

Update on compliance dates

Bristol City Council is consulting on two options for a traffic clean air zone, which aims to bring nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels below legal limits. Further details on the proposals are available at bristol.gov.uk/trafficcleanairzone

Reducing air pollution to legal levels is also known as 'reaching compliance'. When thinking about the two options it's important for the council to share a clear timeline for when the city would reach compliance.

When the consultation launched on 1 July 2019, the dates for when the two options would reach compliance were not ready to be released. The technical work required to estimate the dates more precisely has now been undertaken.

This work indicates that the compliance date for Option 1 will be 2029 and for Option 2 will be 2028. Because of how close together these dates are, more technical modelling on each option is needed to reach a definite view on which option would reach compliance in the shortest possible time.

In the air quality directive, the European Union has set limits for NO₂ to protect our health. Therefore, the annual average of NO₂ must not exceed 40 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m³). Technical work to see how quickly Bristol can meet this limit shows the majority of roads in Bristol are predicted to meet compliant levels before the indicative compliance dates (Option 1 in 2029 and Option 2 in 2028).

Non-compliant NO₂ levels

A technical note, prepared by the council's engineering consultant, Jacobs, includes a table showing projected pollution readings for both consultation options at nine locations in Bristol which currently record illegal NO₂ levels. The table also shows when each location is predicted to reach compliant levels of NO₂ for the two options. In Option 2, two locations – Marlborough Street and Church Road – are estimated to take longest to reach compliance. In Option 1, Marlborough Street holds back the compliance date.

Background and baseline NO₂

Background NO₂ indicated in the table refers to the level of pollution away from busy roads while baseline figures show what pollution would look like if the council didn't introduce any interventions, beyond what is already planned. The baseline takes into account the fact vehicle engine technology is expected to improve year on year.

Sensitivity tests

Sensitivity testing carried out by Jacobs involves checking different variables which could affect the modelling, and hence the date of compliance, to ensure they don't radically change the outcome. It is important to check every scenario which could affect how quickly the two options reduce NO₂.

Street canyons

Air pollution lingers for longer in some areas of Bristol, for example in between tall buildings, also known as street canyons. This leads to higher concentrations and therefore illegal NO₂ levels. Marlborough Street is particularly sensitive to these conditions.