

Traffic Clean Air Consultation FAQs

Background

What is air pollution?

Air pollution is made up of gases and particles in the air which are harmful to people and other life. The higher the levels of pollution and the more time people spend in polluted air, the worse the effects on health can be. It is now known that exposure to air pollution can lead to conditions such as (but not limited to) heart disease, strokes, asthma, and lung cancer, and damage to other internal organs. The most concerning pollutants within Bristol are nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and very small particulates. These pollutants are invisible.

UK and EU limits on levels of NO₂ are currently breached in Bristol. Local authorities are legally required to reduce levels of NO₂ as soon as possible to comply with these health-based standards and this consultation is concerned with reducing the levels of NO₂ in the shortest possible time.

Very small particulates (less than 10 micrometres or about the width of a single thread in a spider's web) are dangerous because they can penetrate deep into the lungs and travel round the body in the bloodstream where they can affect both your lungs and your heart. Although the focus of this consultation is on NO₂, our proposals would also reduce levels of these harmful particulates.

Where does NO₂ come from in Bristol?

A major source of NO₂ in cities is from road traffic, particularly diesel engines. Nitrogen oxides (NO_x) from vehicle engines react with other pollutants and sunlight to produce NO₂. Around 78% of NO_x comes from road transport and pollutants from road transport happen close to where people breathe. This is why road transport emissions must be tackled for people's health. Pollutants from the port and other sources do not impact on people's health to the same degree as road transport because they are further from where people live.

Why does the city need a Clean Air Plan?

Significant areas of Bristol are affected by harmful air pollution in excess of UK and EU standards for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), which is extremely harmful to health. There are particularly high levels in the central area of Bristol where approximately 100,000 people live and many more study, work and travel through. It's essential to have a plan to reduce pollution and improve the health of Bristol's population.

What is the council's Traffic Clean Air Zone Plan designed to do?

The council must meet a Government directive to develop a plan for Bristol to comply with EU legal limits for harmful emissions of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) in the shortest possible time.

The plan has been developed to reduce harmful pollutants in the air to protect public health.

Why are you just concentrating on pollution from vehicles?

The city is tasked with reducing levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) – the main source of NO₂ where people are exposed to pollution is road vehicles. Therefore, the focus of the Clean Air Zone is on reducing emissions from vehicles, in order to improve air quality within the city in the shortest time.

The Mayor has set out a range of other ways to reduce air pollution as part of wider measures to tackle pollution in the city – read his blog here <https://thebristolmayor.com/>

About the options

What are Bristol citizens being asked to comment on in the Traffic Clean Air Zone consultation?

Bristol City Council is putting forward two possible options, both of which are subject to government funding and approval. We will not be able to proceed unless the scheme is approved by government.

Option 1 Clean Air Zone (private cars not charged)

This includes:

- A charging scheme for non-compliant buses, taxis, HGVs and LGVs. This charge applies once a day regardless of how many times you go in or out of the zone.
 - Taxis £9.00
 - LGVs £9.00
 - HGVs £100.00
 - Buses £100.00
 - Coaches £100.00

Non-compliant vehicles are diesel vehicles which are Euro 5 or older and petrol vehicles which are Euro 3 or older – known as ‘non-compliant vehicles’. The “Euro” number relates to the emission standard set by the European Commission for certain types of vehicle. The larger the Euro number, the less polluting the engine is. Petrol cars made pre 2006 and diesel pre 2015 are not compliant.

- A 24hr a day seven days a week HGV weight restriction (3.5 tons) on some of the most polluted routes: Rupert St, Baldwin Street, Park Row/Upper Maudlin Street, Marlborough Street and Lewins Mead: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- A diesel car ban on Upper Maudlin Street and Park Row running from St James Barton roundabout to Park Street – not including James Barton roundabout itself. 7am-3pm, 7 days a week (does not apply to taxis, private hire vehicles or emergency vehicles)
- Bus and local traffic interventions in the most polluting areas; this includes an inbound bus lane on the M32 from Junction 2 to Cabot Circus car park, an inbound bus lane on Cumberland Road, and using existing traffic signals to control the amount of traffic entering congested areas with poor air quality.
- A scrappage scheme (up to £2,000) for private diesel cars. This would provide a grant towards a new vehicle or an alternative mode of transport. Vehicles belonging to residents in Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire would be eligible – as long as their drive into work includes the Option 1 charging zone area or they live in the area.

Option 2: Diesel car ban

- All diesel cars are banned from entering a specific central area from 7am to 3pm 7 days a week (does not apply to taxis or private hire).
- Other measures including a local scrappage scheme have not been included but could be considered in Option 2

The public and businesses will be able to give their views on the two options as part of a six-week public consultation launching on 1 July.

Why are there not as many measures included in Option 2, does the council favour Option 1?

Option 1 does not charge cars so we need to include a lot more measures to try and reach compliance at the same time as an option which does include either charging or banning private cars. This then provides 2 comparable options which can be consulted on.

How have you considered low-income families who might be affected by the options?

The council has a legal duty to propose options which would bring NO₂ levels to below legal limits in the shortest possible time (this is known as achieving compliance). Work so far to model emissions and air quality has suggested that the two options we are proposing would reach compliance as quickly as possible. Our approach seeks to put forward options which achieve compliance in the shortest possible time while also minimising social impacts on the poorest people.

Could there be changes to the options proposed?

As the further technical work is made available and analysed, alongside the results of this consultation, it is possible that we may need to look at variations on these options including possible hybrid versions of both the consultation options and potentially elements of the previous options, if this is shown to achieve compliance in the shortest possible time. If another option is proposed, which is substantially different to the two options in this consultation, we would consult on that option. Following consultation, the council's preferred option will need to be approved by Government.

Why have you selected these boundaries and times of operation for each zone?

A lot of technical work has been done to look at how quickly different Clean Air Zone options (both charging and diesel ban options) would bring NO₂ levels within legal limits. This includes a range of different boundaries and times of operation for both charging zone and diesel ban options, and various options for charging different types of vehicle. The two options proposed in this consultation have zone boundaries and operating times which our work shows are most likely to bring NO₂ levels within legal limits in the shortest possible time.

Did you consider other options?

Yes we considered a wide range of options. In March 2018, five options were shortlisted and developed further. They included different sized zones with a different mix of vehicles as well as a

non-charging option. Of these five options, two 'preferred options' were then identified based on the year they would likely reach compliance. These were:

- A medium Clean Air Zone category D (a medium sized zone which would charge all non-compliant modes of transport including private cars) which was forecast to achieve compliance in 2030; and
- A 24 hour Small Area Diesel Car Ban which was forecast to achieve compliance in 2024.

However, further analysis showed that both options would have a disproportionate impact on low income households and this led to further work to find options which would meet the council's legal duty on air quality but avoiding or reducing if possible these impacts on low income households. Recent legal advice has confirmed that a 24 hour diesel ban could not be lawfully implemented under current legislation.

The two options proposed in this consultation are the result of this further work.

Where will any planned Clean Air Zone (CAZ) in Bristol be in operation? Will there be more than one?

The consultation provides 2 options each with a different area covered. You can find out what these areas are by visiting www.bristol.gov.uk/trafficcleanairzone

I need my car to get to work - what will this mean for my travel to/from Bristol?

Full details of the options are available within the consultation information. Each option will have a different impact on you if you drive into different areas of the city centre, and will depend on the type of car you have. If you have a diesel car, the diesel car ban (Option 2) will prevent you driving within a certain zone during certain times. In Option 1 there is a diesel car ban proposed on the road past the Bristol Royal Infirmary at certain times.

I use my van every day for work – how will the options affect me?

In Option 1 you will not be charged to enter the charging zone if your vehicle has a minimum emissions standard of Euro 6 for diesel vans and Euro 4 for petrol vans. If the Euro Standard is lower you will be charged £9 for each day you enter the zone.

You will not be affected by Option 2: Diesel car ban, as this only applies to private diesel cars.

Am I going to be charged for driving my car in the centre of the city?

There is no proposed charge for driving a private car within Bristol. However the diesel car ban (Option 2), and the diesel car ban on the road past the Bristol Royal Infirmary in option 1, will mean if you drive a diesel car into these areas during the ban times you will receive a fine. **Taxis, private hire vehicles and emergency vehicles are not banned so will not face a fine.**

During the consultation you can say if you think there are groups of people who should be exempt from this ban.

Why are you planning to charge some vehicles in certain areas of the city and not others?

The options that have been put forward have been modelled to bring the level of pollution within agreed limits as set out by the Government and EU within the shortest possible time – these are largely in the city centre.

What measures are being considered to address the effect of traffic which might be displaced to avoid the Clean Air Zones?

We will review locations where some journeys might re-route as part of a process of scheme refinement following the consultation and we would consider location-specific measures to address this, if needed. The traffic modelling will help to identify locations where traffic might reroute and feedback on potential 'diversion routes' we receive as part of the consultation is also very helpful.

I'm worried about the impact a charging scheme would have on my city centre business. How are businesses being consulted on this?

All businesses are invited to give us their feedback online during the consultation. We are also organising a number of drop-ins where you can come along and discuss any concerns you have. Visit www.bristol.gov.uk/trafficcleanairzone for more information.

Will there be exemptions/discounts for vulnerable groups?

During the consultation we will be asking whether you think there should be any exemptions. We would encourage you to complete the questionnaire to let us know if there's any group you think should be exempt.

Will I be able to get a grant towards a new vehicle as part of a scrappage scheme?

Yes, the suggested scrappage scheme in Option 1 is for any diesel cars. This would provide a grant towards a new vehicle or an alternative mode of transport. Vehicles belonging to residents in Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire would be eligible – as long as their drive into work includes the Option 1 charging zone area or they live in the area. The scrappage scheme is subject to funding and approval from government.

What are the costs for entering the Clean Air Zone in Option 1?

- A charging scheme for non-compliant buses, taxis, HGVs and LGVs. This charge applies once a day regardless of how many times you go in or out of the zone.
 - Taxis and LGVs £9.00
 - HGVs, buses and coaches £100.00
 - Private cars are not charged

What are non-compliant vehicles referred to in Option 1?

Non-compliant buses, taxis, HGVs and LGVs in Option 1 are diesel vehicles that are Euro 5 or older and petrol vehicles that are Euro 3 or older. The minimum emissions standard that you vehicle needs to have, to be classed as a compliant vehicle, is therefore Euro 6 for diesel vehicles and Euro 4 for petrol vehicles.

What is a Euro Standard?

European 'Euro' emission standards aim to reduce levels of harmful exhaust emissions, by defining acceptable exhaust emission limits which become more stringent over time. [Euro standards](#) were first introduced in 1992 with Euro 1. Euro 6 is the most recent standard.

Where can I find out what Euro Standard my vehicle is?

Unfortunately, there is no centralised official website. To find out which Euro standard your vehicle is, check your V5C certificate or go to the vehicle manufacturer.

Will all diesel cars be banned in option 2?

All private diesel cars of any registration will be banned in option 2. Taxis, private hire, vans, HGV and emergency vehicles are not banned.

Will all diesel cars be banned from the road past the Bristol Royal Infirmary in Option 1?

All private diesel cars of any registration will be banned on this road. Taxis, private hire vehicles and emergency vehicles will not be banned

Why are you banning diesel cars when bus \ HGV \ vans all emit NOx too?

Diesel cars emit 44% of the NOx that pollutes the city so they are the highest emitter by vehicle class. There are also a higher proportion of discretionary trips in the polluted area by diesel cars and greater opportunity for drivers to use a more sustainable mode. We believe that there will be less impact on business with the diesel car ban and it could be cheaper to implement than a charging Clean Air Zone.

What happens if I own a diesel car in the diesel car ban area?

You will not be able to drive your car in the diesel car ban area during the hours of 7am and 3pm. During the consultation you have the opportunity to comment on how the ban would affect you so we would encourage you to give us your feedback.

What happens if I own a repair garage / fuel station/ a business with a diesel vehicle fleet in the diesel car ban area?

The proposal currently means that neither your fleet or your customers can use diesel cars within the zone during the hours of the ban which are 7am to 3pm. During the consultation you have the opportunity to comment on how this proposal would affect you so we would encourage you to give us your feedback.

Why haven't you told us when the compliance dates are?

We have been modelling the two options to demonstrate when each option will enable the city to comply with required lower levels of nitrogen dioxide in the air. We still have some modelling to complete but indications are that compliance date of each option is likely to be very close, at least within 1 year of each other. As soon as we have confirmation of the compliance dates we will publish the information – this will be before the end of the consultation period.

What do you mean by compliance date?

The compliance date is the date that the actions we take will lower the amount of nitrogen dioxide in the air to a level that does not exceed the legal limit. In the air quality directive (2008/EC/50) the EU has set limit values for nitrogen dioxide (**NO₂**) for the protection of human health. The **NO₂** annual mean value may not exceed **40 micrograms** per cubic metre ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)

Should I wait until the compliance dates are known before completing the consultation?

The fundamental elements of the scheme will not change once we have this new technical information, it will provide a date by which we expect compliance to be met by. We expect both options to be close in terms of the year in which they will meet compliance. If you wish to complete the consultation again you are able to do so.

Why are some areas with air quality exceeding the 40 micrograms NO₂ levels not in the proposed zones i.e. Option 1 and 2?

Both proposed Clean Air zones would influence pollution levels outside the proposed zone boundaries because many of the journeys to the central areas also pass through areas just outside the zone. Option 1 would encourage bus, coach, HGV, LGV and taxi operators to upgrade their vehicles to less polluting models and these benefits would be felt right across Bristol as well as in the Option 1 zone. In Option 2, people who currently commute by diesel car to the central area would have to switch to a less polluting car or use public transport, walking or cycling instead. As many commuting journeys originate well beyond the proposed option 1 zone, this change in travel would also benefit areas outside the zone.

Are you holding any events so that we can come and discuss the plans?

Yes, we have a number of drop-ins taking place. Visit www.bristol.gov.uk/trafficcleanairzone to find out when.

How and when will it be decided what measures will be implemented and when will they be brought into effect?

The results of the public consultation will be reported back to Cabinet in September. It is then planned that an Outline Business Case (OBC) based on the preferred option will be submitted to the Government's Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU). This will be followed by a Full Business Case by the end of the year.

How much will implementing the plan cost and who would pay for it?

The total cost of preparing the business case is expected to be within the £2million funding originally agreed. The council has already been awarded £1.6million of central Government funding. Once the preferred option is decided upon a further funding bid will be submitted to Government to enable the plan to be implemented.

Wider information

What is the difference between a Clean Air Zone and a congestion charge?

A congestion charge and a Clean Air Zone are related but are not the same. Clean Air Zones are designed to improve air quality to meet legal requirements and therefore focus on tackling polluting vehicles and don't necessarily involve a charge. A congestion charge does not distinguish between vehicles based on pollution, but aims to reduce the total number of vehicles on the road or within an area. A Clean Air Zone may well impact on congestion, but this is likely to only be in the short-term whilst vehicles are upgraded to cleaner models or people adjust their travel choices.

Is Bristol the only city being asked by government to introduce a Clean Air Zone?

61 local authorities have been directed by the Government to reduce air pollution in the shortest time possible. For example, Bath is also planning the introduction of a CAZ and Birmingham and Coventry intend to introduce a CAZ class D (charges private cars). We hope and expect that a cleaner, greener city will improve public health, and both residents' and visitors' experience of the city.

What happens to the money from charges in a Clean Air Zone?

The purpose of a Clean Air Zone is not to generate revenue but to improve the health of local residents by discouraging polluting journeys. We want to deter polluting journeys rather than raise money from them.

The money collected from a Clean Air Zone would go to central Government. The costs of running the central system would then be removed and what is left will be circulated to local authorities to cover the local operational costs of running the scheme. If there is any surplus revenue arising from the scheme, the revenue can only legally be re-invested to deliver improvements in local transport. So if there is any surplus money from the scheme it would be reinvested in the scheme itself and in sustainable travel options.

I bought diesel because the UK government said they were better for the environment! Now I'm told they're bad for air quality. What should I do?

To meet climate change targets, the Government encouraged the uptake of diesel vehicles based on their lower CO₂ emissions. However, NO_x emissions from diesel vehicles are on average much higher than the equivalent petrol vehicles and as a result air quality in cities across Europe has not improved as predicted. The best solution would be for a greater share of journeys to be carried out by foot, by bike, public transport or in ultra-low emission vehicles, but we recognise that this is not possible for all. This is why we plan to introduce a local scrappage scheme for diesel cars as well.

If the need for a Clean Air Zone is based on EU limits, does Brexit change things?

The Air Quality Directive, which sets out the EU limits, has been transposed by UK law with the same limit values applying. The Government is committed to making the air cleaner regardless of the outcome of Brexit.

What are the current air quality readings?

To understand the air quality problem in Bristol, we have collected data from an extensive monitoring network in the city.

For detailed information on air quality monitoring, please read the [Annual Status Report \(ASR\)](#) published by Bristol City Council.

For current air quality information visit our [Air Quality Dashboard](#)

Will the Clean Air Zone in Option 1 actually change behaviour if businesses can claim the money back against tax or from their employer?

The advice we have from the Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) is as follows:

- We would expect the tax treatment of a charge on Clean Air Zones would follow the existing tax treatment of congestion charges and tolls;
- This means a charge would generally be a deductible business expense for the self-employed and an employee on business journeys;
- The approach to give tax relief for qualifying business journeys in Clean Air Zones should be covered by the current rules for travel and expenses.

There is one exception – there would be no tax liability where an employer reimburses an employee for the charge using their own vehicle on a business journey.

There is no certainty that tax claims for entering a charging clean air zone would be accepted as this would be a decision made by HMRC on a case by case basis, it would be expected that there would have to be a legitimate and viable reason for so doing which would need to be proven.

What about the PCN charge in Option 2, can that be claimed back?

Penalty Charge Notices are “0” rated for VAT. If a company decides to pay them or reimburse them is this that their decision. The fine would go to central Government and not through Bristol City Council; we are implementing a scheme which will address the issues of poor air quality as an urgent priority. It is hoped that anyone with a diesel car entering the ban zone and paying the fine would absolutely need to use that route with no other option. There will be no funding support for this other than the potential exemptions which are yet to be agreed.

Any other questions

There is a lot of background information and more detail on the Clean Air for Bristol website which may answer broader questions about clean air and how Bristol is monitoring and tackling air pollution. Visit <https://www.cleanairforbristol.org/>