

SCC Air Quality Strategy and action plan: Highlight Report

Quarter 3 2023/24 (October – December 2023)

Suffolk County Council published its Air Quality Strategy and action plan in May 2023. It consolidates the levers that the County Council has to address air pollution across Suffolk and reduce the health risks associated with poor air quality.

This report provides a summary of the key quarter 3 progress highlights towards each of the eight strategic objectives that the strategy aims to achieve through its action plan (page 2-3), followed by a summary of key areas of added value, concern, and quarter 4 milestones (page 4). A progress report against the full action plan is included at appendix 1 at the end of this document.

The strategic objectives are:

- 1. Partnership working:** encourage and develop closer working relationships around air quality with internal and external partners in the public, private and VCSE sectors.
- 2. Sustainable and active travel:** promote and enable a modal shift from car travel to active and sustainable forms of transport.
- 3. Traffic- and congestion-related emissions:** explore and implement measures to reduce traffic- and congestion-related emissions.
- 4. Carbon reduction:** support and enable homes and businesses to reduce carbon emissions and reduce fossil-based fuel use.
- 5. Policy-level approach:** where appropriate, use available opportunities to include air quality in policies and strategies.
- 6. Monitoring and enforcement:** ensure that decisions and measures relating to air quality are being implemented and enforced as intended.
- 7. Environmental and Green Space Management:** use effective green space management to improve air quality in both indoor and outdoor environments, and enable developments to be more adaptive to climate change.
- 8. Behaviour change and communication:** use behavioural science to promote positive behaviour change around air quality and carbon reduction within businesses and the general public.

The strategy also adopts the [Public Health England \(2020\)](#) air pollution intervention hierarchy, which is a way of prioritising interventions to address air pollution. It means that measures aimed at preventing or reducing air pollution emissions are prioritised over actions to reduce air pollution after it has occurred (mitigation) or actions that rely on avoiding air pollution.



Key highlights in quarter 2 2023/24:

<u>Strategic Objective</u>	<u>Action no.</u>	<u>Summary progress update</u>
Partnership working	4	<p>The 'soft launch' of the Suffolk Air Quality Network took place on 21st November 2023 and was attended by over 20 representatives from partners, stakeholders and community groups. Attendees took part in a range of information sharing discussions and networking around air quality. The network will be fully launched in April 2024 (date TBC).</p> <p>Discussions have continued with the Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (SNEE ICB) to identify where partners carrying out community visits might reduce their air pollution emissions. Air quality was discussed with the West Suffolk Alliance Committee meeting in November 2023, particularly in relation to what actions can be taken in Sudbury, where there is an AQMA. Further discussions are also due to take place at the Ipswich and East Suffolk Alliance Committee meeting in February 2024.</p>
	14	<p>We are facilitating an e-bike trial with Adult Community Services for 40 carers to use instead of carrying out visits by motor vehicle. E-bikes will also be available for up to 60 SCC staff to trial between April and September 2024. 3 x electric cargo bikes that enable transportation of passengers have also been obtained for parents or carers to trial from January 2024.</p>
Sustainable and active travel	15	<p>A 'Walking Bus' manual for primary schools is currently under development for launch after the Easter school holiday 2024.</p>
	11	<p>A cargo bike has been loaned to Everlong Farm in North Suffolk (a veg delivery business in Diss) for the medium term. The bike will be used for deliveries in the local area up to 'several' miles from base, instead of being couriered by a van.</p>
Traffic- and congestion-related emissions	16	<p>Suffolk's first School Street scheme at Ranelagh Road Primary School in Ipswich will commence in January 2024. It will initially involve road closure at school drop off and pick up times, rather than a permanent closure. A further school street is anticipated to commence at Morland Primary School in Ipswich in February 2024.</p>
	8	<p>Suffolk Public Sector Leaders (SPSL) funding has been approved to recruit a schools sustainability lead, and provide a package of support to schools covering decarbonisation and biodiversity enhancement.</p> <p>The second youth conference is also in planning and will be held on 3 July. 18 schools and 250 pupils are attending.</p>
Carbon reduction		

Policy-level approach	3	We have produced a high-level LTP4 consultation brochure, and a set of high-level questions for the public to complete. Both contain references to air quality and the linkages to decarbonising the transport sector. Subject to internal sign off we anticipate conducting the consultation over spring 2024.
Monitoring and enforcement	22	There have been no reported breaches of air quality standards across minerals and waste sites. As a result, no further investigations have been undertaken.
Environmental and green space management	25	The Environment Act, which will make biodiversity net gain a legal requirement, is expected at the end of January or early February 2024. In the meantime, we are working to our Suffolk Interim Guidance which encourages 10% biodiversity net gain across all developments.
Behaviour change and communication	5	<p>Engagement activity continues, with a focus on widening out engagement opportunities to areas that hadn't been covered to date whilst additionally delivering some targeted focus groups with people from key demographics.</p> <p>Engagement in Q3 has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An engagement session at Haverhill Library to coincide with two drop-in socials for the over 65's. - Focus group at Castle Hill Community Centre close to one of the Ipswich AQMA's - 5 polls published on the Next Door app receiving 2,014 responses and over 400 comments - Presence on the BeWell Bus - Presented at the Bury St Edmunds Air Quality Group Meeting <p>Further opportunities are scheduled for Q4 with the Barrack Lane Surgery (in an Ipswich AQMA) Patient Participation Group, the Hardwicke House Surgery Patient Participation Group (Sudbury) and The Limes School Pupil Parliament (Lowestoft).</p>

Key areas of added value:

- Positive relationship development with community groups, schools and SNEE partners through the Suffolk Air Quality Network and on-going engagement. This is helping us to identify opportunities for further work and opens doors to groups and networks we would like to engage with further.
- Having electric bikes and electric cargo bikes out in the community is helping to increase visibility of sustainable travel options and will hopefully have a snowball effect encouraging interest in other user groups.

Key concerns:

- We still need to engage with more groups from ethnic minorities. The Inspiring Inclusion Event in March will hopefully address this and help us make further connections.

Key quarter 4 milestones:

1. Commencement of the LTP4 consultation (action no. 3)
2. Commencement of the scoping exercise to explore evidence-based initiatives to reduce congestion-related transport emissions and improve air quality (action no. 9)
3. Commencement of Suffolk's first School Street at Ranelagh Road Primary School in Ipswich (action no. 16)
4. Biodiversity Net Gain will become a legal requirement (via the Environment Act) in January or February 2024 (action. 25)