



Air Quality Action Plan 2024 - 2029

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To provide Cabinet with the opportunity to approve the Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2029, for implementation.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1. Approve the Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2029 for implementation.**

Decision Information

Is this a Key Decision? No

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? No

What are the relevant corporate priorities? Sustainable South Kesteven

Which wards are impacted? Grantham wards only

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 The Council's current air quality monitoring and reporting programme is carried out within existing budgets which are reviewed annually.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 The Local Air Quality Management ("LAQM") regime was introduced by the Environment Act 1995. The Council's duties under the Environmental Act 1995 are mandatory. The duties imposed on the Council are to review air quality from time to time and, under Part IV of the Act, to develop and implement an air quality action plan to tackle air pollution.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director (Governance and Public Protection) and Monitoring Office

Climate Change

- 1.3 South Kesteven District Council has declared an Air Quality Management Area which primarily relates to the exceedance of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), one of a number of greenhouse gases contributing to an accelerated changing climate. The update of the Air Quality Action Plan sets out duties and actions for lower and upper tier authorities to improve air quality within Grantham, many of which can also contribute to lowering carbon emissions.

Completed by: Louise Case, Sustainability Project Support Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 Under the Environment Act 1995 and the associated Local Air Quality Management Framework, local authorities have a duty to review and assess air quality against National Air Quality Standards. When a pollutant fails to comply with an objective and there is relevant public exposure, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) must be declared and an Air Quality Action Plan

(AQAP) prepared, detailing measures which will be implemented to improve air quality in the designated area.

- 2.2. South Kesteven District Council declared an AQMA in 2013 encompassing the main roads in the town centre of Grantham (see Appendix 1). The main pollutant of concern is Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), which is largely attributable to road transport emissions, with cars being the dominant source within the AQMA.
- 2.3. Local air quality in South Kesteven is managed via an extensive diffusion tube monitoring network comprising fifty-eight passive NO₂ diffusion tubes at thirty five separate locations (some have triplicate/duplicate tubes at one location). The diffusion tube network is used to monitor NO₂ concentrations across the District, identify potential new areas of concern and monitor at known hotspot areas. Through the months of October, November and December of 2024 a further three monitoring locations were trialled in Bourne. These results will be reported in next year's annual status report.
- 2.4. The Air Quality Strategy Objectives for England pertinent to the current AQMA designation are as follows:
 - NO₂ annual mean objective of 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
 - NO₂ 1 hour mean objective of 200 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ not to be exceeded more than 18 times a year.
- 2.5. An Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) (see Appendix 2) was approved in 2016 and since then progress has been made against the identified measures. Implementation of the actions is monitored as part of an Annual Air Quality Status Report (ASR) which the Council is required to produce. The AQAP lasts for a 5 year period before an updated AQAP is required. Therefore, the AQAP 2024-2029 (see Appendix 3) is needed as the previous AQAP has exceeded the 5 year period.
- 2.6. Since the publication of the 2016 AQAP there has been a downward trend in the levels of NO₂ within the district and the few years data for sites within the AQMA have indicated that the levels are below the National Air Quality Standards.
- 2.7. The draft 2024 AQAP reflects the updated positions of ongoing actions to continue the downward trend in NO₂ levels within the AQMA as well as removing completed actions.
- 2.8. The current version of the AQAP is awaiting final appraisal by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). It has been appraised several times within the last 12 months and amendments have been made following the response from DEFRA. The latest appraisal was completed in December 2024

with ten recommendations for amendments which have been actioned. DEFRA has indicated in its response that the AQAP will be accepted following the amendments. Therefore, it is anticipated that the AQAP should be accepted by DEFRA. If any further amendments are required, they will be completed until DEFRA are satisfied with the AQAP and it is accepted. If any further amendments are required, it should not substantially alter the AQAP. In the unlikely event that a substantial alteration is required the revised AQAP will be brought to Cabinet for approval.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1. The current AQAP 2016 is out of date. Consequently, a new final version has been produced. AQAP 2024-2029 updates the projects and actions identified to continue the decrease of NO₂ levels within the AQMA.
- 3.2. The Council has a statutory obligation to review and publish an AQAP at least every 5 years.
- 3.3. Following the completion of the AQAP 2024-2029 a review will be undertaken into the AQMA for both the objectives, and the overall requirements, for an AQMA to be in place because the measures within the AQAP are completed and the data supports a reduction in of NO₂ levels.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 Approve the AQAP as presented – it is a legal requirement to have an Air Quality Action Plan that is updated every 5 years when an Air Quality Management Area is in place.
- 4.2 Cabinet can suggest alterations to the AQAP.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1. As stated, the AQAP published in 2016 is out of date and must be updated in accordance with statutory requirements.

6. Consultation

- 6.1. When creating an AQAP a consultation is required. The relevant legislation and technical guidance sets out a number of statutory consultees. Details of these are listed within the consultation section of the AQAP at Appendix 3.
- 6.2. A four week consultation was undertaken from 13 November 2024 to 11 December 2024. The methodology and summary of the consultation responses

can be found in Appendix 4 and there is a summary of the responses to the consultation in Appendix A of the AQAP.

- 6.3. It is clear from the variety of responses from the consultation that there is a clear lack of public understanding around the Air Quality Management Framework and how the relevant reports, monitoring, AQMA and AQAP all fit into that. The annual status reports (ASR) are published online and are publicly available, along with the AQMA and current AQAP. A review of the responses indicates that the council should consider publishing an overview of how the Council complies with the requirements of the legislation and undertakes monitoring. A plain English summary guide concerning the council's legal obligations and monitoring systems requirements would provide clarity relating a relatively complicated subject.
- 6.4. Respondents were generally in favour of the actions and behaviours which form a central part of SKDC's Air Quality Action Plan. Designed to mitigate or lower emissions and as such improve air quality, eight out of ten (81 or 79.4%) respondents thought that traffic management should be improved at key junctions in Grantham town centre.
- 6.5. Most respondents thought it was important to focus on the public health impacts of poor air quality for all, rather than particular sections of the community. Seven out of ten respondents (77 or 72.0%) chose this as one of their three priority areas. A commitment to changing behaviours was also evident, with four in ten respondents stating that they would consider walking rather than driving a car on a regular basis.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1. [Cabinet Report 4 April 2016](#)
ENV 639 – Approval for implementation of the 2016 AQMA Action Plan
- 7.2. [Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report 13 February 2024](#)
Draft Air Quality Action Plan

8. Appendices

- 8.1. List any Appendices.

Appendix 1 – AQMA Order No.6

Appendix 2 – The Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) – 2016

Appendix 3 – The Air Quality Action Plan 2024-2029

Appendix 4 – Consultation responses report