

Speed restrictions to come into force to improve air quality and save lives in Wales

The measures are aimed at reducing levels of nitrogen dioxide where emissions have been found to exceed legal limits.

Poor air quality contributes to an estimated 2,000 deaths per year in Wales, with exposure affecting vulnerable population groups in particular. Gases such as nitrogen dioxide can increase the symptoms of people with lung diseases, while short-term exposure is associated with increased cardiovascular and respiratory morbidity.

The temporary 50 mph speed limits will be introduced at short stretches of road, between 1.4km to 5.9km in length, at the following five locations:

- A494 at Deeside
- A483 at Wrexham
- M4 between Junctions 41 & 42 (Port Talbot)
- M4 between junctions 25 & 26 (Newport)
- A470 between Upper Boat & Pontypridd

Other measures include increased signage to promote smooth traffic flow. The measures are expected to deliver immediate improvements to air quality, with emissions estimated to potentially reduce by up to 18% at the five locations.

Evidence shows that nitrogen dioxide emissions are at their lowest when light vehicles, the main contributors to emissions, travel at speeds between 40 and 50 mph. The speed limits are also expected to have a smoothing effect, with vehicles travelling at more constant speeds.

The temporary speed restrictions are part of a range of actions being introduced by the Welsh Government to improve air quality in Wales, including a new £20m Air Quality Fund, a Clean Air Zone Framework and a new Air Quality website providing local data on air pollution levels.

Minister for Environment Hannah Blythyn said:

“I am committed to taking action to reduce air pollution in Wales to support a healthier future for our communities and protect our natural environment. Current levels of nitrogen dioxide exceed the legal limit at the five road locations, so we need to act as soon as possible.

“We have been carrying out investigations into all potential measures for reducing nitrogen dioxide levels. Our initial studies tell us that 50 mph speed limits should have the greatest potential to improve air quality at each location. The actions we take to improve air quality in Wales have a key role in supporting the right conditions for better health and well-being.”

Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, Ken Skates, said:

“I want to see concrete measures put in place by the UK Government which focus on removing the source of the problem. They have prevented us from taking our preferred course of action – it is now time for them to step up and use the powers which they have so closely guarded for the benefit of the people of Wales.”

“The root cause is the emissions from vehicles, but legislative competence for vehicle standards and fiscal measures, such as the Vehicle Excise Duty and Company Car Tax, remain with the UK Government. Despite repeated calls, the UK Government has consistently refused to devolve powers which allow us to improve standards and incentivise improved emissions through the tax regime.”

A consultation is open until 19 June on plans to reduce concentrations of nitrogen dioxide, as part of the wider UK plan to tackle roadside NO₂ concentrations.

“While caring for their loved one, it’s crucial carers ensure they care for themselves” – Huw Irranca-Davies

To mark carers’ awareness week 2018, the Minister visited a carer’s centre in Swansea today to thank carers for their dedicated care to their loved ones and to urge carers to ensure they use their legal right to a carers’ assessment.

Under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, carers have an equal right to an assessment to see whether they need support to carry out their caring role and, if they do, to have that support provided.

A carer is anyone, of any age, who provides unpaid care and support to a

relative, friend or neighbour who needs care and support.

There are estimated to be more than 370,000 carers in Wales, contributing more than £8.1bn to the Welsh economy every year. 96% of the care provided to people in communities across Wales is given freely by family and friends.

To support the delivery of enhanced rights for carers under the Act the Welsh Government in partnership with stakeholders established three National Priorities for Carers in Wales:

- Supporting life alongside caring;
- Identifying and recognising carers; and
- Providing information, advice and assistance to carers.

In 2018/19 a budget of £1.095m has been allocated to the delivery of progress against the national priorities and £3m has been specifically allocated to local authorities to enable them to provide additional respite support for carers

To oversee the delivery of outcomes for carers against these priorities, a Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) is being established to provide a national forum to steer the delivery of improvements for carers and provide a cross sector response to the challenges they face.

Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“It is not surprising that as carers dedicate their time to caring for loved ones within families and their wider community, sometimes they can neglect their own health and well-being.

“Our commitment to carers’ rights is reflected through the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.. We are now two years into the implementation of the Act and with the support of the newly established Ministerial Advisory Group for Carers I want to ensure these enhanced rights for carers are realised.

“If carers have eligible needs, their local authority must meet those needs through a carers support plan.

“I want to urge every carer to ensure they have their needs assessed. While caring for their loved one, it’s crucial they ensure they care for themselves.”

[Bridgend health board change to](#)

‘strengthen regional partnership’

Health services for people in the Bridgend area are currently provided by Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ABM), with accompanying partnership structures in the delivery of social services across Western Bay.

This creates a particular challenge for public services in Bridgend which are increasingly working with others across the Cardiff Capital Region to deliver economic growth and improvement in education.

The change announced today will align economic, education, health and social services partnership arrangements for Bridgend County Borough firmly within the Cardiff Capital Region.

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, Vaughan Gething said:

“In making this decision we recognise that people’s health needs are best served by strong, integrated partnership arrangements. I am grateful to the health boards for their continued engagement throughout this process. I look forward to working with them and others over the coming months to deliver the new partnership arrangements, putting in place a strong foundation for sustaining and improving public services.”

The Welsh Government will bring forward legislation to effect the health board boundary change by April 2019 in due course.

Robot Doctors and Rockets – Welsh children’s vision for the future NHS

The competition, organised by the Welsh Government, asked primary school children across Wales to depict what they think the NHS in Wales will look like on its 100th birthday in 2048.

Cerith Hiorns, aged nine, who is a Year 4 pupil at Ysgol Gymraeg Llangennech in Llanelli, has won the 7-9 age category for his vision of a hospital with jet planes and rockets.

While, Cari Megan Lloyd, aged 11, a Year 6 pupil at Ysgol Dolgarrog, in Llanrwst, took the winning place for the 10-11 age category for her depiction of a robot doctor alongside the slogan “people matter”.

The two winners were today congratulated by Health Secretary Vaughan Gething during a visit to the Royal Mint, where they got to strike a special coin from the Royal Mint's Great British Coin Hunt A to Z Collection, with an N for NHS.

During the visit the pupils were also joined by Aneira Thomas, the first baby born in the NHS, for a tour of the Royal Mint.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

"I had great fun going through the entries for our NHS 70 drawing competition and getting an insight into what today's children think the health service will look like when they are adults. With jet planes, space rockets and robot doctors, they certainly have some exciting ideas for the next twenty years!

"It wasn't easy picking the winners and Cerith and Cari should be very proud of their achievement."

Aneira Thomas said:

"I was delighted to meet Cerith and Cari and to see their visions of what the NHS will look like in 30 years' time. I was fortunate to have been born in the first few minutes of 5 July 1948 at the start of the NHS. I have seen many changes and improvements in the NHS throughout my life and career and it was a delight to meet Cerith and Cari to talk about those changes."

Anne Jessopp, Chief Executive of The Royal Mint, which is based in Llantrisant in Cwm Taf Health Board said

"The 'N' for NHS has proved a very popular choice with the public as a Great British Coin Hunt 10p theme. The NHS is a well-respected national institution – most Britons will come into contact with it at some time in their lives, so it was a natural choice. Congratulations to both Cerith and Cari on winning this competition."

In all, ten pictures were selected for special praise across the whole of Wales. The winners have been invited to join a service of thanksgiving to celebrate NHS70 at Llandaff Cathedral on the 4 July, where they will be presented with a special coin from The Royal Mint's Great British Coin Hunt A to Z Collection, an N for NHS, by a special guest.

“In Wales, we’re investing in and prioritising social care” – Huw Irranca-Davies

Speaking at the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) National Conference and AGM in Cardiff, the Minister said the Welsh Government’s vision for the future is that of an integrated health and social care system which provides seamless services for those who need them.

Earlier this week, the Welsh Government unveiled A Healthier Wales, a long term plan for health and social care in Wales – the first national plan in the UK which integrates health and social care.

The Minister told the audience of social workers from across the UK about the four distinctive features of the Welsh Government’s approach: continuing investment in social care, prioritising prevention, developing and supporting the social care workforce and co-production with service users.

Minister for Children, Older People and Social Care, Huw Irranca-Davies said:

“In Wales, we have prioritised social care as a sector of national importance and despite significant cuts to the Welsh Government’s Budget, we have continued to invest in social services. This is in stark contrast to the situation in England, where we know social services have suffered due to large cuts in funding over the last six years.

“However, whilst additional funding helps to combat current pressures, sustaining a level of funding to meet the increasing demand for social care remains challenging. I know there are many views about how to address the funding of social care in the long term and raising additional public funds via a social care levy for Wales is one option we will be exploring over the coming months.”

The Minister also set out the Welsh Government’s approach to reforming social care – with the introduction of the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care Act 2016.

He said:

“Together these two Acts have radically changed the face of social care, paving the way for a person-centred, outcome focussed approach to the delivery of care and support. One which concentrates on individuals, their families and carers and the outcomes they want to achieve.

"We took a collaborative approach to the development of this legislation and continue to do so in its implementation. As a result we are beginning to establish a culture of real improvement. The need for care and support services is growing and there is pressure to do more and to do it differently – that is difficult.

"Our long-term plan for health and social care was published this week, having been developed through a co-productive process. The plan responds to some of the challenges we face. It sets out a vision for the future based on an integrated health and social care system which provides seamless services for those who need them."