

SUBJECT: REVOKING THE USK AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA ORDER 2005

MEETING: Individual Cabinet Member Decision – County Cllr Angela Sandles

DATE: 20th May 2026

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: Llanbadoc & Usk Ward

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To consider the proposed revocation of the Usk Air Quality Management Area Order 2005.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To approve the revocation of the Usk Air Quality Management Area Order 2005 (Appendix One) by the making of the Monmouthshire County Council Usk Air Quality Management Area Revocation Order 2026 (Appendix Two).

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 40µg/m³ specified in the Air Quality (Wales) Regulations 2000 was not being met. The nitrogen dioxide pollutant is largely emitted by motor vehicles.
- 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 the flow of traffic along Bridge Street.
- 3.4 Progress towards meeting the AQAP measures have been continually reviewed and assessed by the Usk Air Quality Steering Group, chaired by Environmental Health 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.

- 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. In 2025 the highest concentration was $20.7\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ which is almost half the objective level,
- 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 2025 was the eighth year below $36\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, which allows for the lower pollution levels that could be reasonably expected with reduced vehicle movements during the Covid pandemic in 2020 / 2021.
- 3.9 As endorsed by Cabinet Member (Recommendation 2.2 of report dated 14th January 2026) a public consultation was undertaken from 26th January to 2nd March 2026, which entailed a bilingual proposal note (Appendix Three) hand delivered to all residential and business properties in the AQMA (170+ addresses). It was also shared directly with the local area County Councillors, Usk Town Council, Usk Air Quality Steering Group members and provided on the Council's website.
- 3.10 The public consultation response was as follows:
- Verbal feedback from persons engaged during the hand delivery of the proposal note was all in favour of the proposed revocation.
 - Usk Town Council provided a statement supporting the revocation.
 - No other written comments were received. No concerns or objections raised.
- 3.11 In accord with statutory guidance Welsh Government (Environmental Protection Division) have been informed of the results of the public consultation and the proposed recommendation to revoke the Usk Air Quality Management Area Order 2005, which has been acknowledged.
- 3.12 If the recommendation to revoke the 2005 Order and make the Monmouthshire County Council Usk Air Quality Management Area Revocation Order 2026 is agreed, it is proposed to provide a copy of the Order on the Council's website and inform the Usk

Town Council and Llanbadoc Community Council accordingly. This will be done promptly following decision and within one month of the revocation order coming into effect.

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 Four.

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, revoke the Order.

5.2 Revoking the Order 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 Policy Guidance (PG25) 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 the revocation, if agreed, Environmental Health will continue monitoring air quality in Usk the results of which will be provided in the annual review reports of local air quality in Monmouthshire to Welsh Government. In addition, the Usk Air Quality Steering Group has signalled its intention to continue to help focus efforts on improving air quality, informed by the continued monitoring and directed by the measures identified in the most recent Air Quality Action Plan update in 2023.

7. REASONS:

7.1 Revoking the Usk Air Quality Management Area Order 2005 is justified, proportionate and in line with the requirements set by legislation.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 None directly arising from the revocation of the Usk Air Quality Management Area Order 2005 if it proceeds.

9. CONSULTEES

Cabinet.

Strategic Leadership Team.

Social Care and Health Directorate DMT

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Monmouthshire County Council Usk Air Quality Action Plan Update January 2023.
Report for Individual Cabinet Member Decision dated 14th January 2026 'Revoking the Usk Air Quality Management Area Order 2005'.

11 AUTHOR: Huw Owen, Principal EHO and Paul White, Specialist EHO (Pollution)

12 Contact Details:

Huw Owen: Tel 01873 735433; Email: huwowen@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Paul White: Tel 01873 735449; Email paulwhite@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix One: Usk Air Quality Management Area Order 2005.

Appendix Two: Monmouthshire County Council Usk Air Quality Management Area Revocation Order 2026 (draft).

Appendix Three: Revocation of Usk Air Quality Management Area Order 2005 Proposal Note

Appendix Four: Integrated Impact Assessment.