

Agenda Item No:	6	
Committee:	Cabinet	
Date:	23 March 2026	
Report Title:	Air Quality Review and Assessment Statutory Reporting	

1 Purpose / Summary

- 1.1 To present the findings of the annual statutory 2025 review and assessment of air quality.
- 1.2 To update members on the development work undertaken in 2025 to increase monitoring sites and air quality data across Fenland.
- 1.3 To inform members of the key action plan priorities for 2026.

2 Key Issues

- 2.1 Section 82 of the Environment Act 1995 places a duty on every local authority to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas, and to determine whether nationally set air quality objectives are likely to be achieved.
- 2.2 Nationally set objectives apply to Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂) and Particulates of certain sizes (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} - particles of less than 10 micrometres or 2.5 micrometres in diameter).
- 2.3 Poor air quality has a direct impact on health, and particularly those residents with asthma and other lung conditions.
- 2.4 The Council routinely monitors air quality across the district in accordance with the national air quality strategy for England. Monitoring results are compared against the national objectives and reported annually to Defra.
- 2.5 Air quality reviews undertaken recently (the latest being 2025) have not identified any concerns when considering available air quality data for Fenland.
- 2.6 In areas where pollution exceeds air quality objective levels an air quality management area must be declared. For districts without an air quality management area the authority must write an air quality strategy detailing monitoring and actions to maintain good air quality.
- 2.7 Defra have requested Fenland Council continue to develop a wider air quality strategy and ensure any previous decisions to declare air quality management areas are reviewed and appropriate action is taken. The work referenced within this report fulfils that requirement.
- 2.8 The Fenland district area has been subject to a number of development consents and infrastructure improvements in recent years and these have all had an impact on the action plan for air quality.

- 2.9 In 2025 a joint public health risk assessment was undertaken by UK Health Security Agency and Public Health which specifically looked at health risks from the Saxon Pit site in Whittlesey. This assessment concludes with recommendations of relevance to local air quality management processes.
- 2.10 In March 2025 the Council agreed to revoke 2 air quality management areas (AQMA) declared in Wisbech because of the risk of sulphur dioxide and particulate matter levels from a coal fired boiler, which was removed in 2009. These were 2 of 4 air quality management areas historically declared in Fenland.
- 2.11 The Council must continue to review and potentially revoke the remaining 2 historic air quality management areas. This is a requirement within Defra's feedback to the latest air quality review and assessment report. If these areas are considered appropriate for revocation, a district wide air quality strategy should be developed.
- 2.12 Air quality is an ever-changing situation and as road networks change and new industries emerge the monitoring of air quality continues to be incredibly important.
- 2.13 The development of a new air quality strategy is beneficial because it will reflect current conditions, and upcoming changes, and provide a clearer, more accurate basis for managing air quality.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 For Cabinet to note the report, monitoring locations, plans and proposed actions to ensure the Council's statutory obligations under the Environment Act 1995 continue to be met and actions are implemented to further improve air quality.

Wards Affected	<i>All</i>
Forward Plan Reference	
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Sidney Imafidon – Portfolio Holder for Assets, Business Premises - Health & Safety & Food Safety & Heritage
Report Originator(s)	Annabel Tighe- Head of Environmental Health and Compliance Laura Harwood – Senior Environmental Health Officer
Contact Officer(s)	Annabel Tighe -Head of Environmental Health and Compliance Carol Pilson – Corporate Director

Background Papers	<p>Annual Screening Reviews of the District's Air Quality are available on our website at Air quality - Fenland District Council</p> <p>Saxon Pit Public Health Report Saxon Pit risk assessment Cambridgeshire County Council</p> <p>Air quality management area revocation report 2025 Report and appendix.pdf</p>
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1 BACKGROUND AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

- 1.1 In 2025 Cabinet approved the revocation of 2 air quality management areas (AQMA) for Wisbech. Cabinet then requested an update regarding on going monitoring and project work relating to air quality.
- 1.2 Local authorities have a duty under the Environment Act 1995 to monitor, review and assess air quality against national Air Quality Standards (AQS) and to report on this work annually to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Defra provide feedback and direction in terms of the work councils undertake in this field.
- 1.3 During 2025 officers have worked to develop the Fenland air quality monitoring network through increased grant income, the utilisation of planning consent orders, planning conditions and business / partner links. This has resulted in a network of monitoring which is focussed on areas of higher risk and concern.
- 1.4 National Air Quality Standards to which the council must have regard are set for an array of pollutants generally from traffic and industrial sources. The pollutants are Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), Particulate Matter (PM₁₀ / PM_{2.5}) and Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂).
- 1.5 The predominant pollution sources in Fenland are from traffic emissions. Petrol and diesel-engined motor vehicles emit 3 of the monitored pollutants; NO₂ and Particulates PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}. Historically SO₂ has been a problem as there were a number of industrial combustion processes in Fenland. Most have now been removed or downsized. The remaining potential for SO₂ emissions of concern would be from the Forterra brick works however current production rates and the monitoring undertaken by Forterra as a requirement of their environmental permit shows no likely exceedances.
- 1.6 Fenland has therefore reported good air quality when monitoring against these pollutants over the past 15 years. Improvements in technology and vehicle emission standards have contributed to this picture nationally. FDC officers work closely with county council colleagues when road infrastructure changes are planned.

- 1.7 When monitoring and reviewing for pollutants the council uses data from a blend of different sources including a network of roadside diffusion tubes, a real time sensor and taking account of other industry and authority monitoring results. This network of available data has developed through 2024-2025 and is increasing in 2026. The tables below show the locations of these and the responsible organisation for their maintenance and management.
- 1.8 Throughout 2025 network of roadside diffusion tubes increased with additional scrutiny given to areas of concern (informed through resident consultation). The recent review and assessment has highlighted Weasenham Lane as an area of concern with a slight decline in air quality.
- 1.9 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority manage five low-cost sensors within Fenland, specifically in the towns of March (three sensors) and Wisbech (two sensors). Data was collected at two sensors across the entire duration of 2024, the results and locations of which are presented in the Review and Assessment report show no air quality exceedances for NO₂ and SO₂.
- 1.10 An air quality monitoring strategy required by consent order for MVV Medworth is now active and data is made available quarterly to the public and the council. This strategy takes account of traffic pollutants in areas of concern which may be impacted by the development. This strategy includes a series of roadside diffusion tubes and a sensor installed at Thomas Clarkson Academy which has been operational since September 2025. Note the potential pollution from the incinerator is controlled by an environmental permit which is the remit of the environment agency.
- 1.11 Additional funding has been secured from the county council to install one further monitor to assess air quality in Whittlesey, particularly in the Peterborough Road / Saxon Pit location. This installation will take place in 2026.
- 1.12 In addition to increased monitoring actions there has been;
- Improvements to traffic flows for Broad Street, March
 - The revocation of 2 air quality management areas for Wisbech (pollution source had been removed).
- 1.13 The current assessment of air quality shows Fenland continues to meet air quality objectives with notable improvements in March.
- 1.14 Defra has directed the council to undertake a review of the remaining 2 AQMA's as the national air quality objectives are being met within these locations. This work will be taken forwards as appropriate for each location. In Whittlesey the pollution source has now been removed / reduced as was the situation in Wisbech. In Wisbech the additional monitoring locations and data will help to better understand the current position and next steps for that location.
- 1.15 Remaining AQMA's:
AQMA 3 Wisbech - declared due to elevated levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) from transport emissions.

AQMA 4 Whittlesey - declared due to concerns over sulphur dioxide levels (SO₂) which were likely being emitted from brick works.

Maps of these locations can be found in schedule 1 and 2.

- 1.16 The recent public health risk assessment undertaken by UK Health and Security Agency and County Council Public Health Consultants, with support from FDC officers has identified further air quality monitoring around the Saxon Pit site in Whittlesey would be of benefit. Proposed actions include:
- An air quality monitoring plan will be developed in partnership with the environment agency to include locations for particulate and sulphur dioxide monitoring.
 - One site will be used for a mobile monitoring station (provided by the environment agency) in summer 2026.
 - At a resident feedback event on 5th February discussions were held about the relocation of the Hallcroft Road monitor. This data shows good air quality however residents who live on the north and east side of Saxon Pit report this not to be the case. Relocation of this monitor seems sensible bearing in mind the reported issues further to the north east of Saxon Pit.
- 1.17 It is worth noting the industries operating within the Saxon Pit site are subject to environmental permits which require air quality monitoring of their operations. A summary of this information can be found on the final table below.
- 1.18 For any location across Fenland, where data identifies national air quality objectives are not being met, an AQMA must be declared for the pollutant of concern.
- 1.19 The tables below set out the location, pollutant being measured and the agency or business responsible for the monitor and data.

Fenland District Council – current	
Location	Pollutant monitored for
2022-2025 Hallcroft Road, Whittlesey	NO ₂ , PM ₁₀ , PM _{2.5} , SO ₂
Station Road, March (B1101)	NO ₂
Broad Street, March (Tesco)	NO ₂
Broad Street, March (Natwest)	NO ₂
Dartford Road, March (B1099)	NO ₂
Gaul Road, March	NO ₂
The Causeway, March (B1101)	NO ₂
Wisbech Road, (Cobblestones), March	NO ₂
178a Wisbech Road, March	NO ₂
Peas Hill Roundabout, March (A141)	NO ₂
Isle Of Ely Way, Wimlington (A141)	NO ₂
Fenland Way, Chatteris (A141)	NO ₂
High Street, Chatteris (B1050)	NO ₂

Wenny Road, Chatteris	NO2
London Road, Chatteris	NO2
Tayberry Way, Whittlesey (A605)	NO2
Peterborough Road, Whittlesey (A605)	NO2
Inhams Road, Whittlesey	NO2
Cemetery Road Roundabout, Whittlesey (A605)	NO2
Syers Lane, Whittlesey (A605)	NO2
13-15 Whitmore Street, Whittlesey (A605)	NO2
Eastgate Mews, Whittlesey	NO2
Hallcroft Road, Whittlesey	NO2
1B West Delph, Whittlesey(B1040)	NO2
Kings Dyke, Whittlesey (A605)	NO2
Thorney Toll (A47)	NO2
A47, Guyhirn	NO2
March Road, Rings End	NO2
Weasenham Lane / Cromwell Road, Wisbech (B198)	NO2
Newbridge Lane, Wisbech	NO2
32 Cromwell Road, Wisbech	NO2
South Brink, Wisbech	NO2
13 - 15 Nene Quay, Wisbech	NO2
22 South Brink, Wisbech	NO2
15 Old Market, Wisbech	NO2
North End, Wisbech	NO2
2 Leverington Road, Wisbech (A1101)	NO2
Lynn Road Roundabout, Wisbech (B198)	NO2
Lynn Road / Mnt Pleasant, Wisbech (B198)	NO2
Churchill Road, Wisbech (Bowthorpe)	NO2
Napier Court, Churchill Road, Wisbech (A1101)	NO2
Churchill / Weasenham, Wisbech	NO2
Weasenham Lane AQY, Wisbech	NO2
64 Weasenham Lane, Wisbech	NO2
Weasenham Lane/New Drove, Wisbech (B198)	NO2
Ramnoth Road, Wisbech (A1101)	NO2
Elm High Road, Wisbech	NO2

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority	
Location	Pollutant
Broad Street, March (Station Road/Darford Road roundabout)	NO2, O3, PM1, PM2.5 and PM10
Broad Street, March	NO2, O3, PM1, PM2.5 and PM10
Broad Street, March	NO2, O3, PM1, PM2.5 and PM10
South Brink, Wisbech	NO2, O3, PM1, PM2.5 and PM10
Weasenham Lane, Wisbech (Churchill Road/Elm High Street junction)	NO2, O3, PM1, PM2.5 and PM10

- Note O3 is ozone which is monitored as part of the CPCA project.

1.20 This data is not currently published publicly, but further details and previous results can be found in appendix E on the 2025 Annual Screening Review.

MVV Medworth Air Quality Monitoring Strategy	
Location	Pollutant
Thomas Clarkson Academy	Nitrogen Dioxide
Thomas Clarkson Academy	Sulphur Dioxide
Thomas Clarkson Academy	Particulates of less than 10 microns in diameter (PM10)
Thomas Clarkson Academy	Particulates of less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5)
Walsoken	Nitrogen Dioxide
Walsoken	Particulates less than 10 microns in diameter (PM10)
Walsoken	Particulates less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5)
Thomas Clarkson Academy	NO2
New Bridge Lane Roadside	NO2
New Drove	NO2
Cromwell Road	NO2
Cromwell Road Roadside	NO2
Wisbech Bypass (A47)	NO2
Weasenham Lane	NO2
Weasenham Lane	NO2
Railway Road Roadside	NO2
Algores Way Roadside	NO2
Elm High Road	NO2
Elm High Road Roadside	NO2
Churchill Road	NO2

1.21 As part of the MVV Development Consent Orders Community Air Quality Monitoring Strategy, quarterly monitoring data will be published on their website at <https://www.mvv-medworthchp.co.uk/>

Saxon Pit – Forterra , Johnsons and East Midland Waste Monitoring	
Location	Pollutant
Park Lane, Whittlesey (Forterra)	SO2
Bradley Fen, Whittlesey (Forterra)	SO2
Saxon Pit (Johnsons)	NO2, PM10, PM2.5, SO2
Saxon Pit (Johnsons)	NO2, PM10, PM2.5, SO2
Saxon Pit (EMW)	NO2, PM10, PM2.5, SO2

- 1.22 Note the East Midland Waste Saxon Pit monitor is linked to the national air quality network and data can be viewed [Fenland District Council - Air Quality monitoring service](#)
- 1.23 Forterra and Johnsons data is made available to the environment agency as part of their permit requirements. It is not published data. Previous years' data for the Forterra monitors can be found in the [2025 Air Quality Annual Status Report](#)
- 1.24 Maps of the monitoring locations can be accessed in Appendix D of the 2025 Annual Screening Review [2025 Air Quality Annual Status Report](#)
- 1.25 In summary since 2024 Fenland has seen an increase in district wide air quality data. This has included the installation of eight new sensors or monitors and an expansion of the diffusion tube network through working with partner agencies and industries making use of external funding wherever possible. The aim of this network is to ensure robust available of data and ensure a focus on areas of concern.
- 1.26 The council will continue to use the environmental permit and planning consultation process to encourage the sharing of data and industry responsibility to demonstrate environmental compliance.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The council has a duty to complete the annual review and assessment therefore this report is for information and for members to note the work undertaken or facilitated by the council for improved air quality, which directly impacts the residents' health.

3 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 Consultation regarding the annual review and assessment each year is not required however customer feedback is welcomed and can be submitted through usual council communication channels.
- 3.2 A one off public consultation event took place in relation to the Saxon Pit public health report for Whittlesey on Wednesday 5th February where monitoring options were discussed with residents. All those spoken to wished to see more monitoring on the boundary of the Saxon Pit site.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Air quality review and assessment is a statutory obligation of the council.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal Implications

- 5.2 The Council has a duty to screen, review and, where appropriate, monitor air quality within the district as set out within the Environment Act 1995.
- 5.3 It is important to note the responsibility for monitoring compliance with formal permits is the responsibility of the holder of the permit and not the local authority.
- 5.4 Many of the industrial operations referred to in this report are subject to County Council planning permissions, Environment Agency permits and associated conditions.

5.5 Financial Implications

- 5.6 The General Fund Budget Estimates and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Report, agreed by Cabinet and Council in February, projects a financial shortfall for 2026/27 of £2.856m rising to £2.903 in 2027/28.
- 5.7 Although there are currently many uncertainties regarding the budget for 2026/27 and the MTFS, there remains a significant structural deficit which the Council will need to address.
- 5.8 All monitoring, including staffing costs, is budgeted for or subject to external grants.

5.9 Equality Implications

- 5.10 Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts and particularly affects the most vulnerable in society; children and older people and those with heart and lung conditions. Improving air quality reduces the impact on these vulnerable groups in particular.
- 5.11 The programme of monitoring will continue across all areas of the district, particularly focussed in areas of increased pollution risk.

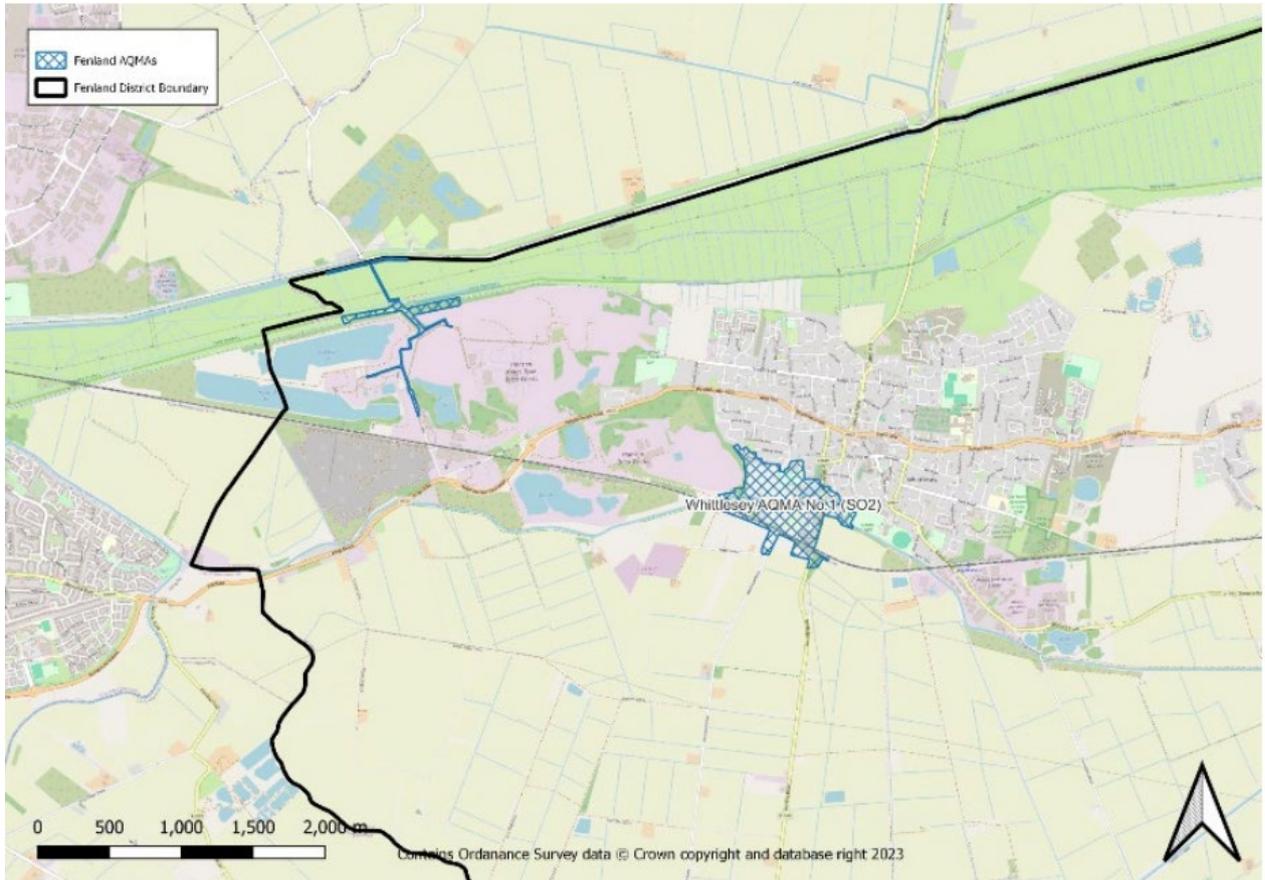
5.12 Other Relevant Implications

- 5.13 It is possible that screening, reviewing and monitoring of particulates of 2.5 micrometres will be required by future legislation.

6 SCHEDULES

- 6.1 Schedule 1 - Map showing Whittlesey AQMA (SO₂)
- 6.2 Schedule 2 - Map showing Wisbech AQMA (NO₂)

SCHEDULE 1
Map showing Whittlesey AQMA (SO2)



SCHEDULE 2 Map showing Wisbech AQMA (NO2)

