

Meeting:	Combined Executive Member Decision Session
Meeting date:	2 June 2026
Report of:	Dave Atkinson, Director of Environmental and Regulatory Services
Portfolio of:	Councillor Kent, Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency

Decision Report: Air Quality Annual Status Report 2026

Subject of Report

1. The report details the latest (2025) air quality monitoring results for York and progress on achieving measures in City of York Council's (CYC) current Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP4) to deliver further improvements in air quality.
2. The Executive Member is asked to note the contents of the report including the trends in air pollution in recent years and approve the submission of the Annual Status Report (ASR) to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for formal appraisal, in line with statutory guidance. The full 2026 ASR is included at **Annex A**.
3. The latest air quality monitoring results can be summarised as follows:
 - No monitoring locations recorded annual mean NO₂ concentrations of 40µg/m³ or above in city centre Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in 2025. This is the second year since the pandemic that all CYC monitoring sites have achieved compliance with health-based objectives (2024 and 2025).
 - Significantly lower NO₂ concentrations across the AQMA observed in 2024 have been sustained into 2025, with further improvements seen in some areas, particularly with regards to the maximum concentrations of NO₂ recorded in key locations around the inner ring road.

- Maximum annual mean concentrations of NO₂ decreased between 2024 and 2025 in all areas of the AQMA apart from Fishergate / Paragon Street and ranged from 3.9% lower around Gillygate / Bootham to 10.6% lower around Holgate / Blossom Street. In the Fishergate / Paragon Street area maximum concentrations of NO₂ increased by 2.5% between 2024 and 2025. Maximum concentrations of NO₂ monitored in most areas are the lowest recorded in over 15 years of monitoring (the lowest recorded concentrations of NO₂ in the Fishergate / Paragon Street area were observed in 2024).
- Whilst concentrations of NO₂ monitored at all continuous monitoring sites in 2025 are not uniformly lower than in 2024, the overall long-term trend (taking into account both continuous monitoring and wider diffusion tube monitoring across the AQMA) suggests a continued downward trajectory in NO₂ pollution levels across York's area since 2012.
- The highest concentration of NO₂ recorded at a location representative of long-term public exposure in 2025 was 29.9µg/m³ near the junction of Gillygate and Bootham. This is well within the health-based objective of 40µg/m³ and reflects a further improvement on 2024 for both Gillygate and across the wider area of York, where maximum NO₂ concentrations of 32.4µg/m³ were monitored around Blossom Street.
- Maximum annual mean concentrations of NO₂ in the former Fulford Road and Salisbury Terrace AQMA's remain well within the health-based objectives and have also fallen further in 2025 compared with earlier years.
- Concentrations of particulates (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) remain within the current (and recently strengthened) health-based air quality objectives for these pollutants. Whilst there is a general downward trend in particulate matter concentrations in York over the last 10+ years, recent years have displayed greater volatility. CYC's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP4) contains measures to reduce local sources of particulate matter further in York.

4. Following adoption of a new Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP4) by CYC's Executive in July 2024, York has made notable progress in improving air quality throughout 2025, building on previous efforts and introducing new initiatives to tackle pollution and enhance public health.
- **Bus service improvements** - we worked in partnership with bus operators to improve bus services across the city. In June 2025, CYC's bus improvement programme celebrated a major milestone with the news that over one million £1 fares have been sold to young people since September 2023.
 - **Taxis** - we continued to work with the taxi trade to encourage the transition to low emission taxis within the city, following the introduction of CYC's new Taxi Licensing Policy in 2024. By the end of 2025, 45% of CYC licensed taxis were using low emission petrol hybrid or zero tailpipe emission electric vehicles.
 - **CYC Fleet** - we continued our phased EV fleet replacement programme for vehicles under 3.5 tonnes. At the end of 2025, 77% of CYC's operational car/van fleet were electric or plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. We also progressed further upgrades of our heavy fleet vehicles over 3.5 tonnes, which now includes 2 electric refuse trucks, 6 electric pick-ups and 2 electric pedestrian sweepers.
 - **Expansion of Smoke Control Area (SCA)** – In April 2025, we consulted on a proposal to expand the existing Smoke Control Area to cover all areas with council boundaries. CYC's Executive approved this expansion in March 2026, that will come into operation on 1 November 2026. The SCA expansion will introduce new rules to ensure only the cleanest fuels and stoves can be used across York.
 - **National Clean Air Day / Clean Air Night** - we supported National Clean Air Day (June 2025) and Clean Air Night (January 2025 and 2026), raising awareness of the links between pollution and health and encouraging continued action by York residents and businesses.

- **Gillygate trial** – we completed a year-long trial aimed at improving air quality on Gillygate. The trial involved changes to traffic light sequencing to reduce standing traffic and emissions. The project also aimed to create a safer environment for pedestrians, wheelchair users and cyclists. The trial's progress and impact on air quality and journey times were monitored throughout 2025.
 - **Planning and Development** - in line with CYC's Low Emission Planning Guidance, we continued to ensure that emissions and air quality impacts from new developments were appropriately assessed and mitigated, exposure to poor air quality was reduced via good design practices and new private trips were minimised via sustainable transport opportunities.
 - **Pollution Forecasting Service** – we continued to promote our DEFRA funded pollution forecasting and alert service (York Air Alert), which received 18,252 visits in 2025 (with over 30,000 visits to date since the launch). The service sends free air pollution alerts and health advice to those most likely to be affected by air pollution to help them minimise their exposure when pollution episodes are forecast.
 - **Anti-idling initiatives** - we continued to promote our 'Kick the Habit' anti-idling campaign on Clean Air Day and throughout 2025 and worked with partners to reduce the incidence of vehicle idling across the city.
 - **Carbon Negative Challenge Fund (CNCF)** – we were awarded funding through the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority's Carbon Negative Challenge Fund to undertake indoor air quality monitoring and health assessment studies to consider the real-world impacts of retrofit interventions progressed through the Warm Homes Grant (WHG).
 - **Other measures** - a number of additional complimentary air quality initiatives were delivered in 2025 through CYC's transport and carbon reduction work programmes.
5. Further details of all the above measures are provided in this report and the main Annual Status Report at **Annex A**.

Benefits and Challenges

6. Producing an Annual Air Quality Status Report (ASR) is required under the Local Air Quality Management regime, as specified by the Environment Act 1995 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021) and subsequent regulations. It also ensures local transparency with respect to publication of air quality data and progress with measures in CYC's current Air Quality Action Plan.
7. Not submitting an ASR to DEFRA for appraisal within the required timescales would mean that CYC is not fulfilling statutory requirements.

Policy Basis for Decision

8. The ASR has been produced as part of our statutory duties required by the Local Air Quality Management framework under the Environment Act 1995 (as amended) and provides an update on CYC's latest Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP4). CYC's AQAP is fully aligned to the Council Plan and reflects ambitions contained within our 10-Year Strategies covering climate, health and wellbeing and the economy.

Financial Strategy Implications

9. There are no specific financial implications associated with submission of the ASR to DEFRA, but delivery of measures to improve air quality will require both capital and revenue funding. Ongoing monitoring of air quality in the city also requires ongoing revenue funding. Any request for funding will follow the council's budgetary (capital & revenue) process.

Recommendation and Reasons

10. The Executive Member is asked to:
 - Note the contents of the report (including the trends in air pollution in recent years and progress made with delivery of measures in CYC's Fourth Air Quality Action Plan) and approve the Annual Status Report and its submission to DEFRA in line with statutory requirements.

Reason: to ensure that the Executive Member is aware of current air quality position in the city and progress made with air quality improvement measures.

Background

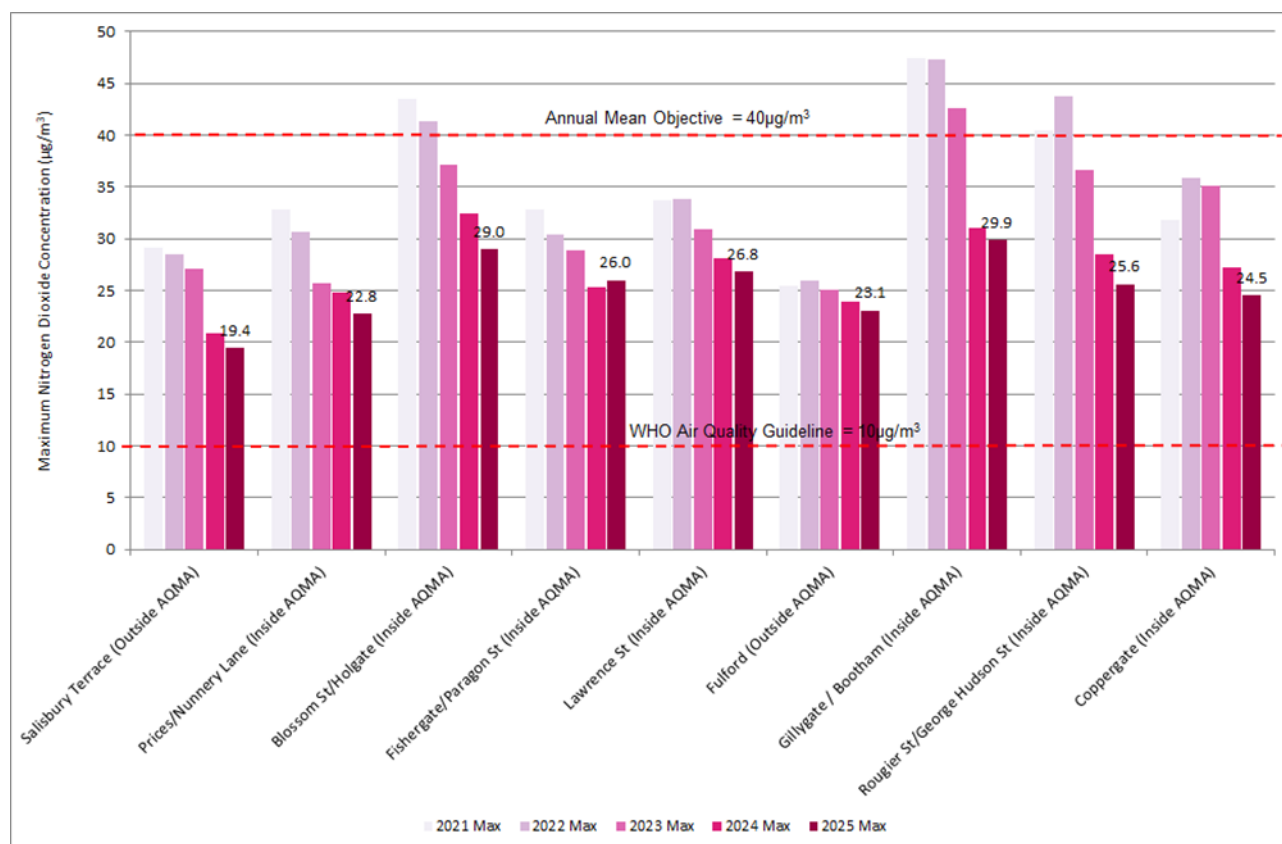
11. Annual Status Reports (ASRs) were introduced to aid transparency, increase accessibility of air quality to the wider public and encourage buy-in to delivering air quality improvement measures by those best placed to assist (e.g. Directors of Public Health and Transport).
12. This report provides an update on air quality in York (2025 calendar year), including progress on delivery of measures within CYC's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP4), prior to submission of this year's ASR to DEFRA. The full Annual Status Report is included at **Annex A**.
13. Breathing polluted air damages our health and costs the NHS and society billions of pounds every year. Air pollution is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer and can cause a range of health impacts, including effects on lung function, exacerbation of asthma, increases in hospital admissions and mortality.
14. Air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society, children, the elderly, and those with existing heart and lung conditions. Low-income communities are also disproportionately impacted by poor air quality, exacerbating health and social inequalities.
15. Historical monitoring of air quality across the city identified some areas of the city centre, around the inner ring road, where long term annual average nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels were above health-based objectives. This became the city centre Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Other AQMAs declared in Fulford and on Salisbury Terrace were revoked in 2020 and 2017 respectively due to air quality improvements.
16. CYC has a statutory duty to try to reduce NO₂ concentrations within the remaining city centre AQMA and additional obligations in relation to the protection of public health and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The main air pollutants of concern in York are NO₂ and particulate matter (PM). Previous source apportionment work has suggested that traffic is responsible for around 50-70% of the total NO₂. Road transport is also a source of PM emissions, although its contribution is less than half that of domestic burning of solid fuels in closed stoves and open fires.

Air Quality Monitoring Update

17. Monitoring of NO₂ and other pollutants has been undertaken across York since 1999. In addition to fulfilling statutory air quality monitoring requirements, monitoring air pollution across the city can assist with the evaluation of air quality improvement, planning and transport measures.
18. The latest air pollution monitoring data and indicators for 2025, summarised in this report, indicate that the significantly lower NO₂ concentrations in the AQMA observed in 2024 have been sustained into 2025, with improvements seen in some areas with respect to the maximum annual mean concentrations of NO₂ recorded in key locations.
19. There were no monitoring locations that measured annual mean NO₂ concentrations of 40µg/m³ or above in 2025. This is the second year since the pandemic that all CYC monitoring sites have achieved compliance with health-based objectives (2024 and 2025).
20. The highest concentration of NO₂ recorded at a location representative of long-term public exposure in 2025 was 29.9µg/m³ near the junction of Gillygate and Bootham. This is well within the health-based objective of 40µg/m³ and reflects a further improvement since 2024 in both the Gillygate area and across the wider area of York, where maximum NO₂ concentrations of 32.4µg/m³ were monitored at a relevant location on Blossom Street.
21. Improvements in annual mean NO₂ monitored at roadside continuous monitoring sites were observed between 2024 and 2025 at Holgate Road (9.6% improvement), Gillygate (3.6% improvement) and Lawrence Street (7.8% improvement). In contrast, annual mean NO₂ concentrations increased between 2024 and 2025 at Fishergate (3.2% increase), Nunnery Lane (0.5% increase), Heworth Green (8.6% increase) and Fulford Road (2.1% increase). Annual mean background concentrations of NO₂ monitored at Bootham Park Hospital (City of York Council's urban background monitoring site) also increased by 2.4% between 2024 and 2025.

22. Whilst concentrations of NO₂ monitored at continuous monitoring sites in 2025 are not uniformly lower than in 2024, the overall long-term trend (taking into account both continuous monitoring data and wider diffusion tube monitoring data) suggests a continued downward trajectory in pollution levels across much of York's area since 2012.
23. Maximum annual mean concentrations of NO₂ monitored at relevant locations across the current AQMA were 29.9µg/m³ (Gillygate / Bootham), 25.6µg/m³ (George Hudson St / Rougier St), 29.0µg/m³ (Holgate / Blossom Street), 26.8µg/m³ (Lawrence St), 26.0µg/m³ (Fishergate / Paragon St), 22.8µg/m³ (Prices Lane/Nunnery Lane) and 24.5µg/m³ (Coppergate). With the exception of the Fishergate / Paragon Street area, where maximum concentrations increased by 2.5% between 2024 and 2025, maximum concentrations of NO₂ decreased in all other areas between 2024 and 2025 and ranged from 3.9% lower around Gillygate / Bootham to 10.6% lower around Holgate / Blossom Street.
24. Concentrations of NO₂ monitored in the (now revoked) Fulford Road and Salisbury Terrace AQMAs in 2025 continue to be well within the annual mean objective of 40µg/m³. This supports the decision to revoke these AQMAs as discussed in previous Annual Status Reports and implemented in February 2020 (Fulford Road) and December 2017 (Salisbury Terrace).

25. The maximum annual mean NO₂ concentrations monitored (at relevant locations¹) in keys areas across the city centre AQMA are captured by Performance Indicator CAN028. Trends over the last 5 years are shown below in Figure 1:



Note: Areas covered by the former AQMAs at Salisbury Terrace and Fulford Road are shown for information only.

26. Maximum concentrations of NO₂ across all areas of the AQMA in 2025 were below the annual mean NO₂ objective and decreased between 2024 and 2025 in all areas apart from Fishergate / Paragon Street (where maximum concentrations increased by 2.5%).
27. The greatest improvement in 2025 was observed in the Blossom Street / Holgate Road area, where maximum concentrations of NO₂ improved by 10.6% between 2024 and 2025. Maximum concentrations of NO₂ monitored across all areas except Fishergate / Paragon Street are the lowest recorded in 15 years of monitoring (the lowest recorded concentrations of NO₂ in the Fishergate / Paragon Street area were observed in 2024).

¹ A relevant location is an outdoor, non-occupational location (e.g. facade of a residential dwelling) where members of the public may be exposed to poor air quality

Ongoing monitoring will determine whether the previous downward trajectory resumes during 2026/27 in the Fishergate area.

Monitoring of Particulate Matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5})

28. CYC monitored particulate (PM₁₀) at three sites (Bootham, Fishergate and Plantation Drive) and fine particulate (PM_{2.5}) at four sites (Bootham, Fishergate, Gillygate and Holgate Road) in 2025. National health-based air quality objectives for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} are currently met in York. The highest annual mean levels of PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} monitored in York during 2025 were 17.0µg/m³ (at Plantation Drive) and 9.6µg/m³ (at Gillygate) respectively. Along with many areas of the UK, these concentrations are above World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines for these pollutants, which have been strengthened to 15µg/m³ (PM₁₀) and 5µg/m³ (PM_{2.5}). The new guidelines are significantly more stringent than current UK Air Quality Objectives and do not currently apply in UK law. The new guidelines reflect the large body of evidence produced in recent years of the harm caused by much lower levels of pollution than previously thought. WHO recognise these are challenging public health recommendations and that achieving the guideline levels would be the ultimate goal. CYC's latest Air Quality Action plan commits to work towards WHO Guidelines in the longer term for all pollutants.
29. The maximum PM₁₀ concentration of 17.0µg/m³ monitored in 2025 is below the maximum concentration of 17.8µg/m³ monitored in 2024 (also at Plantation Drive). The maximum PM_{2.5} concentration of 9.6µg/m³ monitored in 2025 is above the maximum concentration of 9.0µg/m³ monitored in 2024 (also at Gillygate). Whilst there is a general downward trend in particulate matter concentrations in York over the last 10+ years, Figures 2 and 3 show that trends in recent years have displayed greater volatility. CYC will continue to address both PM and NO₂ concentrations through measures in its Air Quality Action Plan.

Figure 2: Trends in Annual Mean PM₁₀



Figure 3: Trends in Annual Mean PM_{2.5}



30. Short term trends and annual variation in PM does not necessarily reflect those seen with nitrogen dioxide as they are less dominated by local sources of pollution. Transport in York produces between 50-70% of total NO_x emissions (which become NO₂) but is only responsible for around 15% and 17% of PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} emissions respectively; the rest is from background sources and other sources such as domestic and commercial heating, nature, waste and agriculture.
31. AQAP4 includes actions that will contribute to local reductions in PM concentrations. Some examples include the continued phasing out of diesel buses and other diesel vehicles and machinery, reducing particulate emissions from domestic and commercial heating, reducing emissions during construction and operation of new developments, improving public awareness of domestic solid fuel burning practices, particulate emissions and associated health impacts. CYC continue to enforce existing smoke control areas to reduce particulate emissions and nuisance and has recently approved expansion of the SCA to cover the whole of York².

Actions to improve air quality

32. CYC has made air quality improvements in 2025, building on previous efforts and introducing new initiatives to tackle pollution and enhance public health. Key developments include:
33. **Buses** - In June 2025, CYC's bus improvement programme celebrated a major milestone with the news that over one million £1 fares have been sold to young people since September 2023. The fare subsidy aims to improve access to education, work and leisure. The scheme was launched as part of the city's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funded by central government; between 2023 and 2025 it was managed by CYC working with all six of York's bus operators, and from 1 April 2025 the funds have been managed by York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority. Figures released in February 2025 showed that 2024 was the busiest year for York's Park and Ride since 2017, with the total number of journeys exceeding 4.5 million, almost one million higher than in 2023. CYC estimates that people boarding at Park and Ride sites in December resulted in over 61,700 cars not travelling into central York.

² See Executive meeting <https://democracy.york.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=72172>

34. **Taxis** – we continued to work with the taxi trade to encourage the transition to low emission taxis within the city, following the introduction of CYC’s new Taxi Licensing Policy in late 2024. In previous years, CYC has supported York licensed taxi drivers with purchase and operational costs for low or zero-emission vehicles using DEFRA grant funding. By the end of 2025, 45% of CYC licensed taxis were using low emission petrol hybrid or zero tailpipe emission electric vehicles. The full extent of CYC’s new Taxi Licensing Policy will come into effect in November 2027, when a 10-year age limit will apply to all licence renewals. CYC will continue to work with proprietors to encourage the uptake of low and zero emission vehicles compliant with the new policy.
35. **CYC Fleet** - the council fleet includes a diverse range of vehicles from small vans and cars to larger heavy goods vehicles. Throughout 2025, we continued our phased EV fleet replacement programme for vehicles under 3.5 tonnes. By the end of 2025, 77% of CYC’s operational car/van fleet were electric or plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. We also progressed further upgrades of our heavy fleet vehicles over 3.5 tonnes, which now includes 2 electric refuse trucks, 6 electric pick-ups and 2 electric pedestrian sweepers.
36. **Consultation on extending CYC’s Smoke Control Area (SCA)** - In April 2025, residents and businesses were invited to share their views on a proposal to expand York’s existing SCA to cover all areas within council boundaries. The proposals will require all residents and businesses to take responsibility for the fuel they burn to minimise smoke and air pollution and improve health and wellbeing for all residents. CYC’s Executive approved this expansion in March 2026, that will come into effect on 1 November 2026. Expansion of the SCA will be supported by a communications campaign to ensure that residents are aware of the new legal requirements. This work reinforces CYC’s existing DEFRA funded ‘Fuel for Thought’ campaign that aims to raise awareness of the links between burning solid fuels, pollution and health and provides advice on alternative, cleaner methods of heating.
37. **National Clean Air Day / Clean Air Night** - CYC supported National Clean Air Day (June 2025) and Clean Air Night (January 2025 and 2026), raising awareness of the links between pollution and health and encouraging continued action by York residents and businesses.

38. **Gillygate trial** – a year-long trial aimed at improving air quality on Gillygate progressed throughout 2025. The trial involved changes to traffic light sequencing to reduce standing traffic and emissions. The project also aimed to create a safer environment for pedestrians, wheelchair users and cyclists. A review of the Gillygate air quality data for 2025 has shown that the trial has brought about further reductions in emissions compared with earlier years. Annual mean concentrations of NO₂ monitored in 2025 at the Gillygate automatic monitor are 3.5% lower than 2024 are the lowest recorded to date. A full evaluation of the trial, including wider traffic impacts, is currently being undertaken, with a permanent change to the traffic light sequencing subject to further Executive Member approval; a further report is expected later in 2026.
39. **Planning and Development** – in line with CYC's Low Emission Planning Guidance, we continued to ensure that emissions and air quality impacts from new developments were appropriately assessed and mitigated, exposure to poor air quality was reduced via good design practices and that new private trips were minimised via the provision of sustainable transport opportunities.
40. **Pollution Forecasting Service** – following the launch of CYC's DEFRA funded pollution forecasting and alert service in 2024, the York Air Alert website received 18,252 visits throughout 2025 (with over 25,000 visits since the launch). The service sends free air pollution alerts and health advice to those most likely to be affected by air pollution to help them minimise their exposure when pollution episodes are forecast. Alerts give advanced warning of when air pollution is expected to be higher than usual, up to 3 days ahead. Subscribers can receive air quality alerts by text, email or voicemail for different areas of York, depending on where they live or work. In a subscriber survey undertaken in August 2025, 95% of respondents said that the service was useful to them, with 64% of respondents saying they took action to reduce either their own exposure, or the exposure of someone they provided cared for.

41. **Anti-idling initiatives** - we continued to promote our 'Kick the Habit' anti-idling campaign on Clean Air Day and throughout 2025 and worked with partners to reduce the incidence of vehicle idling across the city. The campaign sets out to encourage people to think about the importance of clean air and the impact that this has on them, their health and those around them. Work in 2025 reinforces action in previous years, including the erection of permanent anti-idling signage in all CYC owned car parks, at most city centre bus stops, taxi ranks and at other key locations across the city. In 2025, we issued further guidance to residents around vehicle idling during winter months and how to minimise idling while defrosting windscreens.
42. **Carbon Negative Challenge Fund (CNCF)** – CYC was awarded funding in 2025 through the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority's Carbon Negative Challenge Fund to undertake indoor air quality monitoring and health assessment studies to consider the real-world impacts of retrofit interventions progressed through the Warm Homes Grant (WHG). The project will provide further insight into any unintended consequences of energy efficiency measures (such as reduced ventilation) that could exacerbate issues like damp and mould that disproportionately affect vulnerable residents. Funding will also be used to facilitate the replacement of gas cookers with electric alternatives, to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions. It is anticipated that the project will create a replicable model for integrating indoor air quality monitoring into regional retrofit programmes, helping to de-risk future investment and build public confidence. It directly supports the region's carbon negative goals by ensuring that retrofit measures deliver not only carbon savings but also safe, healthy living environments.
43. Complementary air quality initiatives were also delivered in 2025 through CYC's transport and carbon reduction work programmes. A full overview of these measures is provided in the main Annual Status Report (see **Annex A**).

Priorities

44. CYC's priorities for the coming year are:
45. **Progress development of York's transport policies** – CYC's Local Transport Strategy sets out a vision for a healthier, more sustainable and better-connected city. Our Transport Implementation Plan (2024-2026) details the measures that will enable us to turn that vision into a reality and build the foundations for our Movement and Place Plan, which will map out connected networks for all modes of travel. The Implementation Plan will be refreshed 2026, with a continued focus on reducing car dependency and improving sustainable travel. We will also explore opportunities to improve freight and logistics to ensure that York's businesses have efficient access for their supplies, goods and services, while at the same time reducing the impact of heavy lorries and light goods vehicles on carbon emissions, air pollution, safety and damage to heritage.
46. **Continue to progress upgrades to bus services and infrastructure** (including further electrification) – we will continue with our programme to electrify the bus network, aiming to completely electrify the network by 2028 (subject to funding). Having consulted with the public between Nov 2025 – Jan 2026 on a new bus priority route through central York, we aim to implement the 'Rougier Route' scheme for a trial 18-month period during Summer 2026 under an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO), which will also act as Phase 2 of the consultation, allowing minor amendments to be made to the project if needed. The project will not only improve bus service reliability and enhance air quality along the corridor but will provide safer walking and cycling routes into the heart of York city centre.
47. **Sustainable Travel / Reducing car dependency** – we will continue to focus staff resource on promoting sustainable transport, utilising grants and developer contributions where available to provide advice to residents, employers and developers about how to make the most of active modes and public transport. This will involve a programme of travel plans for individuals, schools, businesses and new developments. We will support sustainable travel events including community walks, cycle rides and car-free days and will continue to investigate 'micro-mobility' schemes (with the intention of replacing the TEIR mobility scheme that ended in 2024).

48. **Indoor air quality monitoring** – we will progress indoor air quality monitoring and conduct health assessments to consider real-world impacts of retrofit interventions progressed through CYC’s Warm Homes Grant (WHG). The project, funded through York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority’s Carbon Negative Challenge Fund will provide further insight into any unintended consequences of energy efficiency measures that could exacerbate issues like damp and mould that disproportionately affect vulnerable residents.
49. **Continue to address idling emissions** – CYC will continue to investigate complaints of idling and raise awareness of the links between idling emissions and health in line with CYC’s existing ‘Kick the Habit’ anti-idling campaign.
50. **Continue to reduce emissions from taxis through implementation of new Licensing Policy** - The council's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy was approved by Council on 21 November 2024 and came into force on 22 November 2024. The policy will introduce an age limit and minimum emission standard for York’s operational taxi fleet which will see a gradual change in the operational taxi fleet, as vehicle licenses are renewed and as vehicles become too old to operate in the city. CYC will continue to keep abreast of national grant opportunities for low emission taxis and provide advice to operators / drivers.
51. **Reduce emissions from new development** – we will continue to work with developers to ensure development related emissions are appropriately assessed and mitigated, exposure to poor air quality is reduced via good design practices and that new private trips are minimised via provision of opportunities for sustainable transport. We will continue to encourage walking, cycling and low emission public transport use, which have co-benefits for health and wellbeing.
52. **Street Trading** – we will work towards implementing a formal Street Trading Policy to replace and strengthen existing informal guidelines for street trading activities in the city. To further reduce emissions from vehicles or ancillary equipment associated with such activities, it is anticipated that the new policy will introduce new requirements around the use of generators and for any vehicles that are required to be kept running for the purpose of providing power in connection with the licensed street trading activity.

53. **Expansion of strategic EV charging network** – we will continue with our EV charging programme and actively monitor plug-in vehicle uptake in the city to ensure our charging network remains fit for purpose. York has a developing network of electric vehicle charging points positioned in car parks, Park & Ride sites and at dedicated Hyper Hub charging sites. CYC’s new EV Charging Strategy is being developed in partnership with the Energy Saving Trust and is due for publication in 2026. The EV strategy aligns with the broader Local Transport Strategy, with an updated Implementation Plan scheduled for publication in the second half of 2026.
54. **Improving public awareness of air pollution** – we will continue to raise awareness of local initiatives and campaigns aimed at improving local air quality such as our DEFRA funded air pollution forecasting and alert platform and our ‘Fuel for Thought’ and ‘Kick the Habit’ campaigns. We will seek to improve awareness of the links between air pollution and health impacts generally to support CYC’s ongoing LAQM and public health work.
55. **Further controls to address fine particulate emissions** – following public consultation and subsequent approval by CYC’s Executive, we will expand our Smoke Control Area to cover the whole of York area to improve air quality and health. We will continue to improve public awareness of the links between domestic solid fuel burning, particulate emissions and health impacts and take a proportionate approach to enforcement of Smoke Control Order contraventions, in line with our adopted Enforcement Policy.

Consultation Analysis

56. Local authorities must submit an ASR to DEFRA each year. Whilst no consultation outside CYC has been undertaken specifically for the purposes of compiling the ASR, the report will be considered in public by CYC’s Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency, before submission to DEFRA.

Options Analysis and Evidential Basis

57. The Executive Member is asked to note the contents of this report, including the trends in air pollution in recent years and progress with air quality improvement measures to support and complement other key CYC strategies. The Executive member is also asked to approve the submission of the full ASR to DEFRA for formal appraisal.

58. DEFRA's Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) Policy Guidance (PG22) and Technical Guidance (TG22) outline the process that should be followed by local authorities with respect to LAQM, including the annual submission of ASRs by the end of June of the relevant year.

Organisational Impact and Implications

59. The various implication of this report are summarised as follows:

Financial

60. This report has no direct financial implications. However, implementation of air quality improvement measures will require both capital and revenue funding. Ongoing monitoring of air quality in the city, including continuation of monitoring in previous AQMA areas, also requires ongoing revenue funding. If additional capital funding is required, this will need to be requested during the budget setting process.

Human Resources (HR)

61. There are no HR implications.

Legal

62. Under the Environment Act 1995 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021) and subsequent regulations, CYC has a statutory duty to periodically review the air quality within its area and to designate AQMAs where air quality objectives are not being achieved or are not likely to be achieved. Once an AQMA has been designated there is a duty to carry out an assessment and prepare an Air Quality Action Plan. DEFRA have issued statutory guidance to which councils must have regard in exercising these functions. This includes annual reporting on progress with delivery of AQAPs via Annual Status Reports.

Procurement

63. Whilst there are no direct procurement implications relating to the report itself, should any priorities require procurement, all works and/or services must be procured via a compliant, open, transparent, and fair process in accordance with the council's Contract Procedure Rules and where applicable, the Procurement Act 2023. Further advice regarding the procurement process and development of procurement strategies must be sought from the Commercial Procurement team.

Health and Wellbeing

64. Measures to reduce emissions and improve air quality support CYC's health and wellbeing priorities which aim to tackle health inequalities and promote healthy lifestyles. AQAP4 has been developed in consultation with Public Health and supports the aims of the council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy by minimising and reducing public exposure to air pollution and raising public awareness about the impacts of air pollution on health.

Environment and Climate Action

65. Air pollution damages buildings as well as human health. Improving air quality will help to protect the city's many historic buildings and create a cleaner environment for visitors to York.
66. York's built and natural environment underpins people's quality of life and attracts millions of visitors to the city each year. Protecting and enhancing these environments for existing and future generations is a key priority for the council and our residents. The council has a key role in creating an environment where people make sustainable choices about the way they live and work.
67. AQAP4 embeds the council's commitment to healthy and affordable (energy-efficient) homes and has been developed to complement CYC's Climate Change Strategy.

Affordability

68. Measures to improve air quality are considered in terms of affordability to the public, with each measure balanced against a potential adverse economic impact (e.g. measures such as congestion charges and Ultra Low Emission Zones (ULEZs) have been ruled out as they prevent the less well off from entering the city centre while the more prosperous can afford to pay the charges and continue to do so).
69. AQAP4 supports a sustainable, efficient and affordable public transport system for all, together with safe walking and cycling. Consideration is given to all those unable to afford to transition to zero and low emission modes of transport and heating with grants and incentives being made available where possible.

Equalities and Human Rights

70. The Council recognises, and needs to take into account its Public Sector Equality Duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct; advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it in the exercise of a public authority's functions). Vulnerable people, including older people, children, pregnant women and those with respiratory and other illnesses, are more likely to be adversely affected by poor air quality.
71. At the time of writing there are no equalities implications identified in respect of the matters discussed in this report, which is brought to the Executive Member for information only. However, it should be noted that throughout delivery of AQAP4, EIAs will be carried out on a case-by-case basis in respect of specific projects / measures to identify any equalities implications.

Data Protection and Privacy

72. The data protection impact assessment (DPIAs) screening questions were completed for the recommendations and options in this report and as there is no personal, special categories or criminal offence data being processed to set these out, there is no requirement to complete a DPIA at this time. However, this will be reviewed following the approved recommendations and options from this report and a DPIA completed if required.

Communications

73. Delivering clear messages to the public around the cause and consequence of poor air quality, particularly around impacts on health, are particularly important for driving behaviour change. Campaign work is a valuable part of CYC's air quality improvement strategy. Further support from CYC's Communications team will be sought as necessary.
74. York's 2026 ASR demonstrates continued compliance with legal NO₂ limits and a general continuing long-term trend of improving air quality. This reflects the success of initiatives like zero-emission buses and fleet upgrades, anti-idling campaigns, and infrastructure improvements.

Future communications will highlight these successes and will continue to raise awareness around particulate matter, which still exceeds WHO guidelines, to maintain momentum and support for further action.

Economy

75. Good air quality reduces absence from work and education due to air pollution related illnesses. A healthy York population is critical to achieving the economic aspirations of the city.

Risks and Mitigations

76. Not submitting an ASR to DEFRA for appraisal within the required timescales would mean that CYC is not fulfilling statutory requirements and may weaken York's ability to attract future DEFRA funding for air quality related initiatives.

Wards Impacted

77. All wards

Contact details

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Background papers

- Adoption of York's Fourth Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP4) – Executive, 18th July 2024, see <https://democracy.york.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=733&MIId=14499&Ver=4>
- Previous CYC Local Air Quality Management Reports are available to view at <https://www.york.gov.uk/AirPollutionReports>

Annexes

- Annex A: Full 2026 Annual Status Report