

Friends of the Earth press release

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Mapped: Seventy One East Midlands locations breaching air pollution limits

A data audit* by Friends of the Earth has revealed the 71 sites across The East Midlands that have breached the annual Air Quality Objective for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) levels, which is set to protect health. Of these sites the Kingsway/A38 junction in Derby had the highest NO₂ level, with an annual average of 62ug/m³ - more than 50% over the Objective of 40ug/m³

View full map here, and spreadsheet organised by local authority here.

High levels of NO₂ can cause a flare up of asthma or symptoms such as coughing and difficulty breathing. A leading cause of NO₂ pollution is emissions from road traffic.

With toxic air above limits affecting huge swathes of the UK Friends of the Earth is campaigning for Clean Air Zones to be rolled out in far more places than are currently being planned, supported by measures such as improved infrastructure to support safe cycling and walking. This would see fewer polluting vehicles on our roads and would ultimately improve public health. Removing such vehicles would also contribute to reducing carbon emissions and fighting climate change.

Richard Dyer, East Midlands campaign organiser at Friends of the Earth, said:

“It’s unforgivable to see many locations across the region over air quality limits, leaving thousands of us breathing dangerously polluted air.

“Air pollution is often an issue thought of as affecting only the biggest cities. The reality is that unacceptably toxic air can be found across much of the UK. even in smaller towns. It is harming the health of people across the country and is especially bad for young children whose lungs are still developing.

“The government needs to step up and do more to deal with this air pollution crisis – they can’t just carry on leaving the difficult decisions with local authorities, many of which are severely under-resourced.”

East Midlands locations ranked by annual average level of NO₂ (in ug/m³):

1. Kingsway/A38, Derby – 62
2. Pegasus crossing, Tintwistle, High Peak – 60.2
3. M1 Bridge Copt Oak, North West Leicestershire – 58.7
4. Leicester Road, Kibworth, Harborough – 56.9
5. Harborough Road, Northampton – 54.7
6. Liquorpond Street, Boston – 53.2
7. Glenhills Way, Leicester – 53
8. Vaughan Way, Leicester – 53
9. Woodhead Road, Tintwistle, High Peak – 51.5
10. London Road, Nottingham - 51

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For more information contact the Friends of the Earth press office on 020 7566 1649 / 07718 394786 (out of hours – please do not text this number) or by emailing media@foe.co.uk.

Editor’s **notes**:

1. *Data has been accessed from the most recent local authority annual Air Quality Status Reports submitted to Government. The results are all bias corrected, and distance-adjusted where appropriate. In some cases, this data is provisional and awaiting approval from DEFRA.
2. In order to meet the Annual Air Quality Objective a site must have an annual average Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) level below 40ug/m³

3. A full UK map of all the locations breaching the annual Air Quality Objective for NO₂ can be viewed here
 - This map pinpoints the locations where the annual mean NO₂ levels are above the national Air Quality Objective (an annual average of 40ug/m³). The points on the map are colour-coded as follows:
 - Yellow - between 40 and 50ug/m³
 - Orange - between 50 and 60ug/m³
 - Red - above 60ug/m³
4. A spreadsheet organised by region/nation and local authority can be viewed here
5. See here for more information on sources of NO₂ pollution
6. See here for more information on the health risks of NO₂ pollution
7. Friends of the Earth is calling for urgent government action to quickly and drastically improve air quality including:
 - More Clean Air Zones than are currently being planned, which must be come into effect rapidly during 2019. These must include all vehicle types. Effective Clean Air Zones will lead to fewer, and cleaner cars on our roads, safer streets, more welcoming neighbourhoods and, vitally, healthier lungs for our children.
 - The UK must phase out high polluting diesel and petrol vehicles, more rapidly than the government propose – by 2030, rather than 2040. There must also be a government-led scrappage scheme to help people move away from the most polluting vehicles (with car club membership and alternatives to driving such as rail season tickets being offered), and motor manufacturers who have contributed to the UK's air pollution crisis should be made to cough up to help fund such a scheme.
 - Investment in clean, affordable and reliable public transport.
 - An improvement in infrastructure to support alternatives to driving, such as safe cycling and walking.
 - Road traffic needs to be reduced – to meet climate change targets as well as those for air pollution. Traffic generating schemes such as airport expansion and road building which would add to the air pollution problem must be scrapped
 - The UK must move to World Health Organisation Standards for air pollution, and these must be incorporated into the Environment Bill. The full guidelines from the WHO can be read here
8. Friends of the Earth is an international community dedicated to the protection of the natural world and the wellbeing of everyone in it. We bring together more than two million people in 75 countries, combining people power all over the world to transform local actions into global impact. For more information visit: <https://friendsoftheearth.uk/> follow us at @friends_earth, or like our Facebook