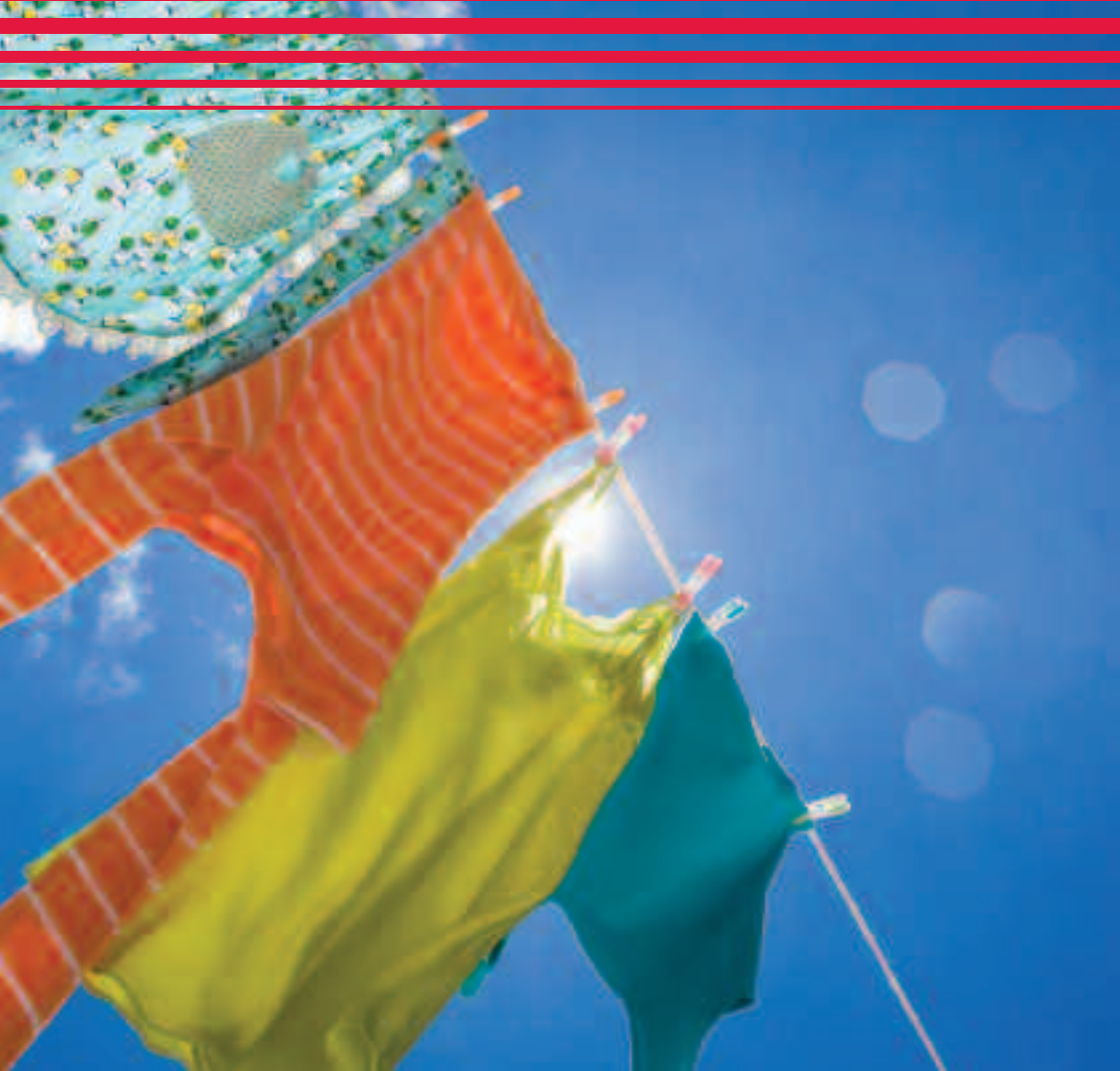




St. Helens  
Council

# Air Quality Management Areas



# **Declaration of Air Quality Management Areas in St.Helens**

On the 30th April 2009, St.Helens Council are declaring two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within the Borough. This leaflet attempts to explain the declaration process, how the AQMAs will help improve air quality and the local environment, and tries to answer any other questions you may have about AQMAs.

## **What is an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)?**

Local authorities have a duty under the Environment Act 1995 to review local air quality based on seven key pollutants. Monitored results must be evaluated against national air quality objectives which are defined by statutory legislation.

An Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is an area that Local Authorities are obliged to designate, should monitored air pollution exceed the objectives.

At present in St.Helens, two areas have been found to exceed the national objectives and therefore two AQMAs are being designated. This is the first step to help to improve air quality in these areas.

## **Is St.Helens the only place to have an AQMA?**

No, over 100 cities and towns within the UK have declared AQMAs, these include Liverpool, Wigan and Warrington.

## **What are the National Air Quality Objectives?**

Air quality standards are currently set by the national Air Quality Strategy. The main objective is to ensure that everyone is able to enjoy an acceptable level of air quality in public places. The Air Quality Strategy proposals aim to protect health and the environment without imposing unacceptable economic or social costs.

At present, St.Helens meets all the objectives set, with the exception of the annual mean for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) of 40 micrograms per metre cubed.

## What is nitrogen dioxide?

Nitrogen dioxide is produced both directly as a primary and indirectly as a secondary pollutant. In the UK, approximately 50% of the atmospheric nitrogen dioxide is associated with emissions from motor vehicles and 25% is from power stations.



Larger and older vehicles, particularly diesel, produce more nitrogen oxides than newer 'cleaner' vehicles. Monitored nitrogen dioxide levels show variation throughout the day, with peak levels coinciding with morning and evening rush hours.

## Why is nitrogen dioxide a problem?

Air pollution is not a problem to healthy people unless it is increased to levels rarely seen in St.Helens. However, it can cause problems to sensitive groups such as young children or people with asthma. Those people with respiratory illnesses may also be sensitive to nitrogen dioxide levels, however a direct causal link is yet to be proved.

## Where are the Air Quality Management Areas?

St.Helens Council is obliged to declare an AQMA where monitoring results indicate pollution levels are exceeding the air quality objectives. A description of the two AQMAs are as follows:

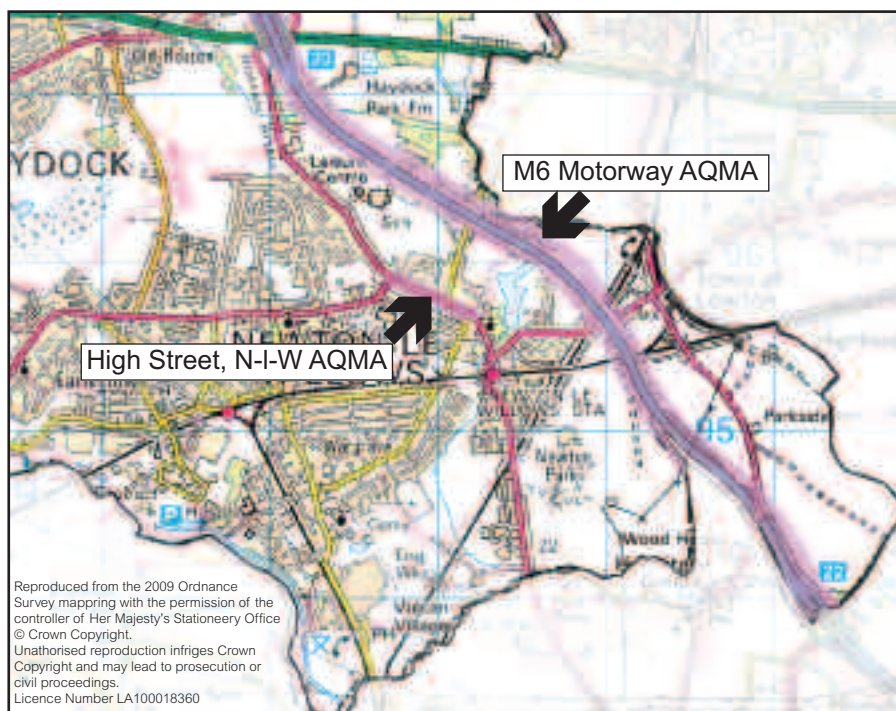
## AQMA Number 1 – M6 Motorway

A 3.7 mile continuous strip on both sides of the M6, measuring 70m either side of the central reservation and incorporating Junction 23 with the A580 East Lancashire Road. Declaration is due to exceedances in the annual nitrogen dioxide objective, the principal source being emissions from road vehicles.

## AQMA Number 2 – High Street, Newton-le-Willows

A linear AQMA along High Street, Newton-le-Willows, between the junctions with Ashton Road and Church Street, measuring 30m from the centre of the road. Declaration is due to exceedances in the annual nitrogen dioxide objective, the principal source being emissions from road vehicles.

A map of the proposed AQMAs is shown below. Detailed maps of the areas are available on the Council website, [www.sthelens.gov.uk](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk), or at the Central Library, Victoria Square, St.Helens.





## **How can we reduce air pollution?**

Over the coming year, the Council will be undertaking a Further Assessment to identify the main pollutant sources and calculate more accurately the improvement in air quality that is needed to meet the objectives.

The information gathered in the Further Assessment will be used to inform the Action Planning stage. During this stage, the Council will consult with statutory bodies and interested parties to produce an Action Plan.

The Action Plan will set out measures to be implemented to improve air quality. This will specifically target road transport emissions, through schemes such as travel plans, pollution control, local air quality, strategic planning, promotion of low emission technologies and other local initiatives. These may cover a wider geographical area than just the AQMA.

A steering group consisting of representatives from the appropriate Council departments, other local authorities, local organisations, Councillors and members of the public will be set up to drive the Action Plan forward. The Action Plan will then be implemented over coming years by the appropriate parties. The Action Plan will be reviewed and updated over time.

## **What if I have more questions or want to be involved in the consultation process?**

Further information about air quality in St. Helens is available on the Council website at [www.sthelens.gov.uk](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk), and follow the links to the air quality pages.

If you still have further queries, please contact Lucy Northey, Scientific Officer (Air Quality): telephone 01744 676351 or email [lucynorthey@sthelens.gov.uk](mailto:lucynorthey@sthelens.gov.uk). Alternatively, contact Mike Petersen, Environmental Control Manager: telephone 676346 or email [mikepetersen@sthelens.gov.uk](mailto:mikepetersen@sthelens.gov.uk).





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**Contact Centre**, Wesley House, Corporation Street, St.Helens,  
Merseyside WA10 1HF

Tel: (01744) 456789/676789

Fax: (01744) 456895

Minicom: (01744) 671671

Email: [contactcentre@sthelens.gov.uk](mailto:contactcentre@sthelens.gov.uk)