

**Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel - 17
September 2025**

Draft Air Quality Strategy – Public Consultation Report

Purpose	To review the outcomes of the public consultation on the draft Air Quality Strategy and the amended Air Quality Strategy prior to consideration by Cabinet and Full Council.
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>New Forest District Council has no declared Air Quality Management Areas and as directed by The Environment Act 2021; the council must proceed to publish an Air Quality Strategy to ensure air quality remains a high priority.</p> <p>A public consultation on the draft Air Quality Strategy was undertaken between 3 March – 5 May 2025 with 96 responses received. The responses have been considered, resulting in some minor amendments to the draft Air Quality Strategy and some additional points collated to help steer the development and implementation of the Strategy.</p> <p>Following the consultation process the amended Air Quality Strategy is recommended for adoption.</p>
Recommendation	That Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel supports the process for Council to consider the Air Quality Strategy for the New Forest District Council, with the recommendation of adoption.
Reasons for recommendation(s)	It is a legal requirement to develop an Air Quality Strategy by Local Authorities with no declared Air Quality Management Areas.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Dan Poole – Portfolio Holder for Community, Safety and Wellbeing

Strategic Director(s)	Richard Knott – Strategic Director of Housing & Communities
Officer Contact	<p>Rachel Higgins Environmental Protection Team Manager 02380 285339 rachel.higgins@nfdc.gov.uk</p> <p>Joanne McClay Service Manager – Environmental and Regulation 02380 285325 joanne.mcclay@nfdc.gov.uk</p>

Introduction

1. This report advises on the outcome of an 8-week public consultation (from 3 March to 5 May 2025) concerning the draft Air Quality Strategy (AQS) for New Forest District Council (NFDC). The report also provides detail on the resulting amendments made to the draft AQS.
2. The consultation report and amended AQS will be presented to Cabinet and Council, with the recommendation to approve and adopt the AQS for NFDC.

Background

3. Local Authorities have a statutory duty through the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) regime to review and assess local air quality in their district in accordance with legislation, Government policy and guidance. Where an air quality objective is being, or likely to be, exceeded, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) must be declared.
4. The Environment Act 2021 updated the LAQM regime to require local authorities from 2023 with no declared AQMAs to produce an AQS for their district. In August 2023 NFDC revoked its remaining AQMA (Lyndhurst) and officers have progressed work to develop a draft AQS.
5. The LAQM regime of review and assessment of local air quality against the air quality objectives remains and will be maintained alongside the implementation of the AQS.
6. The draft AQS was developed with the assistance of air quality consultants Ricardo-AEA Ltd and relevant stakeholders who

proactively contributed to the text of the draft AQS. The draft AQS was presented to Cabinet on 5 February 2025 who approved the draft AQS for public consultation.

Overview of public consultation on the draft Air Quality Strategy

7. The public consultation on the draft AQS was undertaken between 3 March and 5 May 2025 via an online questionnaire. The consultation sought respondents' views on:
 - air quality within the New Forest area,
 - general concerns about air quality,
 - a district wide Air Quality Strategy,
 - the priorities identified in the Strategy,
 - the representatives proposed to sit on the steering group and
 - understanding what actions, if any, they would be willing to take to themselves to improve local air quality
8. A link to the questionnaire was posted on the New Forest District Council website and publicised via the Council's Facebook page and on the resident email updates. Respondents could request a paper copy of the questionnaire if required.
9. Some questions required a yes or no answer, some asked for activities to be ranked in order of perceived importance and others allowed free text in which the respondent could expand upon their views or concerns.
10. The responses were collated and presented in a consultation report and attached in **Appendix 1**.

Outcome of public consultation on the draft Air Quality Strategy

11. In response to the consultation NFDC received:
 - Online responses: 93
 - Email response from a member of the public: 1
 - Email responses from professional bodies: 2 (New Forest NPA and UKHSA)
12. The majority of respondents agreed with the Council's priority areas within the draft AQS and the stakeholders we intend to work with. Respondents did state they would like to see more involvement from members of the public in the development and implementation of actions to improve local air quality.
13. The consultation highlighted public transport, improving traffic flow and planned development were a concern to the majority of respondents in terms of impacts on local air quality.

14. In response to the public consultation there were 6 minor amendments to the text of the draft AQS. These are noted in Appendix C of the consultation report (attached as **Appendix 1**) and have been completed for the finalised AQS document (attached as **Appendix 2**).
15. The responses to the public consultation will also assist with prioritising, developing and implementing each of the 6 priority areas identified within the draft Air Quality Strategy. The steering group will consider comments such as; ensuring public involvement throughout the process possibly through focus groups, having stronger links with public transport and cleaner transport modes and providing clearer messages on local air quality information and monitoring, when developing an action plan.

Corporate plan priorities

16. The adoption of the AQS for New Forest District Council is a statutory requirement and relates to the following corporate priorities:
17. **Theme:**
Empowering our residents to live healthy, connected and fulfilling lives and protecting our climate.
18. **Corporate Plan Objective:**
Protect and improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.
19. **Service Objective:**
Adoption and implementation of the AQS for New Forest District Council.

Options appraisal

20. **Option 1:**
That Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel reviews the AQS prior to Cabinet, considers the proposed amendments to the AQS (following the consultation process) and recommend the revised AQS for adoption by Full Council.
21. **Option 2:**
That the adoption and publication of the AQS is not considered a priority for the Council. However, the Council is legally required to adopt an AQS and failure to approve and adopt may leave the Council open to legal challenge, including by Defra. This option is not recommended given the Council's corporate plan commitments to the health of its residents.

Consultation undertaken

22. Consultation has taken place with the Portfolio Holder, stakeholders and the public through a public consultation process.

Financial and resource implications

23. The cost to develop the AQS has been funded from existing budgets, however there is likely to be an annual cost to implement the actions arising from the Strategy. The cost for implementation of the Strategy will be determined through work plans and stakeholder involvement. Future work may include additional monitoring of pollutants within the district and potential consultancy costs to assess and model pollutants, when necessary, to further develop the Strategy priorities and assess the impact of any measures implemented.
24. Existing budgets will fund part of the costs to implement the AQS. However, further funding opportunities will need to be explored such as securing additional funding from Government grant funding schemes either individually or by working collaboratively with neighbouring authorities to reduce costs and the possibility of funding from planning contributions.
25. There is also resource implication for officer engagement to implement the AQS. This work would be completed by current positions within the Service and across the Council. However, there may be some opportunity for collaborative working with other local authorities to develop and implement specific schemes. There is also an option to continue work with Southampton University using their expertise in air quality data analysis.

Legal implications

26. In accordance with The Environment Act 2021 the Council is required to develop and adopt an AQS where there are no AQMAs within their district. Legal implications of failing to adopt an Air Quality Strategy may result in challenge from Defra.

Risk assessment

27. There is no requirement for a formal risk assessment. Any risks in delivering the Strategy will be reviewed in terms of task-based actions and staffing and financial resources required to deliver the actions which will continue to improve local air quality.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

28. The development and implementation of an AQS for New Forest should align with policies concerning health, climate and nature, reducing emissions from vehicles and by working with local industry. Actions forwarded within the Strategy will be developed by the steering group and address impacts on the environment, climate and nature.

Equalities implications

29. The Environment Act 2021 has been assessed by Government as being compliant with United Kingdom equalities and human rights legislation. Furthermore, the action areas identified within the draft AQS aim to link areas of health inequalities with air quality to enable suitable targeting of action to reduce the impacts of airborne pollution on those most vulnerable in the New Forest district.

Crime and disorder implications

30. No specific implications.

Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications

31. No specific implications.

New Forest National Park implications

32. The AQS for New Forest covers both the New Forest District Council and New Forest National Park areas. The aim of the Strategy is to improve air quality and therefore benefit these areas, however the development of specific actions needs to ensure any potential negative impacts are identified and appropriately considered.
33. The inclusion of the New Forest National Park in the development of the Strategy, and on the strategy steering group should ensure all partner agencies are included in the development of actions, decision making and delivery. Therefore, avoiding duplications, conflicts of policy or unreasonable impacts.

Conclusion

34. The Council is legally required to develop an AQS for New Forest following the revocation of its remaining Air Quality Management Area in 2023. The draft Strategy has been consulted on with stakeholders and the public and is now seeking final approval for adoption.

Appendices:

List appendices here:

Appendix 1

Air Quality Strategy Consultation Report

Appendix 2

Finalised Air Quality Strategy

Background Papers:

Defra LAQM Policy:

[England \(exc. London\) Policy Guidance | LAQM](#)