

Meeting:	Combined Executive Member Decision Session
Meeting date:	3/06/2025
Report of:	James Gilchrist, Director of Transport, Environment and Planning
Portfolio of:	Councillor Jenny Kent, Executive Member for Environment and Climate Emergency

Decision Report: Air Quality Annual Status Report 2025

Subject of Report

1. The report details the latest (2024) 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 improving trend 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 2025 ASR is included at **Annex A**.
3. Air quality monitoring results in 2024 can be summarised as follows:
 - The health-based air quality objectives for the pollutant nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) have been achieved at all monitored locations throughout York for the first time since the Covid pandemic of 2020.
 - NO₂ concentrations in the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) have further improved since 2023. Maximum recorded annual mean concentrations of NO₂ decreased throughout the AQMA between 2023 and 2024, ranging from 3% lower around Prices Lane / Nunnery Lane to 27% lower around Gillygate / Bootham. Concentrations of NO₂ monitored at almost all

locations in York throughout 2024 continue the downward trend in NO₂ concentrations since 2012.

- The highest concentration of NO₂ recorded at a location representative of long-term public exposure in 2024 was 32µg/m³ on Blossom Street, near the junction with Queen Street. This is within the health-based objective of 40µg/m³ and reflects a significant improvement on 2023, where maximum NO₂ concentrations of 43µg/m³ (above the objective) were monitored near the junction of Gillygate and Bootham
 - There were no monitoring locations that measured annual mean NO₂ concentrations of 40µg/m³ or above in 2024. It may be appropriate to revoke some localised areas of the city centre AQMA in the near future, should compliance with Air Quality Objectives continue throughout 2025 and in future 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, trends over the last 5 years are less pronounced. CYC's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP4) contains further measures to reduce particulate matter further in York.
4. Following adoption of a new Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP4) by CYC's Executive in July 2024, we progressed delivery of measures in AQAP4 including the following initiatives and projects:
- **Bus service improvements** - we worked in partnership with bus operators to introduce further zero emission electric buses to York, significantly reducing carbon, NO_x and particulate emissions across the city. This has enabled First Bus to set up one of its first net zero emission bus operations in the city. The depot has seen emissions reduce by 90% compared to 2020 with the total fleet of 86 all-electric buses saving around 5,000 tonnes of CO₂ a year.
 - **Taxis** - we provided financial support to taxi drivers through our DEFRA funded Low Emission Taxi Grant scheme until June 2024 (when all funding had been allocated). The scheme provided £105k in grant funding and has supported 38 CYC licensed taxi drivers with either purchase or operational costs for low or zero-emission vehicles. 40% of CYC licensed taxis

were low emission petrol hybrid or zero tailpipe emission electric vehicles as of 31st December 2024.

- **CYC Fleet** - following electrical infrastructure upgrades at the council's Hazel Court Eco depot site, we continued our phased EV fleet replacement programme for vehicles under 3.5t. 60% of CYC's operational van fleet were electric or plug-in hybrid electric vehicles by January 2025.
- **Anti-Idling awareness** - we continued to promote our 'Kick the Habit' anti-idling campaign on Clean Air Day and throughout 2024 and worked with partners including schools and businesses to reduce vehicle idling across the city.
- **Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure** - we continued to upgrade our public electric vehicle charging network and held two workshops with the Energy Savings Trust (EST) in 2024 as part of the development of our updated Public Charging Strategy, due for publication in 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.
- **Smoke Control Areas** - we adopted a new enforcement policy for smoke emissions in CYC's Smoke Control Area (SCA) in November 2024 that will act as a deterrent to burning non-authorised fuels (or using non-exempt appliances) in smoke control areas which contribute to air pollution and especially fine particulate concentrations across the city which impact human health. We re-launched our DEFRA funded 'Fuel for Thought' campaign across CYCs social media channels in October 2024 and prepared for a consultation on expanding the Smoke Control Areas, to be launched in 2025.
- **Pollution Forecasting Service** - We launched a new DEFRA funded pollution forecasting and alert platform, [York Air Alert](#), in July 2024. The new 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. Subscribers can receive air quality alerts by text, email or voicemail for different areas of York.

- **Local Transport Strategy** – The Executive approved a new Local Transport Strategy (LTS) in July 2024. The LTS sets out ambitions for York’s transport network and infrastructure until 2040. An Implementation Plan for the first period of the new LTS was approved by CYC’s Executive in November 2024. The Implementation Plan provides an approach to city-wide transformation that will reduce air pollution and enable more physical and social activity through promotion and facilitation of active and sustainable modes of transport.
- **Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)** – this plan was approved by CYC’s Executive in December 2024 and will develop more routes for active travel, enabling more people to choose to walk, wheel and cycle safely.
- **Gillygate Traffic Signal Trial** - in December 2024, CYC’s Executive Member for Transport approved a traffic signal trial on Gillygate aimed at improving air quality in the Air Quality Management Area. The trial will continue throughout 2025 with support from local residents, businesses and partner organisations including York Civic Trust. In addition to improving local air quality, the aim is to create a safer environment for pedestrians, wheelchair users and cyclists.

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 improving trend in air pollution in recent years and progress made with delivery of measures in CYC's 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 (2024 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 ASR is included at **Annex A**.
13. Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society: children, the elderly, and those with existing heart and lung conditions. The mortality burden of air pollution within the UK is equivalent to 29,000 to 43,000

deaths at typical ages¹, with a total estimated healthcare cost to the NHS and social care of £157 million in 2017².

14. 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 AQMA. Other AQMAs declared in Fulford and on Salisbury Terrace were revoked in 2020 and 2017 respectively due to air quality improvements.
15. 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

16. 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.
17. The air pollution monitoring data for 2024, indicates that NO₂ concentrations in the current city centre AQMA have improved further since 2023. The highest concentration of NO₂ recorded at a location representative of long-term public exposure in 2024 was 32µg/m³ on Blossom Street, near the junction with Queen Street. This is within the health-based objective of 40µg/m³ and reflects a significant improvement on 2023, where maximum NO₂ concentrations of 43µg/m³ (above the objective) were monitored near the junction of Gillygate and Bootham.
18. Improvements in annual mean NO₂ monitored at roadside continuous monitoring sites between 2023 and 2024 were: Gillygate (22% improvement); Heworth Green (12%); Holgate

¹ Defra. Air quality appraisal: damage cost guidance, January 2023

² Public Health England. Estimation of costs to the NHS and social care due to the health impacts of air pollution: summary report, May 2018

Road (8%); Nunnery Lane (8%); Fulford Road (7%) and Lawrence Street (2%). By contrast, the Fishergate site increased by 6%, possibly due a nearby construction site.

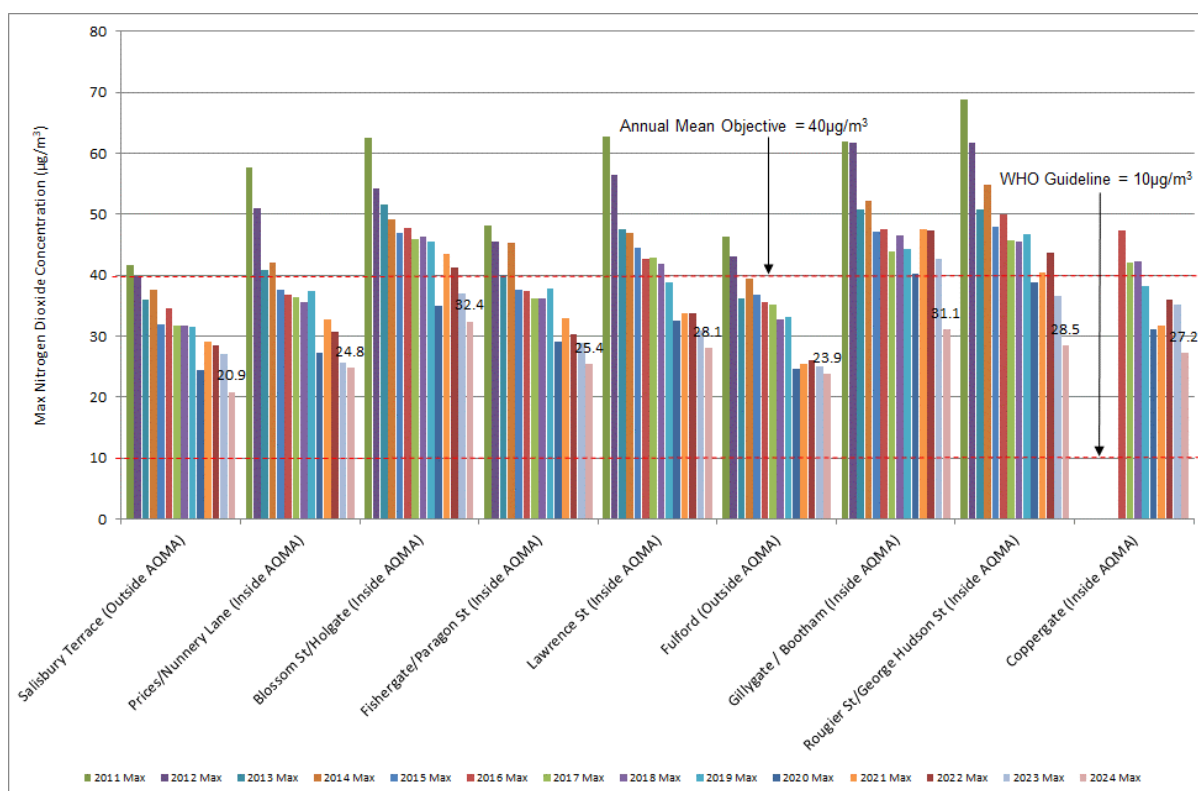
19. Annual mean background concentrations of NO₂ monitored at Bootham Park Hospital (City of York Council's urban background monitoring site) also improved by 3% between 2023 and 2024.
20. Concentrations of NO₂ monitored at the vast majority of locations in York throughout 2024 continue the general downward trend in NO₂ concentrations monitored in the city since 2012. No locations measured annual mean NO₂ concentrations of 40µg/m³ or above in the city centre AQMA in 2024. This is the first year since the Covid pandemic (2020) that all CYC monitoring sites have met the health-based objectives.
21. Maximum annual mean concentrations of NO₂ monitored at relevant locations across the current AQMA were 31.1µg/m³ (Gillygate / Bootham), 28.5µg/m³ (George Hudson St / Rougier St), 32.4µg/m³ (Holgate / Blossom Street), 28.1µg/m³ (Lawrence St), 25.4µg/m³ (Fishergate / Paragon St), 24.8µg/m³ (Prices Lane/Nunnery Lane) and 27.2µg/m³ (Coppergate). Maximum concentrations of NO₂ decreased in all these areas between 2023 and 2024 and ranged from 3% lower around Prices Lane / Nunnery Lane to 27% lower around Gillygate / Bootham.
22. It may be appropriate to revoke some localised areas of the current city centre AQMA if compliance with objectives is sustained in future years.
23. Concentrations of NO₂ monitored in the (now revoked) Fulford Road and Salisbury Terrace AQMAs in 2024 continue to be well below 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).

Local Air Quality Indicators

24. The maximum NO₂ concentrations monitored (at relevant locations³) in keys areas across the city centre AQMA are captured

³ 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

by Performance Indicator CAN028. Trends in air quality between 2011 and 2024 are shown below in Figure 1:



Note: Former AQMAs at Salisbury Terrace and Fulford Road are shown for information only.

25. The maximum annual mean NO₂ concentration monitored at a relevant location in 2024 was 32.4µg/m³ on Blossom Street. As can be seen from Figure 1, maximum concentrations of NO₂ across all areas of the AQMA in 2024 were below the annual mean NO₂ objective and decreased between 2023 and 2024. The greatest improvement was observed in the Gillygate area, where maximum concentrations of NO₂ improved by 27% between 2023 and 2024. Maximum concentrations of NO₂ monitored across all areas are the lowest recorded since CYC's began monitoring.

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

26. 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 2024 were 17.8µg/m³ and 9.0µg/m³ 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

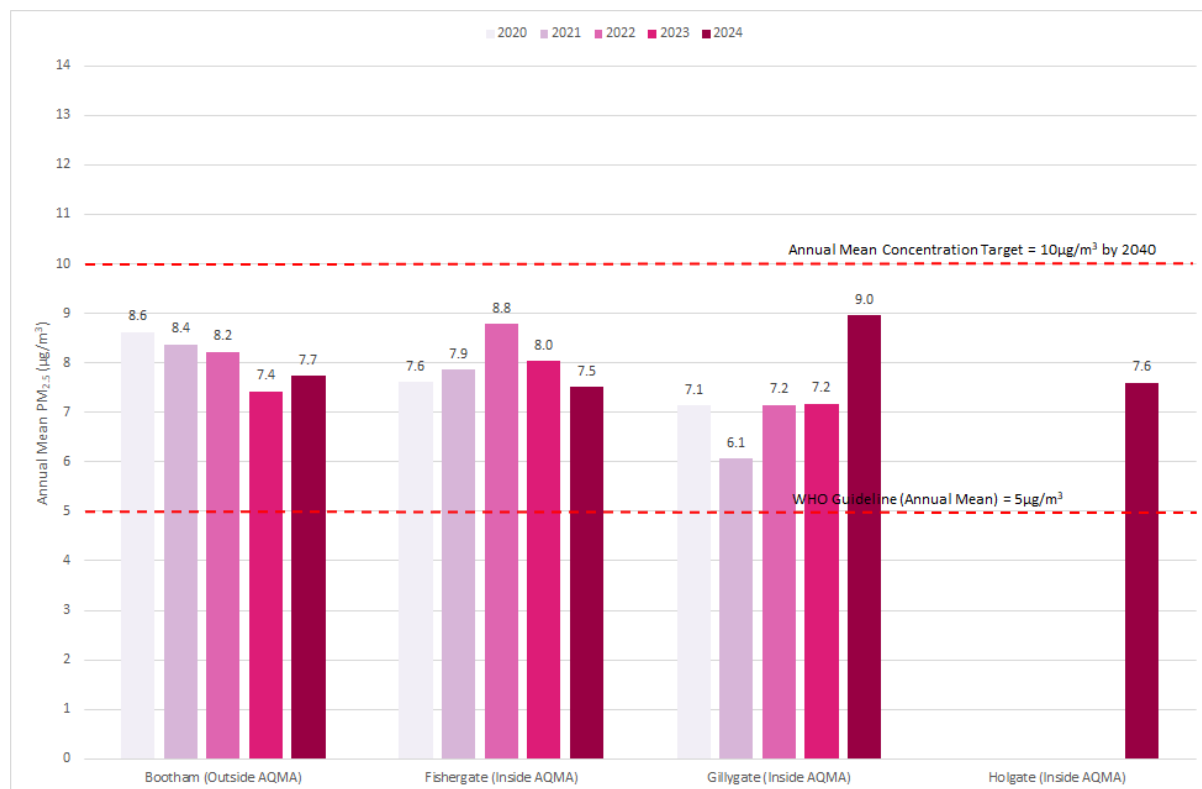
caused by much lower levels of pollution than previously thought. WHO recognise these are challenging public health recommendations and that achieving the guideline levels would be the ultimate goal. AQAP4 will strive to work towards WHO Guidelines in the longer term for all pollutants.

27. Maximum particulate concentrations monitored in 2024 are slightly above the maximum levels of $16.8\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (PM_{10}) and $8.0\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ($\text{PM}_{2.5}$) monitored in 2023. 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 over the last 5 years are less pronounced. CYC will continue to address both PM and NO_2 concentrations through measures in its Air Quality Action Plan.

Figure 2: Trends in Annual Mean PM_{10}



Figure 3: Trends in Annual Mean PM_{2.5}



28. 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.
29. AQAP4 includes further actions that will contribute to local reductions in PM concentrations. Some examples include the continued phasing out of diesel buses, 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 is currently consulting on expanding the Smoke Control Area to cover the whole of York.

Actions to improve air quality

30. CYC has made significant air quality improvements in 2024, building on previous efforts and introducing new initiatives to tackle pollution and enhance public health. Key developments include:
31. **Buses** - Following the introduction of the UK's first and only 'voluntary' Clean Air Zone (CAZ) for buses in 2020/21, CYC has worked in partnership with bus operators to introduce further zero emission electric buses to the York fleet, significantly reducing carbon, NO_x and particulate emissions across the city. Our work brought Government funding to the city, enabling First Bus to set up one of its first net zero emission bus operations in the city. The York depot is one of the first outside London to be fully electric, and the first in Yorkshire; £10.2m funding of the £23m project was from the Department for Transport ZEBRA scheme. The depot has seen emissions reduce by 90% compared to 2020 with the total fleet of 86 all-electric buses saving around 5,000 tonnes of CO₂ a year. The current phase of CYC's bus electrification programme will involve nearly all of York's operators, which include small local companies as well as larger national operators and will cover less frequent services and those which are urban/rural in character. Through our Enhanced Partnership, CYC holds regular meetings with operators and stakeholders where feedback and participation from all bus user and disability groups is actively welcomed.
32. **Taxis** - We provided financial support to taxi drivers through our DEFRA funded Low Emission Taxi Grant scheme until June 2024 (when all funding had been allocated). The project encouraged the transition to low emission taxis within York via incentives and awareness raising. The scheme provided £105k in grant funding and has supported 38 CYC licensed taxi drivers with either purchase or operational costs for low or zero-emission vehicles. At the end of December 2024, 40% of CYC licensed taxis were using low emission petrol hybrid or zero tailpipe emission electric vehicles. We also consulted with taxi users, members of the trade and other stakeholders between April and July 2024 on a new [Taxi Licensing Policy](#) that required vehicles to meet stricter emission standards to help improve air quality across the city. The new policy, approved in November 2024, also supports the supply of more wheelchair-accessible taxis and aims to increase awareness of and extend safeguarding standards among drivers and operators.

33. **CYC Fleet** – following electrical infrastructure upgrades at the council's Hazel Court Eco depot, we continued our phased EV fleet replacement programme for vehicles under 3.5t. 60% of CYC's operational van fleet were electric or plug-in hybrid electric vehicles by January 2025. A new multi-purpose mini electric vehicle, known as a Goupil, also went into service on 29 April 2024. The vehicle is helping frontline staff in Public Realm keep the city clean and tidy and is being used for removing fly tipped items or carrying sandbags, tools and other heavy items. Its' small size means it can be used across the narrow streets of York, without contributing to local air pollution.
34. **Anti-idling initiatives** - we continued to promote our 'Kick the Habit' anti-idling campaign on Clean Air Day and throughout 2024 and worked with partners including schools and businesses 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 2024 reinforced 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. Further information about the campaign can be found on [CYC's Kick the Habit Webpage](#).
35. **Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Infrastructure** – we continued to upgrade of our public electric vehicle charging network of 'fast', 'rapid' and 'ultra-rapid' charge points, as outlined in our current [Public Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy](#). Council officers organised two workshops with the Energy Saving's Trust (EST) in 2024 as part of the development of our updated Public Charging Strategy, due in 2025. These sessions included a review of current options for on-street charging for residents in terraced streets without off-street parking provision. Data published in January 2024 shows that York has 104 charge points per 100,000 people. This compares to a figure of 46 for the Yorkshire region and 73 for the UK as a whole on average. Research undertaken in March 2024, conducted by 'Independent Advisor Car Insurance', concluded that York is the fourth best city in the UK for EVs and was ranked number 1 in the North of England for EV ownership.
36. **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.

37. **Smoke Control Areas** - We adopted a new enforcement policy for smoke emissions in CYC's Smoke Control Area (SCA) in November 2024. The policy was developed in response to revisions to the Clean Air Act 1993 made through the Environment Act 2021. The policy will enable consistency in approach with other local authority areas and will act as a deterrent to burning non-authorised fuels (or using non-exempt appliances) in smoke control areas which contribute to air pollution and especially fine particulate concentrations across the city which impact human health. We re-launched our DEFRA funded 'Fuel for Thought' campaign across CYCs social media channels in October 2024; the campaign aims to raise awareness of the pollution caused by burning solid fuels and the dangers it can pose to health. CYC are currently consulting on the expanding the Smoke Control Area to ensure consistency in CYC's approach to dealing with smoke emissions across York and to ensure clarity for the public in terms of the rules for burning solid fuels.
38. **Pollution Forecasting Service** - We launched a new DEFRA funded pollution forecasting and alert platform, [York Air Alert](#), in July 2024. The new 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.
39. **Local Transport Strategy** – The Executive approved a new [Local Transport Strategy \(LTS\)](#) in July 2024. The LTS set out ambitions for York's transport network and infrastructure until 2040. This follows the extensive Our Big Conversation programme of engagement throughout 2021 and 2022, which asked residents, businesses and communities for their thoughts on what they want York to look like in 10 years, as well as data analysis and modelling undertaken for the Local Plan Examination in Public in 2022. The LTS is rooted in the wider city strategies and their ambitions, and sets out a series of key policy themes to achieve a reduction of 71% in York's transport carbon emissions (required to reach net zero by 2030). An Implementation Plan for the first period of the new LTS was approved by CYC's [Executive](#) in November 2024. The Plan reaffirms York's commitment to the

city's "transport modal hierarchy", which prioritises active modes and public transport and was supported by 73% of respondents to Our Big Transport Conversation. It specifies a set of schemes and measures, some funded and some for which funding will be sought, which will deliver towards meeting the priorities identified in the "Our Big Transport Conversation" consultation. The Implementation Plan provides an approach to city-wide transformation that will reduce air pollution and enable more physical and social activity through promotion and facilitation of active and sustainable modes of transport. This is aligned with priorities set out in AQAP4.

40. **The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)** will develop more routes for active travel, enabling more people to choose to walk, wheel and cycle safely. LCWIP is a strategic plan which outlines an evidence-based, prioritised series of active travel zones and routes that can then be used to secure external funding, including developer contributions. LCWIP was approved by CYC's [Executive](#) on 12 December 2024 but will be a 'living' document that can be updated based on changing circumstances and priorities in the city. LCWIP will be responsive to key pieces of work such as the Movement and Place Plan, Local Plan and Local Transport Plan.
41. **SAMHE (Schools Air quality Monitoring for Health and Education) Project** – CYC worked with the University of York to promote [SAMHE](#) amongst local schools. The project involves scientists from 6 institutions across the UK and is supported by the Department for Education (DfE). The project enables pupils to interact with real world data about their environment and brings together scientists, pupils and teachers. SAMHE is establishing a network of air quality monitors in schools across the UK, to generate a dataset which will help researchers better understand schools indoor air quality. Thirteen York schools participated in the main project with other schools involved in the co-design stages.
42. **Gillygate Traffic Signal Trial** – in December 2024, CYC's [Executive Member for Transport](#) approved a 12-month traffic signal trial on Gillygate aimed at improving air quality in the AQMA and supported by organisations including The Gillygate Air Quality Group, residents, businesses and York Civic Trust. The trial aims to reduce the number of queuing vehicles in Gillygate which, in addition to improving local air quality, will also create a safer environment for pedestrians, wheelchair users and cyclists. We will

continue to work with residents in the Gillygate area to explore options to further improve air quality.

43. Complementary air quality initiatives were also delivered in 2024 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 future 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 measures that will enable us to turn that vision into a reality and build the foundations for our forthcoming Movement and Place Plan (due by the end of 2025), which will map out connected networks for all modes of travel.
46. **Explore opportunities to reduce freight emissions** – CYC's LTS and AQAP4 commit to exploring opportunities to improve freight and logistics to ensure York's businesses have 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. In the short term we propose to designate a 'freight network' for medium (3.5T) and large (7.5T) vehicles and review powers to enforce such a network. We will also set up a freight forum and invite industry partners and experts to advise and partner with us on developing a freight strategy and network for the city. We also propose to implement a scheme allowing cargo delivery cycles access to the city centre footstreets during footstreet hours. In 2021, CYC received DEFRA funding to pilot a transshipment hub for the city, but this project has proved difficult to deliver to date, in part due to the challenge of attracting a commercial partner. We are actively seeking ways of delivering this project and taking advice from other cities where successful similar pilots have been delivered in combination with commercial partners.
47. **Continue to progress upgrades to bus services and infrastructure (including further electrification)** – presently there are around 14 million bus trips a year in York (nearly 40,000 a day). Electric buses now account for around 65% of all bus journeys in York. We will continue with our programme to electrify the bus network, aiming to completely electrify the network by 2028 (subject to funding). In the short term (2025-2026) we will

deliver a 'city centre sustainable transport route' which will facilitate substantial reductions in through private traffic with active travel, public transport and essential journeys prioritised. This will not only improve bus service reliability and enhance air quality along the corridor but will provide safer walking and cycling routes into York city centre.

48. **Traffic signal trials** – we will pursue initiatives in areas with poor air quality such as Gillygate by using traffic signals to mitigate the worst queuing in challenging areas of the network. We will embody the principles of the emerging Movement and Place Plan in how we manage our highway network. Potential measures may include reallocation of road space, traffic reduction, traffic filters and using signals to manage flows on some corridors. Wider gating strategies will also be considered to improve efficiency of Park and Ride services and to improve air quality further in the city centre.
49. **Sustainable Travel / Reducing car dependency** – we will continue to promote sustainable transport, using grants and developer contributions where available to provide advice to residents, employers and developers on how to make the most of active travel modes and public transport. This will involve an expanded 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 host the 'Active City' conference in Summer 2025. We will pursue a programme of School Streets so that the travel needs of children travelling to school are prioritised and will engage with the health sector on initiatives such as social prescribing of cycles and loan of e-bikes for health professionals. We will continue with our current Car Club initiative and over the coming year we will procure further Car Club packages to provide more extensive coverage across the city and out to villages, including access to a wider variety of vehicle types including vans. We will also develop a consistent and equitable strategy for parking across the city which balances the needs to provide access and to reduce levels of car use and will continue to investigate 'micro-mobility' schemes (with the intention of replacing the TEIR mobility scheme that came to an end in 2024).
50. **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. We will respond to complaints of idling through additional resources and signage where appropriate.

51. **Continue to reduce emissions from taxis through the new Licensing Policy** – CYC's Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy was approved by Council on 21 November 2024. The policy introduced an age limit and minimum emission standard for York taxis which will see a gradual change 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.
52. **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 public transport use, which have co-benefits for health and wellbeing.
53. **Expansion of strategic EV charging network** – CYC will continue with our EV charging programme and actively monitor plug-in vehicle uptake 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. We will complete the update of our 'EV Charging Strategy' in 2025 and seek ways to bring widespread coverage, using our Parking Strategy to help us balance the competing needs of highway space. We will continue to explore technology advances, such as inductive charging and will trial charging in residential areas (and evaluate its success and scope for further installations in York).
54. **Improving public awareness of air pollution** – we will promote our DEFRA funded air pollution forecasting and alert platform. The platform has been designed to ensure the most vulnerable residents have access to information that allows them to minimise exposure when pollution levels are high. We will seek to improve awareness of the links between air pollution and health impacts to support our air quality management and public health work. This will include raising public awareness of the links between domestic solid fuel burning, particulate emissions and health impacts.
55. **Further controls to address fine particulate emissions** – we will consider further opportunities to tackle fine particulate emissions. This includes consulting with the public on expansion of the smoke control area to cover the whole of CYC's administrative area to improve air quality and health.

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. Any request for funding will follow the council's budgetary 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. York's 2025 Air Quality Report shows a citywide achievement: for the first time since the pandemic, all monitored locations meet legal NO₂ limits. This reflects the success of initiatives like zero-emission buses, anti-idling campaigns, and infrastructure upgrades. Communications should highlight this milestone as a public health and environmental success, while continuing to raise awareness around particulate matter, which still exceeds WHO guidelines, to maintain momentum and support for further action.

Economy

74. 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

75. 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

76. All wards

Contact details

For further information please contact the authors of this Decision Report.

Author

Name:	Mike Southcombe
Job Title:	Environmental Protection Manager
Service Area:	Public Protection
Telephone:	(01904) 551514
Report approved:	Yes
Date:	03/06/2025

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&MId=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 2025 Annual Status Report

List of Abbreviations Used in this Report:

ASR	Annual Status Report
DEFRA	Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs
DfT	Department for Transport
AQAP4	Fourth Air Quality Action Plan
AQMA	Air Quality Management Area
CAZ	Clean Air Zone
µg/m ³	Micrograms per cubic metre
NO ₂	Nitrogen dioxide
PM ₁₀ /PM _{2.5}	Particulate Matter up to 10 microns / 2.5 microns in size
LTP	Local Transport Plan
EV	Electric Vehicle