

Welsh Government Update: Air Quality Policy

Welsh Air Quality Forum Annual Seminar, 20 November 2025

Roger Herbert



Overview

Delivery of the Clean Air Plan for Wales

- Local Air Quality Management policy
- New national air quality targets
- Targets and local authorities



Addressing Local Air Quality (1)

Promoting awareness

Welsh Ministers to take steps to promote awareness of the risks to human health and the natural environment caused by air pollution, and ways of reducing or limiting air pollution:

Delivery plan to be published following consultation, early 2026

Vehicle idling

Consultation on draft regulations concluded, October 2025

Regulations to be considered by Senedd, March 2026

Expected coming into force, end September 2026

Consultation on guidance, spring 2026

Tackling roadside emissions

Publication of 2024 data on NO₂ concentrations for the motorway and trunk road network, November 2025

Addressing Local Air Quality (2)

Smoke control and domestic solid fuel burning

- Updated guidance published following consultation, July 2025
- Further work underway to assess fuel poverty aspects of any potential restrictions on domestic burning, ongoing

Local Air Quality Management Fund

- c£1m allocated to 10 local authorities in 2025-26
- More sustainable funding approach considered
- How can we best facilitate sharing of findings and best practice?

Local Air Quality Management Guidance

- Updated guidance published summer 2025 (with amended information on revocations November 2025)

New national air quality targets

Environment (Air Quality & Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024: National air quality target-setting framework

- Duty to set targets for $PM_{2.5}$
- Duty to set a long-term target in respect of one of: NH_3 ; PM_{10} ; O_3 ; NO_2 ; CO; and SO_2
- Powers to enable Ministers to set long-term air quality targets
- Two phase implementation of target duties
- $PM2.5$ widely acknowledged as the pollutant of most harm to public health
- Evidence to inform $PM2.5$ target proposals gathered over past 2-3 years
- Consultation on draft $PM2.5$ target regulations now live
 - Open from 17 November 2025 to 16 February 2026

New national air quality targets

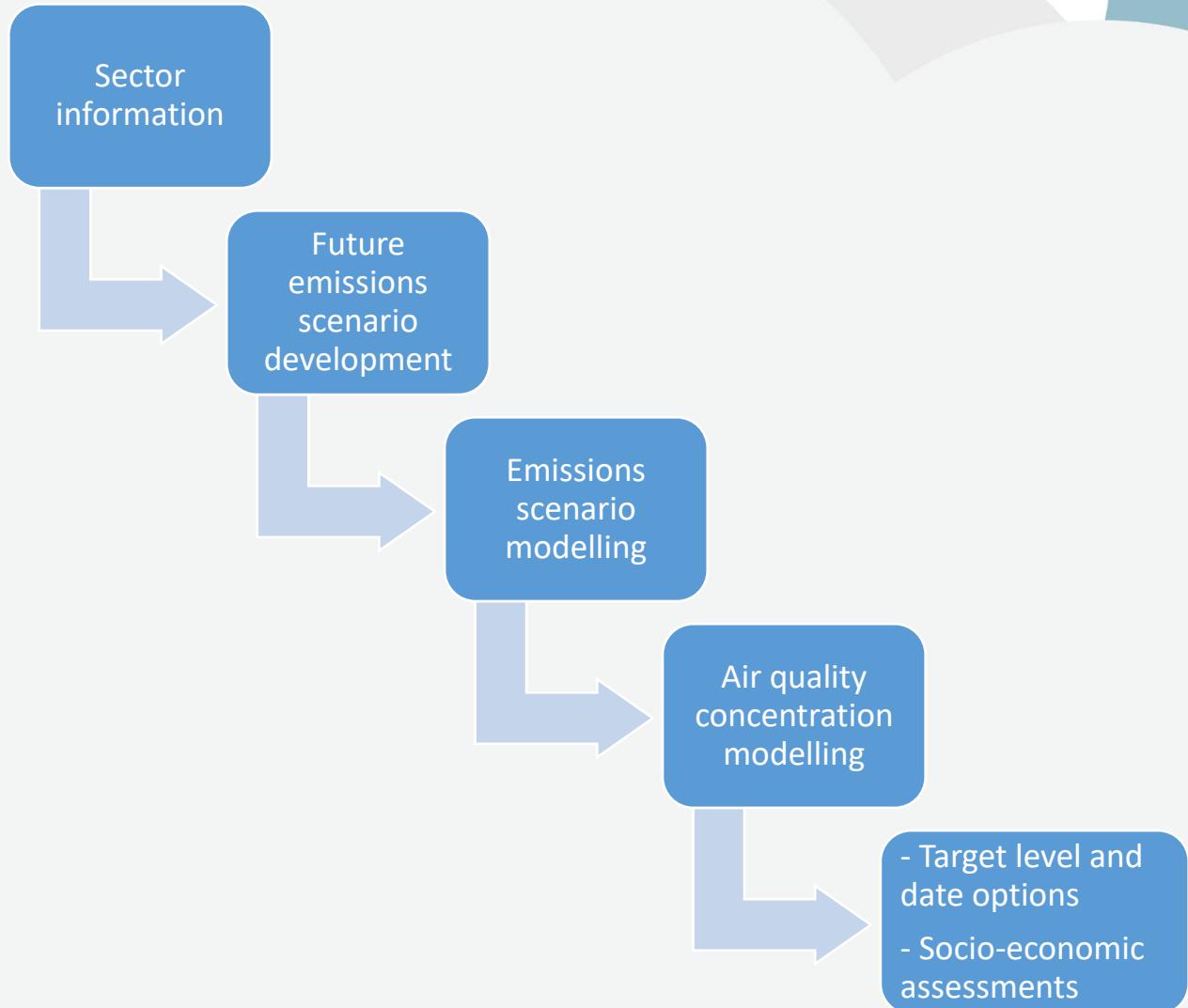
Environment (Air Quality & Soundscapes) (Wales) Act 2024: National air quality target-setting framework

- Target-setting framework process requires Welsh Ministers to:
 - have regard to:
 - scientific knowledge;
 - independent expert advice; and
 - the most recent WHO air quality guidelines for a pollutant when setting or reviewing a target for that pollutant
 - before setting or amending a target, **be satisfied the target can be met**
 - monitor progress towards targets and publish associated data
 - review targets set every 5 years
 - maintain the target standards once the target level and date have been reached and put in place reporting arrangements

New national air quality targets

Target development

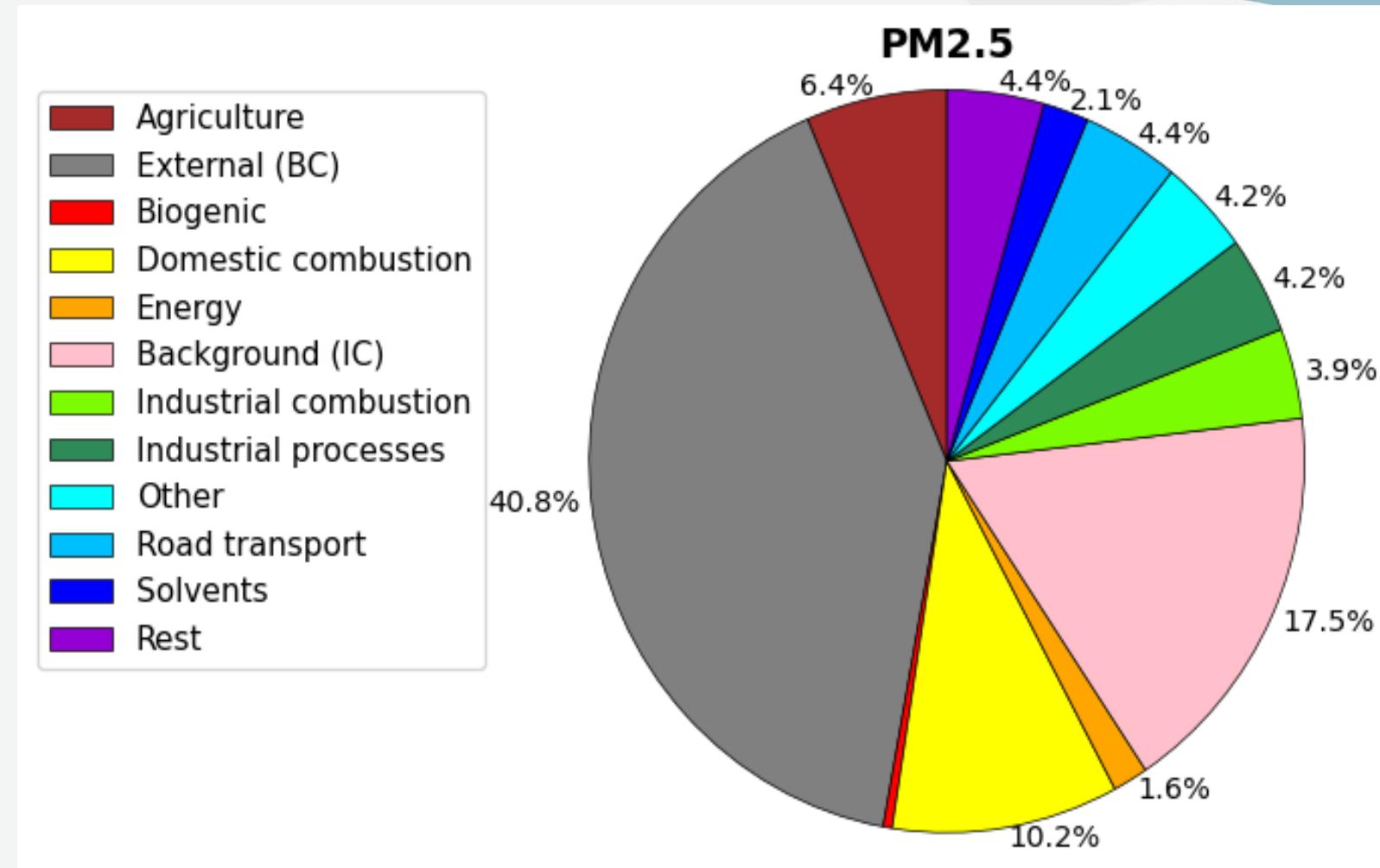
- Views from sector leads and experts to help form basis of future emissions scenarios
- Develop future scenarios with different levels and combinations of emissions to feed into models
- Modelling of future concentrations to determine achievable target levels and dates



New national air quality targets

Average PM2.5 population exposure in Wales, 2030

- 41% is from outside Wales and up to a maximum of 17.5% from secondary PM2.5
- Of the manmade sources in Wales:
 - 10% domestic combustion
 - 6% agriculture
 - 8% industrial processes and industrial combustion
 - 4% transport
- Lowering concentrations requires proportionate action across multiple sectors



New national air quality targets

PM2.5 target proposals

- Two new targets for PM2.5 are proposed to work in tandem:
 - An annual mean concentration target of 10 µg/m³ by 2035 (AMCT)
 - driving reductions in areas with the highest concentrations
 - A population exposure reduction target of 25% by 2035 compared to 2019 (PERT)
 - driving reductions across the country where people are exposed

New national air quality targets

Local authorities

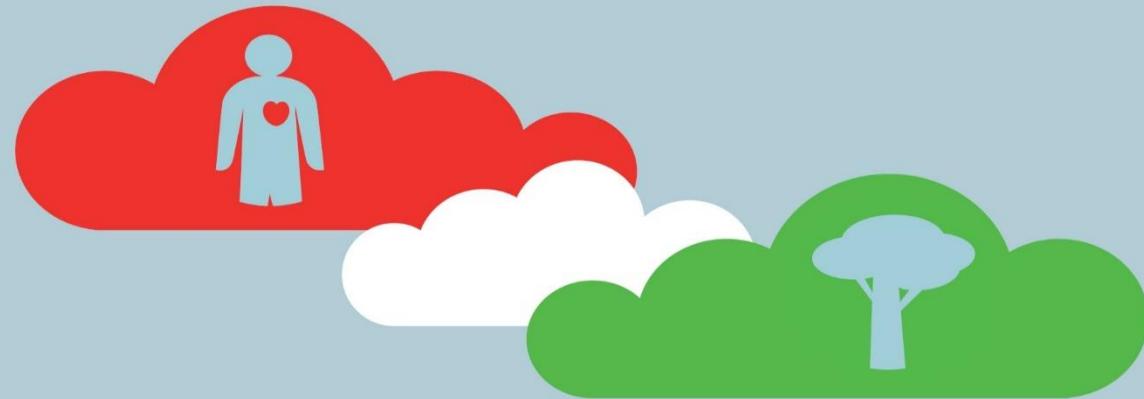
- Duty to achieve targets rests with national government, delivery will require action across society
- A flexible role to reduce PM2.5 is set out in the Local Air Quality Management policy guidance.
- Considerations for local authorities to support the new targets include:
 - PM2.5 is a regional pollutant (influence concentrations but not control);
 - PM2.5 arises from multiple sources and locations (requires collaboration);
 - PM2.5 monitoring (few monitors, so difficult to demonstrate direct effect of local actions)
- Example areas of focus:
 - Emissions reduction?
 - Planning considerations?

New national air quality targets

Summary

- New targets are designed to be ambitious, achievable and impactful
- Achieving targets will require proportionate action across a range of sectors
- Need to balance health benefits against costs to the public, business and government
- Public consultation is important part of understanding whether the proposals achieve that balance

Delivering Cleaner Air for Wales



Thank you



Draft PM_{2.5} target regulations

	Concentration Target (AMCT)	Exposure Reduction Target (PERT)
Target averaging period	Annual mean assessment (calendar year), at each monitoring location.	Three-year average (the average of three consecutive calendar years).
Assessment Locations	Appropriate locations where concentrations are likely to be highest and where there is appropriate public exposure. This will include all monitoring classifications (indicative of background and near-source levels).	Representative site locations indicative of average population exposure (predominantly urban background, not including near source locations).
Compliance assessment	Measurements at all monitoring sites will need to meet (report measurements at or below) the target concentration level by the target achievement date.	A national population exposure indicator based on the average of representative monitoring sites across the country. The indicator will need to meet the percentage reduction target by the target achievement date.

Draft PM_{2.5} target regulations

Target benefits

- Biggest reductions in the most populous regions - includes areas of highest and lowest deprivation, and areas with the highest proportion of children and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic residents
- Health
 - a statistical equivalent of 40-82 deaths avoided per year
 - a maximum of 140 statistical cases of illness prevented per year
 - reduced hospital admissions per year i.e. between 17 and 35
- Benefit to cost ratios from 3.6-4.3. Benefits outweigh costs
- Actions help reduce emissions of other pollutants and GHGs