**Air Quality Management Areas - Frequently Asked Questions**

**What is an Air Quality Management Area?**

An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is a defined area where the level of certain pollutants exceed, or are likely to exceed levels set by the Government to protect health (the national air quality objectives). In such circumstances, the Council has a statutory duty to declare an AQMA. Once an AQMA has been declared, the Council has to carry out further work to monitor the air quality in the area, in this case for nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and identify what action can be taken to improve it. The creation of an AQMA is therefore a positive step towards improving local air quality.

**What are the national air quality objectives?**

The air quality objectives applicable to Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) in Wales are set out in the Air Quality (Wales) Regulations 2000, and the Air Quality (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2002.

There are two air quality objectives for nitrogen dioxide; to protect residents and others who will be breathing the air for a long time, and to protect visitors who are just passing through the area.

* The long-term objective (for residents) is 40ug/m3 averaged over a year
* The short-term objective (for visitors) is 200ug/m3 averaged over one hour

**Where does nitrogen dioxide come from?**

Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) emissions are made up from both primary nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and nitric oxide (NO), and are largely formed by the burning of fossil fuels, such as diesel and petrol. NO produced undergoes a chemical reaction with atmosphere laden with oxidants such as ozone (O3) to produce secondary NO2.

Although non-transport sources of NOx are considerable contributors, according to the National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory, road transport accounts for one third of the UK’s NOx emissions. Diesel vehicles are outlined as the main source of road transport influencing these levels.

Increased levels of NO2 in towns and cities are found close to roads, normally within a few metres of the kerb. NO2 usually disperses quite rapidly but if there are buildings very close to the road it can build up to higher levels.

**What are the health effects associated with high nitrogen dioxide levels?**

Nitrogen dioxide can have both long and short term health effects on residents. Short term effects can include irritation of the eyes and throat and there can be an increase of symptoms of respiratory conditions including asthma, and bronchitis.

The long term health effects will increase the susceptibility to respiratory conditions among healthy individuals, and lead to gradual deterioration in the health of people already suffering from respiratory problems, particularly in elderly people.

**Does the AQMA stay in place permanently?**

No, the Council will continue to monitor the levels of nitrogen dioxide and if the annual average nitrogen dioxide level falls below the national objective, the AQMA can be removed.

**Have other local authorities declared AQMAs?**

Yes, many local authorities have identified areas where the air quality needs to be improved for a range of air pollutants in addition to nitrogen dioxide. A full list of these is obtainable at the Government’s web page <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/list>

Examples of the approaches taken by local authorities to tackle poor air quality can be viewed at <http://laqm.defra.gov.uk/action-planning/good-practice.html>

**Do I have to tell the Land Registry that my property falls within an AQMA?**

No, there is no legal requirement for the AQMA to be placed on the land registry against properties located within it, however, the information has to be made available to the public, and will be placed on a national website by DEFRA, and locally on the Bridgend County Borough Council website.

**What are the implications for property values?**

The designation of an AQMA is a legislative requirement. AQMAs are not subject to routine land searches and with many other councils having declared AQMAs, to the best of our knowledge there have been no reported effects on property values.

**What happens next?**

The Park Street AQMA takes effect on 1st January 2019. Once the AQMA has been declared, a Draft Air Quality Action Plan must be produced within 18 months and finalised within 2 years. The Council will identify steps which can be implemented to reduce the level of nitrogen dioxide to bring it within the national air quality objectives.

Public engagement will take place in the spring with residents invited to make suggestions as to the mitigation measures that might be put in place. There will be opportunities to engage both face to face and online, and residents will be able to comment on the set of proposals put forward. Once agreed, this plan must be formally adopted before two years have elapsed. Further details of the exact timeline for the various stages of the process will be advised in due course.

Since air quality monitoring on Park Street began in 2017, static, manual diffusion tubes have been employed, and the results evaluated on a monthly basis. In the near future, an electronic monitor is due to be installed which has the added benefit of providing real time data, allowing daily and weekly trends to be identified. Once the real time monitor has been installed and validated, residents will be able to view the data produced online. As and when this facility goes live, residents will be provided with a link to access the data.