale: Annually.
- Promoting green travel initiatives to reduce the number of car trips – see;
<http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/environmentandwaste/greenerliving/greentravel/default.aspx> . Timescale: 2017.
- Campaign to raise awareness of the impact on air quality of idling engines (when parked). Timescale: Spring 2017.

Longer term, the intention is to:

- Increase the number of electric vehicle charging points in the District.
- Monitor progress and uptake of the various travel plans and traffic management schemes, and of the cycling and walking strategy.
- Develop further air quality projects depending on the results of the Freight Management Plan and the Instantaneous Emissions Modelling.

A copy of the full Air Quality Status Report (ASR) can be downloaded at;
<http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/environmentandwaste/pollution/air-pollution/>