

## **Staffordshire Chambers/Stoke-on-Trent City Council Air Quality Webinar – 13 December 2021**

### **Proposed Clean Air Zone CAZ C - FAQs**

#### **What is a Clean Air Zone?**

A Clean Air Zone (CAZ) is a defined area where targeted action is taken to improve air quality, by imposing a daily charge on any older vehicles that don't meet specific emissions requirements, if they are driven into or within the area. There are four types of CAZ specified by Government, ranging from a CAZ A which only applies to older buses, coaches and taxis, through to a CAZ D which applies to older buses, coaches, taxis, lorries, vans and cars. Only older vehicles are affected by a CAZ, basically ones that don't meet the latest emissions standards set by Government.

The objective of a CAZ is to deliver a rapid improvement in air quality for the benefit of those who live and work in an area. Most CAZs also include the provision of a Clean Air Fund (CAF) to help people and businesses who drive older vehicles to upgrade their vehicles or to consider alternative ways to travel in the area.

#### **Why are you looking at a Clean Air Zone?**

Stoke-on-Trent is one of around 60 councils across the UK that has been instructed by a legally binding Direction from the Government to improve air quality in the shortest possible time. Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) is a pollutant mainly generated by traffic, and it causes significant health problems if its concentrations in the air we breathe exceed a certain level that is specified in Government legislation.

We have found that some parts of the city and the borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme have NO<sub>2</sub> levels that exceed the legal limit, and many more areas where the NO<sub>2</sub> levels are close to the limit. Breathing in polluted air contributes to the equivalent of approximately 200 deaths a year in North Staffordshire. It also contributes to making many other health conditions worse, like asthma and bronchitis.

Our study identified three locations where NO<sub>2</sub> levels will exceed the legal limit if nothing is done, and these include the southern end of Victoria Road in Fenton, towards the junction with City Road.

We've looked at various alternatives, including installing what's called a "bus gate" on Victoria Road. This would restrict all northbound traffic during the peak traffic periods (7am-10am, 4pm-7pm Mon-Fri), but would still allow buses, taxis and bikes to go through. Southbound traffic towards City Road wouldn't be affected. Whilst this would improve air quality, we believe the bus gate would have a serious detrimental impact on local businesses because during its hours of operation it would apply to all car, van and lorry

drivers, irrespective of the age of their vehicles. We also believe it would have adverse effects on other roads, especially City Road, as many drivers are forced to find alternative routes to avoid the restriction.

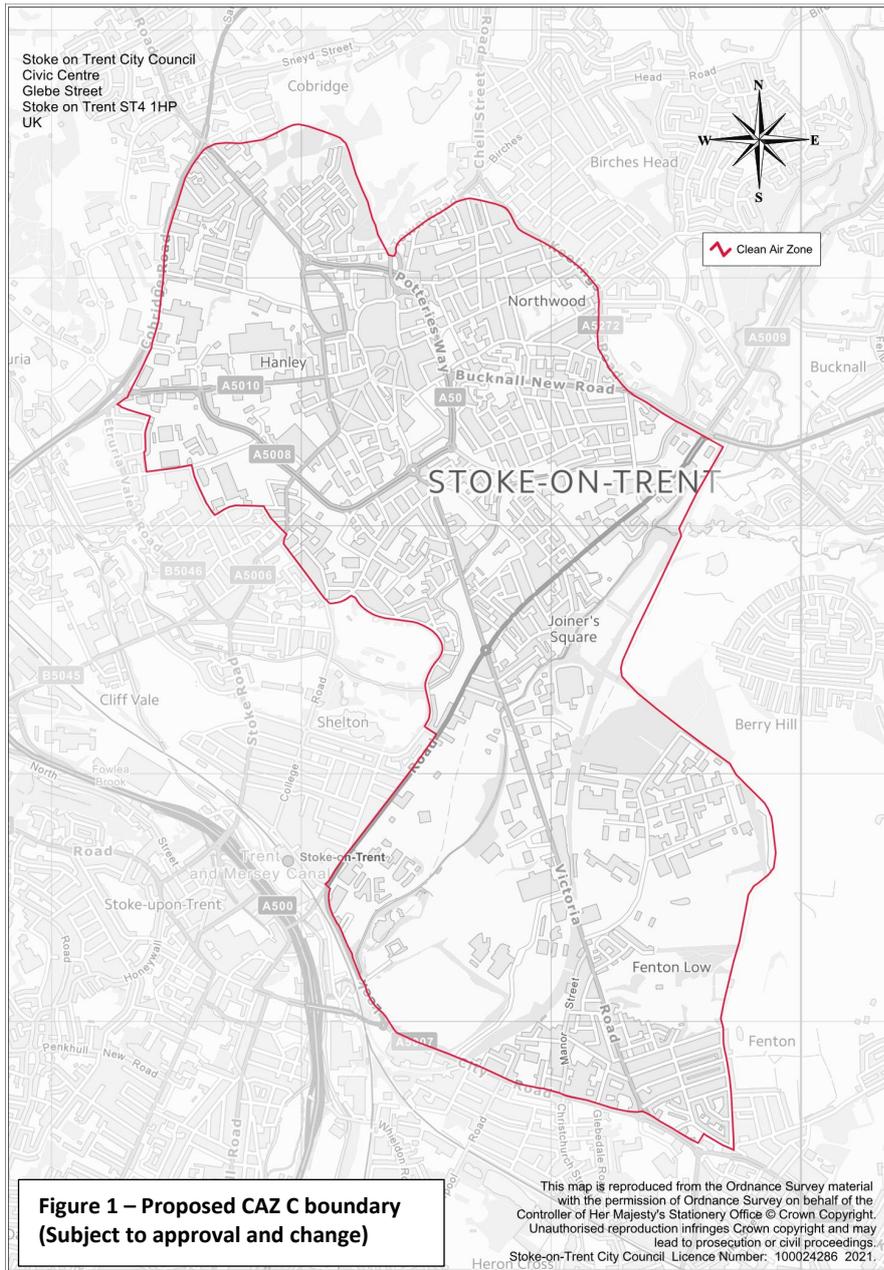
Therefore we have looked for a better solution, which will still deliver the required improvements in air quality, whilst minimising impacts on local businesses and people's daily lives. We have found that a CAZ C would provide such a solution.

### **What class of Clean Air Zone might Stoke-on-Trent have?**

Our CAZ would be based on a Class C Clean Air Zone which means there would be charges for all non-compliant vehicle types with the exception of private passenger cars and motorcycles. So it's important to understand that no private cars would be charged, irrespective of how old they are.

### **Where would the Clean Air Zone be?**

To deliver the required improvement in air quality, the CAZ would need to cover all of the city centre and the area between there and Victoria Road in Fenton, including Joiner's Square. It would extend to the east as far as (but not include) the junction of Bucknall New Road and Leek Road (the Lime Kiln junction). It would extend south along Victoria Road, as far as (but not including) the junction with City Road in Fenton. The CAZ will be clearly signposted from outside the area. Figure 1 shows the area which we have looked at for the CAZ C. The boundary is still subject to approval by the City Council and Government and it could change.



### When will this start?

A Clean Air Zone needs to be introduced as soon as possible, because people are suffering from the adverse impacts of air pollution. But the legislative and technical process is complex, meaning the earliest it can happen is some time in 2024. However, we are legally required to reduce the levels of pollution on Victoria Road before the year 2025.

### How do I know if this will affect me?

Private passenger cars and motor bikes would not be charged for entering the zone, irrespective of how old their vehicles are.

For other vehicle types, it all depends on the age of the vehicle. Lorries, coaches, buses, vans, minibuses and taxis (both Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles) will be liable for

the charge if their exhaust emission levels do not comply with the latest standards – known as the “Euro” classifications.

There is some work to do on confirming the categories, but only the very oldest petrol vehicles will be affected, and most diesel vans and taxis that have a 65 registration plate or newer (that is, registered from September 2015) will not be affected. For buses, coaches and lorries, the age is slightly older.

Ultra-low emission vehicles and zero emission vehicles, like electric cars, won't be charged.

### **What are the Charges?**

The charges for entering or driving within the CAZ C would apply only to those vehicles that don't meet the required emissions standards. The current charges being investigated are:

- For non-compliant buses, coaches and taxis (hackney carriage vehicles and private hire) - £5
- For non-compliant vans - £9
- For non-compliant lorries- £35.

It should be noted that the magnitude of these charges is still being investigated and are therefore still subject to change.

For consistency with other CAZs in the UK, our CAZ would be required by Government to be operational for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Under the legislation, and again for consistency with other CAZs, all these charges would be applied daily (0000hours – 2359hours), so once a vehicle is driven into or within the CAZ it can be driven again on that same day without further charges.

### **How is a CAZ enforced?**

The CAZ area will be monitored using Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras, linked to a nationally approved system that uses the DVLA's database of vehicle registrations. If you drive a vehicle that is required to pay the daily charge and drive into or within the CAZ, you will be able to pay online and will be required to do so within 7 days of driving within the CAZ, otherwise you'll be subject to a penalty charge. There will be extensive signing, both at and within the CAZ boundary and also on its approaches, to enable motorists to make informed choices about their journeys.

### **Is there any help available?**

The Council will seek Government funding through its Clean Air Fund (CAF) for a range of grants and exemption schemes to provide financial support to affected local businesses. For example, we hope to secure a grant to support eligible businesses to upgrade their vehicles so that they comply with the restrictions, and this will happen before the launch date of the CAZ.

Such a scheme could offer one-off payment contributions, for example if an old diesel van or taxi is replaced by a newer low emission or electric vehicle of the same type. It will not

meet the full costs but can provide a level of financial support. Much more work needs to be done on the CAF element of the proposal and we will engage with local businesses much more over the coming months.

We are required by Government to bid for money from the CAF, which we will do in 2022, alongside the submission of the Outline Business Case for the CAZ. It is vital we have the funds from the CAF before the CAZ is launched.

### **What about elsewhere where air quality is poor?**

The proposed CAZ C is designed to tackle the poor air quality in Victoria Road, Fenton. Two other locations exist where NO<sub>2</sub> levels will exceed the legal limit if nothing is done – on Etruria Road between Basford Park Road and Victoria Street, and on Bucknall New Road, towards the Potteries Way junction. There are also many areas where the NO<sub>2</sub> levels are close to, but don't exceed the legal limit, so Government don't require any action. However, the City Council's CAZ C proposal will provide improvements in some of these areas as well, increasing the benefits it brings. The proposals for the other two locations where NO<sub>2</sub> levels will exceed the legal limit are outlined below:

- On Etruria Road, this location straddles the boundary with Newcastle-under-Lyme, so we are working with the Borough and County Councils to identify proposed measures. Work is ongoing and more details can be found on their website, at <https://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/protection/air-quality-management/6>
- On Bucknall New Road, the pollution is mainly due to the large number of buses which use this road, and a solution is already funded by Government and is underway which will upgrade a large number of buses so that their exhaust emissions are reduced to those of equivalent new diesel buses. This is called "bus retrofit" and during 2022 around 50 buses will either be retrofitted or replaced by newer buses. This will result in the NO<sub>2</sub> levels being reduced to below the legal limit.

### **If more people are now buying hybrids and electric vehicles, won't this problem go away?**

In short, yes, but not for several years. We cannot wait for the time when most vehicles will be low or zero emission because the current pollution levels are creating problems for people's health. Across the UK, around 40,000 people die prematurely every year due to poor air quality and many more suffer acute health problems, and traffic is the main cause of this pollution, so we have to act as soon as we can.

The good news is that, once enough people have switched to low or zero emission vehicles, the pollution problem will go away and the CAZ can be removed. We estimate that this will happen by 2029 but that date will be dependent on careful monitoring of pollution levels and traffic flows, and on Government being satisfied that the legal limits will not be breached once the CAZ is removed.

### **What about the impacts of Covid, for example with more people working at home won't the problem solve itself?**

The initial impacts of Covid-19 on traffic levels were very noticeable, but the economy across the UK has recovered and changed. Our latest assessments show that traffic patterns have changed but the pollution problem still exists in the city so we have to take action.

Furthermore, we know that acute bronchial conditions can adversely affect people's ability to recover from Covid-19, so it's more important than ever that we tackle the problem of traffic generated air pollution.

### **Is this just about the council generating money?**

Absolutely not, the Government does not allow councils to use CAZs as a revenue source. The charges that are imposed are used to cover the running costs of the CAZ, and any surplus is retained by Government and cannot be used directly to fund other local services.

### **Who is paying for all of this?**

All of the work associated with the study and developing the proposals is being funded by Central Government so it has no impact on Council revenue budgets. Equally, the installation of the CAZ C and other measures, like measures funded from the CAF, is all funded by Central Government. The work is managed by the Government's Joint Air Quality Unit which is overseeing our work and that of other Councils across the UK that are undertaking similar work.

### **Are there going to be Clean Air Zones elsewhere?**

Yes, quite a few, including Sheffield, Manchester and Birmingham, which already has a CAZ D covering its city centre which includes charges for older private cars as well. Smaller cities are also looking at CAZs as a solution, whilst some are finding that other solutions like traffic management are more appropriate for their specific problem.

Portsmouth has recently launched CAZ B area which includes daily charges for non-compliant buses, coaches, taxis and lorries, but not vans or cars.

Bath launched a CAZ C in March 2021, and Bradford is also soon to follow suit, so we are working closely with them to monitor its impacts and learn from their experience.

Finally, other cities including Oxford are considering initiatives like Zero-Emission Zones and London also has an Ultra-Low Emission Zone which has more stringent restrictions, but all of these are different to CAZs.

### **Where can I find out more?**

Further information will be available on the City Council's website very soon.