

# The Sussex Air Quality Partnership (Sussex Air)



## Business Plan 2025/26

### 1. The Sussex Air Quality Partnership (Sussex Air)

Sussex Air is a partnership, set up in 2000, comprised of officers from all the Local Authorities in Sussex. The partnership has a set of terms of reference but is not a formally constituted body.

All partners pay an annual subscription of £4,000 to Sussex Air, which is used to fund the services set out in section 5. The partnership is currently hosted by Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) and chaired jointly by Adur & Worthing Councils and Lewes-Eastbourne Councils. Other Councils such as Brighton & Hove and Horsham have led on DEFRA bids and funded projects. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) oversee the partnership's data management contract.

The partners meet quarterly to discuss air quality policy and practice, decide on budget allocations, review existing contract performance and work on joint bids and project delivery.

### 2. Members of Sussex Air

All 15 local authorities in Sussex are members of the Sussex Air partnership.

### 3. Aim and objectives of the Partnership

The aim of the partnership is to assist partners to comply with their statutory Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) duties and to contribute to improving air quality and health in Sussex.

The objectives of the partnership are to pool limited resources to provide:

- a co-ordinated and high standard air quality evidence base
- information and advice, to the public
- co-ordination and delivery of strategic work and projects to improve air quality in Sussex.

### 4. Day to day running of the partnership

ESCC and MSDC manage the partnership budget, and provide legal, procurement and IT expertise and support as required. A project officer is employed as a contractor on a part-time basis by MSDC on behalf of Sussex Air to:

- 1) manage and promote the Sussex Air website and the Air Alert service.
- 2) Support the management of the air quality data management contract for Sussex Air.
- 3) respond to queries from the public, partners and stakeholders.
- 4) organise the quarterly partnership meetings, prepare papers, attend and minute the meetings.
- 5) provide project support to partners as and when required.
- 6) support delivery of the business plan actions (see section 5.)

## 5. Sussex Air work programme for 2025/26

The main activities to be carried out during 2025/26 to meet the aim and objectives of the partnership will be to provide and manage:

### 5.1 Evidence base

- a. A three-year data management contract was agreed with Bureau Veritas from 1 January 2022 (with the provision for a year contract extension to December 2025, which was agreed in September 2024), following a competitive tender process. The contractor manages:
  - a. the Sussex Air website
  - b. air quality monitoring data collection, validation, ratification and dissemination
  - c. the issuing of Air Alerts
- b. The contract is owned and managed by ESCC and overseen by a contract management group which includes officers from ESCC, Adur & Worthing Councils, Lewes-Eastbourne Councils and the Sussex Air project officer on behalf of the wider Sussex Air partnership.

### 5.2 Information and advice to the public

- a. The Sussex Air Alert service provides advance warning of episodes of elevated air pollution. It operates all year round, providing information to vulnerable residents, frontline health professionals, third sector partners and carers who are working with vulnerable residents.
- b. Air Alert is free to subscribers and delivers messages by text, email and voicemail. Texts are delivered via the government's GOV.UK/Notify service, which provides 25,000 free alerts for subscribed services. This reduces the need for paid text alerts and will continue to reduce the cost to Sussex Air.
- c. Actions that will be carried out in 2025/26 to provide information and advice on air quality are set out in appendix 2.
- d. The Sussex Air website provides source of local air quality information & advice which is available to the public and other interested parties.

### 5.3 DEFRA air quality grant project(s)

Currently Defra have withdrawn the Air Quality Grant funding and no information on any new rounds of funding is currently available.

#### a. **The Defra Funded Schools Project**

In July 2022 ESCC completed the project management of the 2020 DEFRA grant funded project to deliver support to schools and businesses. The project was managed by Sussex Air and the delivery partner, Sustrans. The project was extended into communities for 2023/24 due to its success in schools, and community groups across Sussex had the opportunity to have Sustrans at their Eco fair or community fun day explaining the health impacts poor air quality can have and what can be done to mitigate these impacts.

As a result of a successful bid submitted by Brighton & Hove City Council, Defra provided funding to support a continuation of the schools' programme from 2020/22 until 2024.

The project is being funded through partner organisations to February 2025. Additional funding streams will be sought to continue this work into 2025-26. The work has

potential to better integrate with new monitoring, School travel, School Streets, Asthma friendly schools.

**b. East and West Sussex Taxi projects – This project is now completed.**

The purpose of this project is to facilitate a transition to electric vehicles by taxi and private hire drivers in East and West Sussex. Horsham District Council led the engagement study.

Sussex Air commissioned an engagement feasibility study to establish preferred locations for EV charge points and gather information on driver attitudes towards EV driving. The recommendations from the study will help build an infrastructure that is convenient, reliable and works for the taxi trade and will drive the progression of taxi licensing policies for EV drivers in East and West Sussex.

The Energy Saving Trust has finalised the report for West Sussex and East Sussex Taxi survey. These include the fleet profiles (for the vehicle details that were provided), EV alternatives and recommendations.

More information is available on the Sussex Air website. [Sussex-air :: Promoting better Air Quality in Sussex :: sussexair.extrawebsites.co.uk :: Air Quality Guidance Planning](https://sussexair.extrawebsites.co.uk)

**Bus retrofit project – This project is now completed.**

In 2022 funding was granted that has enabled the retrofit of a further 52 (more than a hundred in total) double decker buses from the Euro-V to the Euro-VI emission standard, further to the twenty-one buses retrofitted with the 2020/21 grant funding and previous support from DfT's Clean Bus Transport Fund.

The engineering design allows for optimised Diesel Particulate Trap (DPF), selective catalytic reduction and telemetry. A series of five exhaust upgrades of this type have been successful in Brighton & Hove, helping to substantially reduce ambient NO<sub>2</sub> in Brighton & Hove's bus-ULEZ and more widely across Sussex. This work was delivered by the end of 2023. There were also additional new buses rolled out in 2024. All scheduled routes in the city now meet the bus-ULEZ standard. The benefits of cleaner buses achieving ultra-low, and zero emission standards is ongoing and continues to improve annually.

**5.4 Co-ordination of air quality work and partnership communications**

- a. Quarterly partnership meetings are held on-line and/or at venues across Sussex, to ensure the data contract is meeting partner needs, to agree on and arrange shared activities such as funding bids, and to discuss current air quality issues and research. These meetings also provide a forum for officers to share policy updates, technical knowledge, good practice and engage collectively with Public Health and transport colleagues.
- b. Sussex Air responds to government consultations on behalf of the partnership, where partners provide comments to enable this.
- c. Two officers represent Sussex Air on Defra's national Local Authority Air Quality Advisory Group, which provides a useful platform to hear about, and potentially influence, changes to air quality policy and practice. The representatives provide two-way feedback to Sussex Air and to DEFRA on changes to policy and practice.

- d. The Sussex Air Quality and Emissions Mitigation Guidance is currently under review and the updated version is likely to be published in early 2025.
- e. The Chairs will continue to seek engagement from National Highways on matters that may affect Sussex authorities.

#### 5.5 Procurement of a new data management contract

The current data management contract ends in December 2025. A procurement process will be undertaken during 2025 to ensure there is a smooth transition between providers, if there is a change as a result of this process.

### 6. **Sussex Air budget 2024/25** (TBC at financial year end – March 2025)

<b>SAQP partnership budget</b>	<b>2024-25 forecast</b>	<b>2025-26 forecast</b>
<b>Income (£)</b>		
Balance in reserves from previous financial year	-26,314	-28,784
Partner subs	-60,000	-60,000
<b>Total income:</b>	<b>-86,314</b>	<b>-88,784</b>
<b>Expenditure (£)</b>		
AQ data contract	39,000	42,000
Website updates	3,280	0
JB contract	10,000	10,000
Air Alert (messages & marketing)	250	1,000
Hosting Sussex Air	5,000	5000
Projects	0	0
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>57,530</b>	<b>58,000</b>
<b>Year-end balance (£):</b>	<b>-28,784</b>	<b>-30,784</b>

(Note: the cost for the 'AQ data contract' in 2025-26 is an estimate, as we won't know what Q4 costs will be until we have tendered for a new supplier for the contract.)

Key risks to the partnership are detailed in Appendix 1.

### 7. **Contact - Sussex Air partnership**

Chairs – Nadeem Shad (Adur & Worthing Councils), Rachel Sadler (Lewes-Eastbourne Councils)  
 Vice Chair – Sam Rouse (B&HCC)  
 Project officer – Jeanette Brown  
 Email: Jeanette.brown@midsussex.gov.uk

## APPENDIX 1 – KEY RISKS

Risk	Impact	Risk assessment 1 = Low; 3 = High Impact x Likely = Result			Proposed Countermeasures
		Impact	Likely	Result	
Budget: reduction in future income	Unable to deliver part of the business plan	3	1	3	1) Commitment from partners to annual subs. 2) Avoid financial commitments beyond current available resources.
Policy & legislation: change to LAQM, either: 1) increasing the burden on LAs or 2) ending LA responsibility for local air quality	1) Increased pressure on Sussex Air. 2) Loss of rationale for Sussex Air.	3	1	3	1) Use current surplus to address pressures. 2) Close Sussex Air.
Staff: loss of key staff with knowledge of Sussex Air contracts & projects	Unable to deliver part of the business plan & meet partner needs, and fulfil contract liabilities	3	2	6	1) Document all contracts & projects for ease of handover. 2) Procure staff capacity so that there is flexibility and test the wider market.
Defra Grant Funding	The impact will mean that no funding would be available through Defra to support AQ projects.	3	2	6	1) Seek alternative Air Quality project funding streams.

## **APPENDIX 2 – COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING**

### **Sussex Air website**

The Sussex Air website was re-built in 2022 as part of the new data management contract with Bureau Veritas. The site includes near real-time air quality data, the Sussex Air Alert service, annual NO<sub>2</sub> data, the annual reports on local air quality produced by partner Local Authorities, various reports produced by Bureau Veritas and pages on pollution impacts on public health.

### **Campaigns**

The Sussex Air Alert service is promoted throughout the year with an additional push in the weeks leading up to Clean Air Day and Cycle to School weeks in June. During these campaigns, the profile of the Sussex Air Alert service is raised through targeted social media and digital marketing including paid Facebook advertisements and promotion through the Sussex District and Borough councils.

The Sussex Air Alert service is also publicised through partner events and in ESCC in-house publications (In Brief magazine, PH Bulletin, e-newsletters).

In 2025/26 East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council and local authority communication teams will continue to promote the Air Alert service via social media campaigns, which have previously proved successful, resulting in a noticeable increase in subscribers to the service during these periods of promotional activity. Sussex Air will continue to work with Public Health colleagues in East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove to share good practice and promote the service across the county.

In addition to the marketing campaigns, Sussex Air and the Sussex Air Alert service continue to be promoted through partnership work with Sussex Air officers and partners in Public Health and the NHS throughout the year.

### **Actions**

The Sussex Air project officer will:

1. Promote the Sussex Air Alert service across Sussex, exploring opportunities and using the full range of communication/marketing options available. They will work with all Local Authority communication teams, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council where appropriate using low/no cost options and reviewing the successes of 2024, in order to tailor the promotion to 2025/26.
2. Explore opportunities to work with Public Health colleagues and other health groups across Sussex to raise awareness of the Sussex Air Alert service.
3. Keep a record of the communications and marketing activities and review the effectiveness of each campaign against the spend. Use the information gathered to shape future promotions of the Sussex Air Alert service, to provide the best publicity and value for money for the partnership.
4. All partners will promote Sussex Air and the Sussex Air Alert service within the district/boroughs and share information/contacts and best practice.

### **Conference**

An Air Quality Conference is planned for 9<sup>th</sup> October 2025 at the University of Sussex and will discuss matters relating to air quality management and engage with a broad range of stakeholders.