

Air Quality activities in the United Kingdom

In the UK, the Government department, DEFRA, is responsible for managing and coordinating air quality. There are around 300 monitoring stations operated by DEFRA across the UK organized into networks. Each network uses a particular method to monitor pollutants. In addition some local authorities operate their own monitoring stations which are not part of the DEFRA network.

You can find out if there is a DEFRA managed air quality monitoring station by entering your postcode on the following website <http://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/networks/find-sites?view=location>.

You can find out the level of air quality near you in two ways. You can see what the air pollution levels are from your nearest monitoring station by clicking on the following link <http://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/latest/currentlevels>, or by looking at what the predicted air quality is for the next few days by looking at the forecasting section below.

Air Quality Forecasting

The British people are well known for talking about the weather and weather forecasts. You can also get forecasts of air pollution reported on a daily basis. Forecasts for the next day are issued for each of the 16 regions in three different areas.

- In towns and cities near busy roads
- Elsewhere in towns and cities
- In rural areas.

Each forecast is based on 10 bands ranging from 1 (low) to 10 (very high) which are linked to the short term effects of air quality on human health. You can find out what the air pollution near you is predicted to be tomorrow by going to <http://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/forecasting/>.

You can also see what actions you should take to protect your health by air pollution band by following this link: <http://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/air-pollution/daqj>.

Local Authority Actions

Each local authority has a responsibility to calculate if air quality concentrations will exceed the EU air quality standards and report the information to DEFRA. Each council can introduce extra controls on emissions if there are air quality problems in a certain area. If the air quality falls below the required standards, an air quality management area (AQMA) is declared and special measures can be introduced to try to improve air quality. Such measures include;

- Road charging
- Parking restrictions
- Pedestrianisation
- Restrictions on waiting and loading times
- Reviewing planning applications by a pollution control team.

Information on air quality in your local area can be obtained from the following website <http://aqma.defra.gov.uk/aqma/maps.php> or from your local council website. In addition, some local authorities have got together to manage air quality and develop local warning systems e.g. for London <http://www.airtext.info/> and in Sussex <http://www.airalert.info/Splash.aspx>