

Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk

Air Quality Action Plan Summary

Making King's Lynn a cleaner, more environmentally friendly place to live, work and visit

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Introduction – the problem

The quality of the air we breathe is an issue that can affect many people who live, work or visit the borough, especially in our urban areas. Air pollution can cause ozone depletion, contribute to climate change, make our environment less attractive and can have serious effects on health. We are aiming to reduce air pollution to levels that do not cause a risk to human health. These ‘safe’ levels are called *air quality objectives*.

The Borough Council has been measuring air pollution in our urban areas and in some rural areas since 2006. The results have shown that in King’s Lynn town centre and the Gaywood Clock area levels of nitrogen dioxide are above the air quality objective. The nitrogen dioxide is mostly coming from road traffic: mainly cars and buses. For this reason the Air Quality Action Plan has an emphasis on traffic management. Many of the actions aim to smooth traffic flows and make it easier to get in and out of town.

If we can reduce air pollution to below the air quality objectives the rewards include improved human health, reduced health costs and a healthier, more productive environment. These benefits will result in a better place to live and work and King’s Lynn in particular will be a more attractive destination for visitors.

The causes, sources and impacts of air pollution are connected. So, if we address one air quality issue we can often help to reduce other kinds of pollution and benefit our urban areas. These benefits include:

- Reduction in greenhouse gases which can contribute to climate change
- Reduction in noise, dust and other pollutants
- An improved environment, making the town centre more attractive
- A smoother flow of traffic making the town centre a more appealing place to live work or visit
- A more holistic view of related issues such as traffic congestion, parking availability and appeal of urban areas

Rather than bringing more restrictions to traffic and transport there are positive benefits to be gained. The actions have the potential to have a positive effect on the wider road network around the urban area. The Council also recognises the importance of car usage in a rural area.

Actions

The air quality action plan contains 20 actions that will help to improve air quality. These are listed below.

Road traffic plays a major part in creating air pollution, but pollution comes from other sources too. So this action plan includes actions for transport, homes, business and industry as well as policy actions that set out how the Council will make decisions that can affect air quality.

A separate Air Quality Action Plan document explains in more technical detail how the Borough Council has monitored air quality and how we decided what action to take. We are working with people across the Borough Council and with Norfolk County Council's transport planners to achieve the actions in the plan. The Air Quality Action Plan sets out in detail how and when the actions will happen and who is responsible.

Policy Actions

1. Air Quality Management Areas

When the Borough Council monitored air pollution near busy roads it was found that levels of nitrogen dioxide were above the air quality objective. In these areas: Kings Lynn town centre and Gaywood Clock, air quality management areas were declared to show where action needed to be taken. The air quality management areas are along Railway Road, St James Road, Blackfriars Road, Austin Street and London Road in Kings Lynn town centre and parts of Gaywood Road, Lynn Road and Wootton Road in the Gaywood Clock area.

Each time the Environmental Quality Team are asked to comment on a new application for planning permission that could have an effect on an air quality management area officers ask the developer to consider and take action on any air quality impacts of the development.

2. Development Management Policy

The Borough Council looked at the Government's advice on planning and development control and wrote a development management policy in the Local Plan. This sets out what will need to be considered when developers want to build new houses, businesses or services that could be affected by poor air quality or where the new development could cause air pollution. The council want to see development happen but also to protect the local environment.

3. Planning advice

The Council's Environmental Quality Team provide advice to the officers in the planning department to make sure that air quality is considered, especially when a new development is in an air quality management area or where a new air quality management area could be created if levels of air pollution are too high. We want to ensure that development does not expose people to unacceptable levels of air pollution.

4. Parking Management Plan

The Borough Council will develop a plan which will consider how changes to the current car parking operations could help smooth out car journeys and help reduce congestion and consequently improve air quality.

Road Traffic Actions

5. Bus lane

Norfolk County Council received special funding from government to build a 'bus only' lane from Wisbech Road, through the Friars to Boal Street. This removes some of the traffic from London Road . The Borough Council is monitoring the impact of this new road and we are also considering with Norfolk County Council if taxis and private hire vehicles could use this new route.

6. Public transport

The Borough Council with Norfolk County Council and other stakeholders are looking at ways that public transport could be made more attractive. If more people used the bus services then this could remove some cars from the road and reduce pollution.

7. Traffic control

Norfolk County Council have installed an urban traffic control system at main junctions in or near to the air quality management area. This reduces stop/start driving, improves traffic flow and reduces congestion and car emissions. The system will be actively managed to keep traffic moving and in response to changes in the network.

8. Selective Vehicle Detection

This system detects when a bus is approaching traffic lights and changes the lights so that public transport vehicles can move smoothly through traffic. This reduces stop/start driving by buses and improves journey times. The impact of this action on traffic and air quality will be monitored.

9. Parking control

The use of parking controls and enforcement is being reviewed so that there is some control over where and when people park. Parking controls have been

decriminalised so that the Borough Council control parking enforcement. By controlling parking, traffic flow through the air quality management area can be managed and congestion reduced.

10. Car Parking charges

Ways of varying car parking charges will be investigated so that long and short term parking are charged differently. The aim is to even out traffic at peak times but also make short term trips easy. If traffic flow is smoothed out throughout the day this can help to reduce car emissions.

11. Parking messages

Message signs are being provided to direct drivers to available parking spaces. This should help to prevent extra journeys by drivers hunting for a somewhere to park. The impact of this action on traffic and air quality will be monitored.

12. Residents only parking

On-street parking can add to congestion. The Borough Council is investigating if residents only parking could be provided in the town centre to encourage visitors and workers to use public car-parks and free up roads to allow easier movement of traffic.

13. West Lynn Ferry

The ferry at West Lynn provides a car-free route straight into the town centre with parking provided at Ferry Square, West Lynn. 'Park and sail' accounts for over 90,000 return journeys in a year. The Borough Council will continue to support the ferry as it helps to reduce car journeys from the west of the borough.

14. Road Layout

Together with Norfolk County Council, the Borough Council are looking at ways that the road layout can be changed around the town centre to reduce congestion within the air quality management area.

15. Traffic management at London Road & Southgate

Ways to reduce queuing traffic into and out of town along London Road and through Southgate are being investigated. This may include alteration of traffic signals or priority at junctions.

16. Traffic Management at Gaywood

Together with Norfolk County Council, the council are looking at how traffic queues at Gaywood clock and the south of Wootton Road could be reduced. This may include changes to the position or timing of traffic signals.

17. Travel Plans

A green travel plan is a way that businesses or services can manage how users and employees travel. The plan is a package of actions that promote public transport, cycling, walking, and car-sharing. Alternatives to car use and to single car

occupancy are encouraged together with measures that reduce need to travel for work. By reducing car journeys, travel plans can cut the contribution to air pollution made by large organisations.

18. Cycling and walking

Walking is an activity that most members of the community can do and cycling is also growing in popularity. They are healthy activities and a great form of exercise. Encouraging people to switch from a car to walking or cycling can also help to reduce air pollution. Together with Norfolk County Council the Borough Council aim to improve spaces for walking and cycling such as cycle lanes and pavements. Sustrans maps and bicycle user groups will be promoted.

Emissions Actions

19. Electric vehicle charging

Electric vehicles do not produce the same air pollution as petrol or diesel vehicles. However, promoting alternative fuels relies on charging points being available. The Borough Council will investigate the feasibility of providing electric vehicle charging points in car parks and in new developments.

20. Quality bus partnerships

A quality bus partnership is a contract between the County Council and bus operators. The contract includes the types of buses that should be used, the level of service and vehicle emissions. The partnership should help to provide an attractive and low emission bus service.

How we will do it

Individuals, communities, industry, business and governments all contribute to pollution — so we can all be part of the solution. The Borough Council have set up an Air Quality Steering Group to agree and implement the measures in the Action Plan.

Stakeholders opinions are being sought. The Air Quality Action Plan will be made available for an 8 week period giving consultees the opportunity to comment on the draft plan. This document will be published on the Borough Council's website and we will consult with stakeholders such as:

- Members of the public
- Cabinet
- Borough & County councillors
- Norfolk County Council Planning & Transportation
- Borough Council Commercial Services
- Borough Council Development Services
- Management team
- Bus operators
- Taxi operators
- Chamber of Commerce
- Vancouver Quarter management
- King's Lynn Town Centre Partnership
- King's Lynn Area Consultative Committee
- Business Improvement District
- Other stakeholders

All comments and opinions will be considered and the final action plan measures will be drawn up. The final air quality action plan will have to be approved by the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk Cabinet and by the Secretary of State before it becomes a fully adopted policy. The Environmental Quality Team will monitor the action taken and report annually to the Secretary of State.

How we will know if its worked

The effectiveness of the Air Quality Action Plan will be carefully monitored by measuring nitrogen dioxide levels at relevant places in the air quality management areas. Traffic flow changes on key routes will be assessed as air quality is reviewed and assessed each year.

There will be regular review of the Action Plan measures to check progress. This will be reported annually in an Action Plan Progress Report which will be made widely available.