

SUBJECT: REVOKING THE USK AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA ORDER 2005

MEETING: Individual Cabinet Member Decision – County Cllr Angela Sandles

DATE: 14th January 2026

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: Llanbadoc & Usk Ward

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 To inform the Cabinet Member of the need to revoke the Usk Air Quality Management Area Order 2005 and agree the principal steps for doing so.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 Approve the undertaking of a process with a view to revoking the Usk Air Quality Management Area Order 2005.

2.2 Endorse a public consultation of four weeks duration, with residents, businesses and other interested parties in the vicinity of the Usk Air Quality Management Area, which will notify these stakeholders of the intention to revoke the Order and invite representations.

2.3 On completion of the public consultation a further report to be submitted for Individual Cabinet Member Decision on the revocation of the Order.

3. KEY ISSUES:

3.1 Local authorities have a duty under the Environment Act 1995 to monitor the quality of air within their administrative areas, produce an annual report (to Welsh Government in Wales) and designate special management areas known as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) where pollutants exceed certain levels.

3.2 On the 14th November 2005 Monmouthshire County Council declared an AQMA by Order, largely focused on Bridge Street and parts of Castle Parade, Usk, as the annual objective level for nitrogen dioxide of 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ specified in the Air Quality (Wales) Regulations 2000 was not being met. The nitrogen dioxide pollutant is largely emitted by motor vehicles. A copy of the Order is provided in Appendix One.

3.3 An Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) for Usk was developed by the Council, approved by Welsh Government and took effect in September 2009. The AQAP, updated by the Council in January 2023, sets out a number of measures which may help reduce nitrogen dioxide levels. These are prioritised for action based on air quality impact, cost, feasibility,

wider impacts and timescales. In particular the focus has been on actions that can help reduce congestion and improve flow of traffic along Bridge Street.

- 3.4 During the drafting of the 2009 Action Plan the Usk Air Quality Steering Group was set up as a means of consultation with relevant stakeholders invited to the meetings to discuss and have an input into the AQAP. The Steering Group, chaired and led by Environmental Health, has subsequently met several times a year and has included representatives from Usk Town Council, Llanbadoc Community Council, Usk Civic Society, area County Councillors and officers from the Council's Highways, Planning, Trading Standards and Placemaking teams. The Steering Group has continually reviewed and assessed the plan's measures and the progress made towards achieving them.
- 3.5 Air quality has been monitored throughout this period by the Environmental Health team with a network of diffusion tubes in the management area providing data each month on the nitrogen dioxide levels. The levels have been improving since 2012 and the annual objective level has not been exceeded at any of the monitoring locations since 2015. This improvement in air quality has been reflected across the county and indeed there have been no exceedances of the nitrogen dioxide annual objective level since 2020 in the one other AQMA located at Hardwick Hill (A48) in Chepstow.
- 3.6 A significant factor for the improving air quality is the development of cleaner vehicle engine technology, but key measures taken in the Usk AQAP have included:
 - Implementation of a 20mph zone.
 - Enforcement of double yellow line parking.
 - Lorry Watch scheme to help enforce a Road Traffic Order (a weight-based order to prevent Heavy Goods Vehicles entering the town unless they have business in Usk).
 - Improved signage.
 - Development of the Usk Town Masterplan.
- 3.7 The statutory guidance provides that revocation of an AQMA should be considered following three consecutive years of compliance with the objective level and there should not be any declared AQMAs where there has been compliance for a consecutive five - year period. When monitoring with diffusion tubes, as is the case in Usk, the levels should be below $36\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ which is 10% below the $40\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ annual objective level as this allows for a margin of error in the monitoring method.
- 3.8 The monitoring undertaken shows that 2024 was the seventh year below $36\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. This additional two years to the five – year period advocated by the guidance allows for the expected lower pollution levels that could be reasonably expected for 2020 and 2021 due to reduced vehicle movements during the Covid pandemic.
- 3.9 The Steering Group in its most recent meeting on the 9th October 2025 endorsed the need to revoke the AQMA and agreed the residents, businesses and other interested parties in the vicinity should be notified of the intention to do so and given the opportunity to make representations. To this end it is proposed that a bilingual proposal note, provided in draft in Appendix Two, is provided on the Council's website giving the opportunity for representations. In addition, it will be sent directly to each residential and business property within the boundaries of the AQMA and other stakeholders including the Usk

Town Council, Llanbadoc Community Council, local county councillors, other members of the Usk AQMA Steering Group and Welsh Government. There is no timescale set in the guidance for this consultation which is intended to be for a four-week period.

3.10 On completion of the consultation, any representations received will be considered and the findings presented in a further report to Cabinet member for decision on the revocation of the Order.

4.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT, (includes equality, future generations, social justice, safeguarding and corporate parenting):

4.1 The completed Integrated Impact Assessment is provided in Appendix Three.

4.2 The proposal has no implications in relation to any of the protected characteristics:

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL:

5.1 To continue with the existing Usk Air Quality Management Area as designated by the Order made in November 2005 or, as proposed, to undertake the process outlined with a view to revoking the Order.

5.2 The review process is in line with statutory guidance provided in Local Air Quality Management Technical Guidance (TG22) (May 2025) and The Local Air Environment Local air quality and soundscapes management in Wales 2025 (July 2025). It is important to revoke an AQMA at the earliest opportunity to properly reflect the air quality conditions and assist in the proportionate allocation of Council resources.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA:

6.1 Following consultation, the findings will be considered and a further report put to Cabinet member on whether the revocation of the Order is still recommended. The further report to provide an outline for further monitoring and moving to an air quality improvement plan post revocation to help focus measures on improving air quality.

7. REASONS:

7.1 Undertaking the review process is justified, proportionate and in line with the requirements set by legislation.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 None directly arising from the review process or the actual revoking of the Usk Air Quality Management Area Order 2005 if it proceeds.

9. CONSULTEES

Cabinet.

Strategic Leadership Team.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Monmouthshire County Council Usk Air Quality Action Plan Update January 2023

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Appendices

Appendix One: Usk Air Quality Management Area Order 2005.

Appendix Two: Revocation of Usk Air Quality Management Area Order 2005 Proposal Note
(draft)

Appendix Three: Integrated Impact Assessment.