

**Climate Change, Environment and Growth
Executive Advisory Panel
11th July 2022**

Report Title	Air Quality Review – North Northamptonshire
Report Author	Catherine Clooney, Interim Environmental Protection Manager
Executive Member	Cllr Harriet Pentland - Executive Member Climate and Green Environment

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Draft Air Quality Annual Status Report 2022

Appendix B – Air Quality data

Appendix C - Table 2.1 of the NNC ASR 2022

1. Purpose of Report

To provide a further position statement to the Climate Change, Environment and Growth Executive Advisory Panel on:

- 1.1 Air quality in North Northamptonshire from 2021 data (2022 North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) Annual Status Review (ASR) Report)
- 1.2 Implementation of recommendations from the AECOM Review Report taken to EAP on 23rd February 2022
- 1.3 Public Health funding bid reported to EAP on 23rd February 2022 and the potential application for an air quality Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Local Air Quality Management process places an obligation on all local authorities to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas, and to determine whether the air quality objectives are likely to be achieved. Where an exceedance is considered likely the local authority must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and prepare an Air Quality Action Plan

(AQAP) setting out the measures it intends to put in place in pursuit of the objectives.

- 2.2 There are currently no AQMA's in North Northamptonshire and none have been recently recommended for implementation following the combined NNC ASR 2022.
- 2.3 In 2021, North Northamptonshire undertook monitoring at 100 non-automatic (diffusion tube) sites. The results of the monitoring highlight an overall decreasing trend in that time. However, the trend between 2020 and 2021 can often contradict this, with some increases in concentrations monitored in some locations. This is likely due to an increase in traffic in 2021 compared to the restrictions on activity in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, no concentrations exceeding the NO₂ AQS objective value of 40 µg/m³ were recorded in North Northamptonshire in 2021.

3. Recommendations

The Climate Change, Environment and Growth Executive Advisory Panel (EAP) is asked to support the following considerations:

- 3.1 To continue with the current arrangements of monitoring air quality in line with the National Air Quality Objectives.
- 3.2 Endorse the 2022 ASR for North Northamptonshire
- 3.3 To note an update on the AECOM review, Public Health Funding Bid and a potential air quality JSNA application.

Reasons for recommendation

The endorsement of these recommendations will ensure the Council continues to maintain its commitment to monitoring, reviewing and taking measures to improve local air quality, whilst at the same time using funding to implement extra projects to assist with further measures.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 NNC continues to monitor NO₂ concentrations by a network of diffusion tubes which are replaced each month and sent off to the lab for analysis. A draft consolidated ASR of all former sovereign areas was submitted to DEFRA by the deadline of 30th June 2022 (See Appendix A)
- 4.2 Air quality levels are monitored through analysis of compliance against the NO₂ annual mean air quality objective of 40µg/m³. There are no AQMA's across North Northamptonshire, due to a history of non-exceedances and subsequently there have been no AQAP's produced to date.

- 4.3 Despite not having a formal AQAP, North Northamptonshire has taken forward a number of direct measures during the current reporting year of 2021 in pursuit of improving local air quality.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1 North Northamptonshire ASR 2022

A summary of the findings of this report are as follows:

5.1.1 That air quality in North Northamptonshire is generally good and concentrations remain below the AQS objectives. Although the five-year trend decreases overall, some increases in concentrations can be seen between 2020 and 2021. This is not unexpected, with the increases in traffic after the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

5.1.2 As NNC does not have any AQMAs, there is no requirement for a formal AQAP. However, several actions have been taken by the Council to improve air quality. Actions taken chiefly relate to decreasing traffic related NO₂ pollution through promoting alternative travel, and as a consequence of action on climate change.

5.1.3 Moving forward, the priorities for North Northamptonshire are:

- To continue monitoring and the review of air quality in line with national air quality objectives;
- To continue the streamlining process commenced since the creation of the unitary authority to improve air quality reporting and actions;
- To work together with other departments of the Council i.e. planning and Highways, to manage local air quality and raise awareness on its role in achieving a sustainable environment;
- To continue to review all planning applications that are referred to the Environmental Protection team in terms of national and East Midlands Air Quality Network (EMAQN) guidance, ensuring any impacts upon local air quality are quantified; and
- To promote initiatives to reduce emissions of air pollution across the district through partnerships with schools, businesses and communities.
- To monitor air quality and any new sources of pollution as areas within North Northamptonshire continue to develop and grow.

5.1.4 The Public Health team have been consulted on the draft NNC ASR 2022 in line with requirements of the submission process.

5.2 AECOM Review

5.2.1 The AECOM review provided a number of recommendations that could be taken forward to improve air quality management in 2022. These included:

- Submitting the 2022 annual report ahead of the submission deadline, to allow for a timely appraisal and the potential to address any comments that may arise;
- Extending the diffusion tube monitoring network to include selected identified areas and to consider particulates;
- Working in closer collaboration with the relevant public health body and with county working groups; and;
- Reviewing existing local air quality actions, updating and identifying new measures

5.2.2 In line with the recommendations, the 2022 annual report was submitted ahead of the deadline, which will enable the report to be appraised by DEFRA with sufficient time for the local authority to assess and respond to any comments made.

5.2.3 Consideration has been given to the extension of the diffusion tube network in the Wellingborough area to 25 tubes and the re-location of several tubes in the other sovereign areas based on the recommendations made. An assessment of schools near busy roads is to be addressed as part of a wider project.

5.2.4 The Environment Act 2021 introduces a requirement for two new national air quality targets, including one on PM_{2.5}. The new national targets will be set in secondary legislation laid before parliament by 31st October 2022. These targets will apply to England at a national level, but there will be a role for LAs in helping to achieve these. This is at an early stage of policy development, but current plans are to have an emissions-based approach which would require LAs to take a set of actions to reduce PM_{2.5} emissions (and precursors) in their areas, with some flexibility on the type of action to align with local priorities (and sources which they can influence). The possibility is also being explored to ask LAs to prioritise actions to ensure they are maximizing the beneficial impact on vulnerable groups/those at higher risk of poor air quality. Public consultation on the Air Quality Strategy will take place in Autumn/Winter 2022 with a review of the National Air Quality Strategy for England published in May 2023. Formalised plans and the publication of this review will assist to determine any actions and approaches in relation to particulates.

5.2.5 The Environmental Protection team is engaging with public health colleagues and West Northants on an application for an air quality JSNA.

5.2.6 Table 2.1 of the NNC ASR 2022 (See Appendix C), provides details of and progress on measures within North Northamptonshire to improve local air quality:

- Transport plan to promote walking, cycling, and public transport to support the modal shift away from the private car.
- Encourage lower carbon transport alternatives and increase the proportion of low carbon fuelled vehicles.
- Work with taxi companies and licence holders to consider low carbon vehicles.
- Promote low carbon fleet and staff vehicles schemes in the business sector.
- Measure home energy conservation act requirements as part of statutory Home Energy Conservation Act 1995.
- East Midlands Air Quality Network – Engaged.
- Implement East Midlands Air Quality Planning Guidance; link to other local and regional policies.
- Installing Electric Vehicle Charging Points.
- Environmental Permitting – Risk Rating Inspections.
- Enforcement of Environmental Permit Conditions.
- Planning conditions requiring construction/demolition management plans to include dust suppression AND enforce dust/mud controls where no planning condition exists through legislation.
- Age policy for Taxis.
- Health and Wellbeing Officer/Sports Development Officer in Post.
- VOI Scooter Project.
- East Northamptonshire Greenway Project.
- Northamptonshire Climate Change Route Map
- Carbon Literacy Training.
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

5.3 Public Health

- 5.3.1 A successful bid was submitted for Public Health funding and £80k was awarded for two Air Quality Project Officers to undertake project work to improve air quality across North Northamptonshire, by carrying out a package of different measures/innovations.
- 5.3.2 Prior to obtaining and progressing funding additional information has been requested from the public health team. The new template format has recently been completed and submitted for assessment. It is the intention to short list the potential projects to be undertaken by the posts to ensure that the actions can be completed within a time frame and that measurable outcomes can be obtained.
- 5.3.3 Environmental Protection are working with colleagues in West Northamptonshire Council and the Public Health team to submit a JSNA application regarding local air quality. A JSNA is a process that looks at the current and future health, care and wellbeing needs of Northamptonshire residents to inform and guide the planning and commissioning of health, wellbeing and social care services.

6 Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

- 6.1.1 A small number of officers within the Environmental Protection teams across Regulatory Services, are trained and equipped to carry out air quality monitoring assessments. An Air Quality consultant is paid annually to analyse all the data from each sovereign area and to write and produce the Annual Air Quality Status Report. Accordingly, no additional resources or finances are required for the work that we do, but additional staffing resources would assist to progress, implement and maintain measures and actions to address local air quality.

6.2 Legal

- 6.2.1 The Council must continue to meet its requirements under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995.

6.3 Risk

6.3.1 There are no significant risks to note arising from the proposed recommendations in this report, but to do nothing places the Council at risk of not meeting the requirements of the Environment Act 1995, reducing air quality and therefore increasing the likelihood of an AQMA being declared.

6.4 Consultation

6.4.1 Internal Officer consultation has taken place to inform the drafting of this report and its recommendations. There is no legal requirement upon the Council to undertake any form of formal consultation in respect of air quality, but the council will continue to raise awareness of local air quality through wider engagement and education.

6.5 Climate Impact

6.5.1 It is considered that the implementation of the recommendations would have a positive impact on climate change. To ensure the Council have no potential AQMA's in the future, it is recommended that monitoring is continued.

6.6 Community Impact

6.6.1 It is considered that there are no community impacts associated with this report. LA's may however be asked to prioritise actions to ensure that they are maximising the beneficial impact on vulnerable groups/those at higher risk of poor air quality, with a policy area under the National Air Quality Strategy assessing air quality disparities.

7 Background Papers

7.1 AECOM Review Report