



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 13 January 2026

Report of Councillor Phil Dilks, Cabinet
Member for Planning

Air Quality Annual Update

Report Author

Tom Amblin-Lightowler, Environmental Health Manager – Environmental Protection & Private Sector Housing

✉ tom.amblin-lightowler@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

To provide the Annual Air Quality Status Report (ASR 2025) and to provide an update on the proposals for Management Area (order No.6) (AQMA).

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the content of Annual Air Quality Report (ASR 2025).
2. Note the update on the status of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?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? All Wards

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 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 This is an information report for members, there are no further governance implications other than those contained within the report below.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

Climate Change

- 1.3 South Kesteven District Council previously declared an Air Quality Management Area which primarily relates to the exceedance of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), one of the numerous greenhouse gases contributing to the acceleration of climate change. The principal source of NO₂ derives from high-temperature combustion processes such as road transport and associated traffic emissions. Actions included within the Air Quality Action Plan seek to limit the need to travel and to reduce the overall level of vehicle traffic in Grantham. This will have the simultaneous impact of reducing carbon emissions while improving public health.

Completed by: Serena Brown, Sustainability and Climate Change Manager

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 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. Tubes are located in Stamford and Grantham, in addition to a three months of tubes being located in Bourne. These tubes are used to monitor the annual mean objective of 40µg/m³ of NO₂.

Grantham- Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)

2.3 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.

2.4 The Air Quality Strategy Objectives for England pertinent to the current AQMA designation are as follows:

- NO₂ annual mean objective of 40µg/m³
- NO₂ 1 hour mean objective of 200µg/m³

2.5 When an AQMA is in place, an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) is required to be produced every five years. The last AQAP (for the AQMA in Grantham) was approved in 2025 and is included in Appendix 2.

2.6 Implementation of the actions contained within the existing AQAP are monitored as part of an Annual Air Quality Status Report (ASR) (Appendix 3) which the Council is required to produce.

Annual Status Report (ASR 2024) for the District

2.7 The 2025 ASR a contains monitoring data from 2024 and trends relating to data captured (Appendix 3)

2.8 The 2025 ASR has identified that during 2024 there were no exceedances of the 1 hour mean objective when using annual mean as a proxy for hourly mean. This is a positive and supports the overall improvement in air quality.

2.9 The ASR reports that there is compliance with the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide NO₂ at all fifty eight passive monitoring tubes across the thirty-five monitoring locations. This is a continuing trend since 2019.

2.10 The highest reported concentration of NO₂ was at diffusion tube monitoring location SK33,34 which is located on A607 Manthorpe Road, Grantham. It has

shown an overall decline in concentrations between 2022- 2024 at this site in comparison to the previous years data.

- 2.11 Within the 2025 ASR, Figure A.1 to Figure A.4 presents graphs showing the annual mean NO₂ concentrations between 2019 and 2024. The graphs demonstrate a general trend of reduction of NO₂ over this five year period. The significant decreases in 2020 are likely to be attributed to changes in behaviour due to Covid-19 restrictions impacting on travel.
- 2.12 Within the ‘conclusions and priorities’ section of the 2025 ASR report it recommends that the Council continue to use the passive monitoring network to monitor air quality levels, and to ensure that compliance is maintained throughout the District. The report recommends (to comply with the AQS objectives): -
 - Continue passive monitoring within the AQMA to ensure the NO₂ concentration remains below 40 µg/m³
 - Continue to consider amending AQMA No.6 to remove the pollution declaration of 1- hour NO₂ mean exceedances and potential revocation of the AQMA’.
- 2.13 The LAQM Policy Technical Guidance 22 identifies that Authorities that wish to reduce or revoke an AQMA must demonstrate that air quality objectives are being met and have confidence that the improvements will be sustained. It advises that long term, rather than short term, compliance should be considered.
- 2.14 Given that monitoring site SK33,34 has recorded some months concentrations within 10% of exceedance and despite demonstrating a decline in levels from the previous years it is still uncertain as to whether the trend will continue in the future due to the delay in the completion of the Southern Relief Road. It is not recommended that the AQMA be revoked in its entirety at present, but consideration should be given to revoking the NO₂ 1-Hour objective.
- 2.15 In summary the 2025 ASR demonstrates an overall continual improvement in the levels of NO₂ across the district which is a positive, but it is recommended that it is still premature to consider revocation of the AQMA in its entirety.

The 2025 ASR was submitted to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in line with our statutory obligations. The ASR was subsequential reviewed and accepted with the positive feedback received included in Appendix 4.

- 2.16 An additional three diffusion tubes were installed in Bourne in locations along North/South Road during the months of September, October and November. The results from this demonstrated that levels of NO₂ are below the national air quality

objectives. No further monitoring is currently proposed to take place at this time as part of the wider monitoring program based upon the recent results.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 Overall, the general trend shows that concentrations of NO₂ are decreasing, with all sites being below both the hourly and annual objective levels. However, monitoring location SK33, 34 is still monitoring occasions within 10% of exceedance of the annual objective.
- 3.2 There are no recorded exceedances of the hourly mean objective for nitrogen dioxide, when using annual mean as a proxy for hourly mean. Exceedances of this objective have not been observed for over 8 years, therefore an amendment for this particular objective within the AQMA may be appropriate.
- 3.3 If the Council was to amend the AQMA Order No. 6 to remove the pollution declaration of the 1-hour NO₂ mean, the annual mean requirement would remain, and the diffusion tube monitoring network would continue to be monitored.
- 3.4 The NO₂ monitoring data for 2025 will be reported in the ASR for 2026 next year.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 None – the report is for information purposes and is the annual update on air quality within the district and compliance with statutory obligations.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 To provide an overview of the current NO₂ levels within the district against the national air quality objectives.

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 The Local Air Quality Management – P22 Guidance:
[LADM-TG22-August-22-v1.0.pdf](https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Environment/Air-Quality/Local-Air-Quality-Management/P22-Guidance)

7. Appendices

- Appendix One - Air Quality Management Area Order
- Appendix Two - Air Quality Action Plan
- Appendix Three - 2025 Annual Status Report
- Appendix Four - Annual Status Report Appraisal Report