

Package of measures introduced to improve air quality

3 years ago



Local councils will have a new strengthened framework to improve air quality, under new plans announced by Defra.

Using powers in the Environment Act, National Highways is to become the first designated “Relevant Public Authority” placing a legal requirement on it to work together with local councils when necessary to take effective action to deliver air quality standards and objectives. While National Highways already work with local authorities to improve air quality, this statutory requirement – consulted on earlier this year – will see a more consistent approach to meeting local air quality objectives on road networks.

In addition to this, Defra has updated [Local Air Quality Management \(LAQM\) Policy Guidance](#) to reflect legislative changes introduced through the Environment Act 2021 and clarify roles and responsibilities within local government.

Following consultation feedback, the guidance will be amended to include:

- A new requirement for local Air Quality Action Plans to include a timeline of clear actions that ensure Air Quality Objectives (pollution concentration limits) are met and air quality standards improve in local areas.
- The requirement for an Air Quality Management Area to be declared within 12 months of identifying an exceedance of the air quality objectives to ensure that local councils develop Air Quality Actions Plans more quickly.
- The requirement for local authorities to produce an Air Quality Action Plan within 18 months of declaring an Air Quality Management Area.

- A new reminder and warning alert system to increase local council compliance with reporting on actions they are taking to improve air quality.

The Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) Technical Guidance, which is designed to support local authorities in carrying out their duties under the Environment Act, has also been updated to reflect the legislative changes introduced through the Environment Act 2021.

Environment Minister Steve Double, said: “These changes – delivered by our Environment Act – provide a strengthened framework for local councils to meet their air quality objectives, and will ensure that communities are protected sooner with real improvements to the air we breathe.”

[Full guidance on Local Air Quality Management](#) is available on the dedicated website.