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# Cheltenham Borough Council Takes Action to Improve Air Quality in the Borough



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# Foreword

Air quality is something that we can't see. That can make it seem a bit removed from our day-to-day lives. But it impacts all of us – particularly the most vulnerable. Scientists tell us that there is simply no 'safe' level of pollution. We have a duty to do everything we can to protect them – that means people like councils and health authorities taking a lead, but also everyone being willing to do their bit too.

For the most part, Cheltenham's air quality is good according to the national legislation. Ella Adoo-Kissi-Debrah, who lived near the South Circular Road in Lewisham, south-east London, died in 2013. An inquest had found air pollution "made a material contribution" to her death. The levels of pollution we experience are nowhere near as bad as those that led to the death of Ella Kissi-Debrah.

We have a small Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), where long term NO2 levels breach the maximum in legislation. You can read more about that in the technical part of our report. However, that does not mean we are cutting back actions. On the contrary, we continue to monitor air quality as part of a borough-wide approach and the majority of actions identified in our action plan will benefit the borough as a whole.

This work will inevitably only be successful if we work together with Gloucestershire County Council, communities and other partners. Cheltenham Borough Council is responsible for air quality monitoring and putting in place a formal Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP). However, the majority of NO2 pollution comes from transport emissions, which is why we are pleased to be working with Gloucestershire County Council, the transport authority, on this document. The Borough's vision for sustainable travel is detailed in the Connecting Cheltenham report. This includes pedestrian friendly streets, a network of cycle paths, improvements to bus routes and much more besides. The County Council has considered this as part of its Local Transport Plan and will take the work further in its detailed Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

The link between this area of policy and health is clear. That's why we were keen to ensure Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has an opportunity to take part in this process through consultation and engagement.

We won't solve this problem collectively by doing one thing, but there is one way we can all make a contribution: by driving fewer miles. Indeed, the air you breathe in your car is probably more polluted than that being inhaled by a pedestrian walking alongside the traffic jam you sit in. People who walk or cycle are much less likely to suffer from breathing problems, obesity, muscle weakness, poor bone density and a whole host of other chronic conditions than those who drive. That should be enough motivation for all of us to make a small change in our lives, but a big difference to cleaning our air.

A stylized illustration of a town skyline. It features three houses of varying heights and widths, each with a chimney and a cross on its roof. There are several trees of different shapes and sizes, and a sun with rays in the upper left corner. The sky is white with a few red clouds. The entire illustration is rendered in a simple, line-art style with red and black outlines.

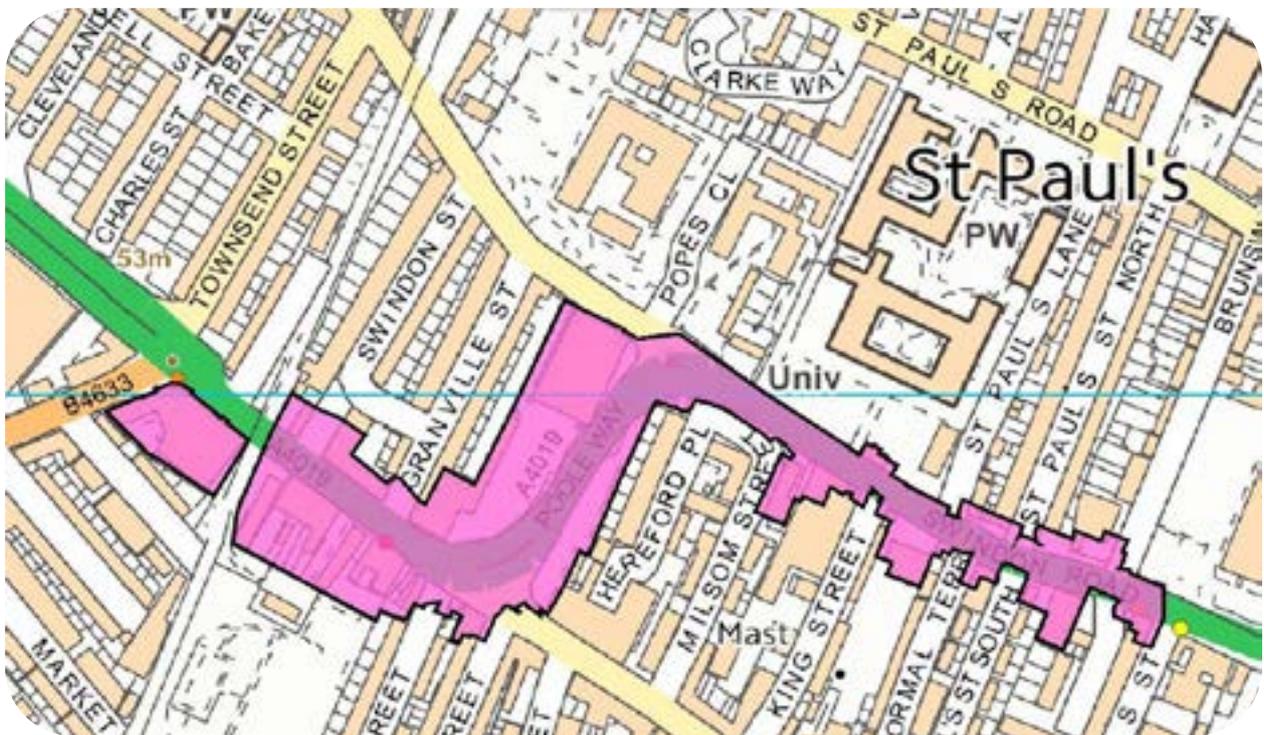
## Councillor Martin Horwood

Cabinet Member for Customer  
and Regulatory Services

# Air Quality Management in Cheltenham

There was a borough-wide Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) declared in 2011 with one overarching plan, the intention being to try and attract attention and investment to improve air quality across the town. Subsequent monitoring results indicated that legal levels of air pollution, 40ug of NO<sub>2</sub>/m<sup>3</sup> of air, were actually being met across most of the town.

Consequently, the AQMA was reduced in size to focus on the area where the levels of air pollution exceeded the legal limits. The reduced AQMA covers the junction of Gloucester Road, Tewkesbury Road and High Street, through Poole Way and along Swindon Road to the junction of St George's Street.



Changes were approved by DEFRA and the authority, and formally implemented Sept 2020. On declaring a new AQMA, the 2014 Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) became obsolete. There is a statutory requirement on the council to produce and implement a new action plan to address air pollution levels in the Air Quality Management Area.



# An action plan for the borough

Although the statutory requirement places a duty on the authority to adopt an action plan to address exceedances in the management area, the action plan must have a broader impact on improving air quality around the whole borough.

The scope and impact of the AQAP therefore includes a comprehensive range of clear and measurable actions that will address air quality both inside the AQMA but also the borough as a whole.

## Partnership Working

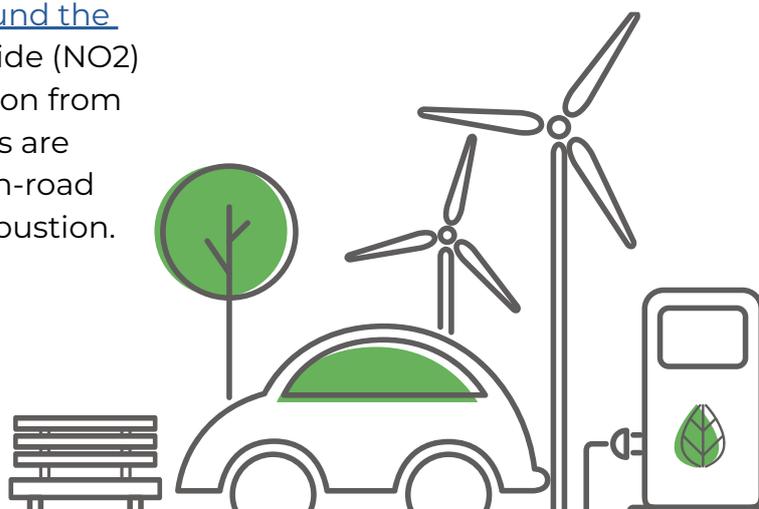
**Improving air quality in Cheltenham is not the responsibility of this authority alone. We are not the highways authority or responsible for travel management. This action plan will rely in particular on input, support and resources from Gloucestershire County Council to help us implement the measures outlined in the action plan.**

However, our partnership work is not limited to the county council. We rely on, and work with, a range of other partners, organisations and groups to implement our action plan. Not least the residents and businesses of Cheltenham who play an important role in supporting the authority's actions to reduce air pollution.

**Equally important is recognising that Cheltenham Borough Council does not have the resources and funding to deliver on all of the actions identified in the AQAP. This too brings into sharp focus the need for a partnership approach to ensure collective and effective use of resources and funding.**

## Measuring Air Quality in the Borough

Air quality is measured at [44 locations around the town](#) measuring the level of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and an additional 9 sites measuring pollution from particulates (PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>). Particulates are caused in part by tyre wear, brakes and non-road sources including domestic solid fuel combustion. Agricultural sources cause a considerable proportion of PM<sub>2.5</sub> pollution.



# Measures aimed at improving air quality throughout the borough

- 1. Development of Air Quality Strategy for the borough**, expanding on the actions and measures outlined in the Air Quality Action Plan through consultation and engagement with partners
- 2. Exploring the creation of Car-free Zones and/or Emissions Charging Zones**
- 3. Setting an annual mean target objective of 30ug of NO<sub>2</sub>/m<sup>3</sup>** or air (instead of the statutory objective of 40ug/m<sup>3</sup>)
- 4. Reviewing the borough's Smoke Control Zones**
- Undertaking **education and awareness campaigns**:
  - Engage with local NHS Trust to raise awareness of the effects of exposure to poor air quality where limits are exceeded
  - Creating a Public Health Awareness Campaigns around exceedances
  - Deliver a Schools Air Quality Project
- Addressing the air quality **impact of the Golden Valley Development** and expanding the **Arle Court Park and Ride**
- Investing in **rapid charging points for electric vehicles** including adopting a **carbon neutral policy** for all licensed taxis and private hire vehicles
- Work to **achieve modal shift away from private cars, improvement in Cheltenham's walking and cycling routes** by:
  - Developing strategic routes and closure of certain town-centre roads to certain vehicle-types
  - Promoting cycling and upgrading infrastructure
  - Adopting 'Twenty is Plenty' where possible
  - Apply variable parking charges to incentivise use of EVs and hybrids
  - Promote Workplace Travel Plans
  - Promote a 'No Idling Policy' for buses and taxis
- Using available policy tools to **support sectors containing more polluting vehicles to switch to cleaner vehicles**:
  - Develop partnership for last mile delivery in town centre, by sustainable transport
  - Implement alternative fuel sources for business fleet within the council
- Investigate **setting targets for PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub>** in line with WHO guidance, and emerging DEFRA requirements, due to be announced November 2022.
- 11. Reviewing air quality monitoring locations** around the borough



# Measures specifically aimed at addressing air pollution inside the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)

1. Engage with Royal Mail to move toward low emissions fleet
2. Commission a study to understand purpose of car trips (including start/end points) through AQMA, single person or multiple occupancy survey and how car parking generates trips through the AQMA
3. Implement Junction improvements/traffic light changes
4. Offer more EV charging points in the streets surrounding the AQMA
5. Extend the existing priority parking areas for Electric Vehicles within parking areas of AQMA
6. Increase car sharing in AQMA

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