

We Asked, You Said, We Did for Air Quality Action Plan consultation

We Asked

We asked about our new Draft Air Quality Action Plan 2025-2030 (AQAP).

We asked:

- if you thought poor air quality was an important issue in Leicester,
- we listed 5 themes of our Draft AQAP and asked if you agreed that these should be key themes, and
- we asked you what other actions we should be taking to address poor air quality in Leicester.

The public consultation was open from 31st July 2024 to 27th September 2024.

You Said

120 respondents completed the online survey. We directly emailed stakeholders including neighbouring Local Authorities, NHS Trusts, representatives of business and community groups with an interest in transport, the environment and advocates for people with disabilities.

85% of responses stated that people agreed that poor air quality was an important issue in Leicester.

The majority of respondents agreed that each theme should be a priority:

- Theme 1: Air Quality Monitoring, Public Awareness & Engagement – 89% agreed
- Theme 2: Promoting, Supporting and Encouraging Sustainable Transport – 80% agreed
- Theme 3: Reducing Emissions from Transport – 79% agreed
- Theme 4: Optimising Traffic Management – 79% agreed
- Theme 5: Development Control and Regulatory Services – 64% agreed

When asked if there were any other actions or measures we could do to improve air quality in Leicester, 40% of respondents said yes.

Comments from this question were grouped into the following broad theme areas, listed in order of most comments:

- Vehicle Demand and Traffic Management
- Improving Passenger Transport
- Walking, Wheeling and Cycling
- Publicity, Engagement and Monitoring
- School Travel
- Electric Vehicle (EV) provision
- Trees, parks and green spaces
- Sustainable development and planning
- Not relevant to air quality
- Do more do quicker
- Non-Transport Sources

We Did

In response to this we reviewed what we are already doing to improve air quality, what we could do more of, where there are other things we could be doing, and what we should not be doing.

The following lists the most common theme areas and our response to the points made:

- **Vehicle Demand and Traffic Management**
 - We have been carrying out junction improvement works and improvements to traffic signalling along key corridors as part of the Connecting Leicester Programme. We currently have no plans to introduce road charging such as a Clean Air Zone or Ultra Low Emission Zone as we currently do not meet central government criteria. We are looking to roll out further 20 MPH zones.

- **Improving Passenger Transport**
 - We are working with bus operators as part of the Leicester Buses partnership, to deliver on our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) 2024. This will continue to promote bus travel, by ensuring it is electric, frequent, easy, reliable, and offers great value. We have achieved almost all of the targets within the previous BSIP.
 - 50% of buses in Leicester are electric, with targets to make 100% electric by 2030.
 - We intend to continue developing the Orbital route to improve frequency and for cross-city journeys and investigate other opportunities for Park and Ride sites across the city.

- **Walking, Wheeling and Cycling**
 - As part of the Connecting Leicester programme we have constructed new segregated cycleways and footways along key routes in identified areas (North West and South West Green Growth Corridors). We will shortly be consulting on our plans for future walking and cycling infrastructure.
 - Plans to further develop cycling and pedestrian infrastructure are dependent on future funding from Central Government. We have a programme of work to encourage Active Travel including working with employers to help facilitate sustainable travel for employees. We also promote a 'Wheels to Work' scheme.

- **Publicity, Engagement and Monitoring**
 - Our monitoring networks provide air quality information at fixed sites for various pollutants including NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}. This monitoring information is provided in the Council's Annual Status Reports (ASRs), which are publicly available on Leicester City Council's [Air Quality webpage](#).
 - The monitoring locations are chosen in areas we know experience high levels of pollution concentrations, such as the inner ring road of Leicester and major junctions around the city. The Council reviews air quality monitoring locations yearly to prioritise areas which are identified as having potential exceedances of pollutant objectives.

- Our data help inform the measures we implement across the city. We have an Air Quality Education Officer who works in schools to promote awareness of air quality. We are in the early stages of work to provide an online air quality portal that will provide information about levels of pollution.
- **School Travel**
 - In last 5 years we have worked with around 100 schools to encourage walking and cycling to school including developing 15 park and stride sites. We have implemented 5 school streets with traffic restrictions at peak hours, we have a programme of visits to enforce parking restrictions and educate drivers. We plan to continue with these activities and expand them. We have a programme for 20 new school streets – This is subject to central government funding.
- **EV provision**
 - We have installed 88 public charging sockets to date in car parks in the city centre and at parks in the city and expect this to rise to 107 by mid-2025.
 - The Council is exploring the opportunities of the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (LEVI) and is currently in discussions with the Government on possible funding. LEVI's focus is on charging in residential areas to enable residents without off street park to charge electric vehicles.
- **Trees, parks and green spaces**
 - There are 182,000 trees in the council's ownership (97,000 planted since the 1980s).
 - Around 17 percent of the city is covered in tree canopy.
 - The council manages 113 hectares of woodland.
 - There are over 530 Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) in place in the city.
 - The council spends around £2million each year on planting, protecting and managing our trees.
 - More than one replacement tree will be planted for the loss of any significant tree that is felled – wherever practical.
 - There are 190 parks and green spaces in the City with ongoing work to ensure they are maintained, safe and welcoming.
 - The City has a biodiversity action plan, a grassland strategy and a programme of planning wildflowers on suitable verges. A balance needs to be struck between amenity and conservation.
 - In urban areas, we recognise that trees, vegetation and green space can help absorb pollutants, reducing concentrations in key areas, as well as supporting pollinators that in turn make more greenspace viable. In urban areas, we recognise that trees, vegetation and green space can help absorb pollutants, reducing concentrations in key areas, as well as supporting pollinators that in turn make more greenspace viable. We will continue to take opportunities to install new trees, vegetation, and greenery as part of transport projects as funding and space allows.
 - We will work with developers to ensure that there is adequate and appropriate and well-located green space included in new developments.

- **Sustainable development and planning**
 - We will continue to work with the Local Planning Authority to ensure that there is integration between land use planning and transport, with the aim to maximise sustainable modes of transport and to make them more attractive when compared with the car.
 - We will continue to complete our statutory duty in providing air quality comments in relation to planning applications.

- **Not relevant to air quality**
 - Some comments received were not relevant to the AQAP or air quality.

- **Do more do quicker**
 - The actions and measures that we will take in the future to improve air quality will depend on central government funding, our ability to secure this funding, and the level of support for changes.

- **Non-Transport Sources**
 - Comments will be passed to the relevant team/department at the Council.