News story: Plans to cut harmful pollution from domestic burning set out

Proposals to promote cleaner domestic burning and cut harmful pollution by prohibiting the sale of the most polluting fuels have been laid out in a government consultation published today.

The burning of wood and coal in the home is the largest single contributor to particulate matter pollution – identified by the World Health Organization as the most damaging air pollutant.

Particulate matter is formed of tiny particles that can get into the body, lodging in major organs, causing short- and long-term health problems. Domestic burning contributes 38% of particulate matter pollution, compared with 16% from industrial combustion and only 12% from road transport.

The government therefore plans to ensure that, in future, only the cleanest fuels are available for sale. Delivering a commitment in the government's Clean Air Strategy, the consultation proposes preventing 8,000 tonnes of harmful particulate matter from entering the atmosphere each year by:

- Restricting the sale of wet wood for domestic burning
- Applying sulphur standards and smoke emission limits to all solid fuels
- Phasing out the sale of traditional house coal

At the same time, the government will ensure only the cleanest stoves are available for sale by 2022. Together this will bring benefits for consumers and householders as burning cleaner fuels and using these devices produces less smoke, soot, and more heat.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

> Everyone has a role to play in improving the air we breathe, and reducing pollution from burning at home is a key area where we can all take action.
>
> While we will never be able to eliminate all particulate matter, by switching to cleaner fuels, householders can reduce the amount of harmful pollution to which they unwittingly expose themselves, their families and the environment, while still enjoying the warmth and pleasure of a fire.

The government's Clean Air Strategy – welcomed by the World Health Organization who said it was "appreciating actions taken by the United Kingdom government to protect its citizens from this silent killer" – also set out proposals to tackle air pollution from a range of other sources

including:

- Publishing new guidance for farmers, advisors and contractors to help them reduce ammonia emissions and invest in infrastructure and equipment
- Working with international partners to research and develop new standards for tyres and brakes to enable us to address toxic non-exhaust emissions of micro plastics from vehicles which can pollute air and water. A call for evidence was launched last month.

This is in addition to our £3.5 billion plan to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions from road transport.

Many consumers are unaware of the impact on their health or the environment from burning solid fuels, or indeed which fuels are the cleanest to buy. Our recent research suggests that over half of people surveyed did not consider that the burning of solid fuels and wood in their home might have an impact on their health or the environment.

The government recognises households have installed wood-burning stoves and is not seeking to prevent their use, or installation, or considering banning domestic burning, but it is keen to encourage people to switch to cleaner fuels.

A simple way to identify clean, quality wood fuel is to look for the Defra supported ‘Ready to Burn’ logo on fuels. Consumers can also take action by buying the most efficient stove and regularly servicing their appliance. The Burnright website has lots of helpful tips on how to minimise the impact of burning on air quality, as can your local chimney sweep during their regular visit. Householders can also swap their supply of traditional house coal to a cleaner alternative.

The consultation closes on 12 October.

Form: Materials facility combined waste returns spreadsheet

Use this materials facility (MF) combined waste returns spreadsheet for sites notified as MFs to the Environment Agency under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016, Schedule 9.

The spreadsheet includes MF sampling data and waste tonnage data.

Please do not open the spreadsheet directly from this page. Save it to a folder by right-clicking, select ‘save as’ and then open it from where you saved it.

Submit your return by email to national-operator-returns@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Deadlines for submission are the same as for waste tonnage returns.

If you have any questions about MF regulations, including requests to notify, email MFRegs@environment-agency.gov.uk.

See guidance on MF sampling.

Open consultation: Air quality: using cleaner fuels for domestic burning

We want to know what you think about our proposals for helping householders move to cleaner fuels for domestic burning. The changes we propose include only allowing the sale of cleaner solid fuels. These proposals apply to England only.

Domestic burning is the single largest source of harmful particulate pollution in the UK. Many people do not realise that there are cleaner alternatives, such as dry wood instead of wet, or low-sulphur smokeless fuel instead of coal.

Lanark businessman fined £1,200 for water pollution incident in Perth

17 August 2018

Businessman Andrew John Bailie was fined £1,200 at Perth Sheriff Court today (17 August 2018) after the discharge of liquid fertiliser into a protected watercourse in Perthshire.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) received complaints from members of the public on 23 September 2015 who had discovered discoloured water and saw dead fish in the Ordie Burn, which is part of the River Tay Special Area of Conservation.

SEPA officers carried out an investigation and identified that the incident was caused as a result of the spreading operation of the man-made liquid fertiliser Anaerobic Digestate at Little Tulliebelton Farm, near Bankfoot,

Perthshire.

Andrew John Bailie pled guilty to failing to comply with the regulations on storing the fertilizer prior to it being spread. Whilst Mr Bailie was not on site during the spreading operation he was aware that the Anerobic Digestate holding tank was located only three or four metres from the watercourse which is too close in case of any leak or overflow from the tank. This is in contravention of General Binding Rule 18 which states that no fertiliser may be stored within ten metres of a watercourse.

SEPA officers found that during the spreading activity the tank had overflowed due to a blockage and a volume of the liquid fertiliser had spilled into Ordie Burn at that point. As a result of further investigation they also found evidence of pollution having entered the Ordie Burn.

SEPA submitted a report to the Procurator Fiscal.

Terry A'Hearn, SEPA's Chief Executive, said:

"Every day SEPA works to protect and enhance the environment, and we are clear that environmental compliance is non-negotiable. This is at the core of our One Planet Prosperity Strategy.

"Andrew John Baillie failed to follow the regulations that are in place to protect the environment, and this resulted in pollution to the water environment with significant impact to trout and salmon populations.

"This incident was not only unacceptable, it was also avoidable. In instances like this it is our job to hold such operators to account. We hope this outcome sends a strong message to everybody operating in Scotland. SEPA is here to make sure that action will be taken if you don't pay attention to your environmental responsibilities."

Calum McGregor, SEPA's Reporting Officer, said:

"Whilst Anaerobic Digestate is a useful fertiliser if used and stored properly, it is a highly polluting liquid which can cause significant harm to fish if it is allowed to enter a watercourse. The discharge of Anaerobic Digestate to the watercourse caused a significant number of fish to be killed, mainly salmonoids, over a 2.2 kilometre stretch of the Ordie Burn and 1 kilometre stretch of the Wynnie Burn. It is expected it will be a number of years before the river fully recovers.

"If Mr Bailie had ensured that the storage of Anaerobic Digestate complied with the regulations, and that those working for him at the site were adequately trained, then this incident could have been avoided. We hope this ruling will serve as a warning to others."

Ends

Notes to editors

The exact charge which Andrew John Bailie pled guilty to was:

Between 21st September 2015 and 23rd September 2015, both dates inclusive, at Little Tulliebelton Farm, Bankfoot, Perthshire, PH1 4DH and elsewhere you ANDREW JOHN BAILIE, being Operations Manager for Digestate Management Services Limited did fail to comply with or contravene a general binding rule, namely number 18, which states that no fertiliser may be stored on land that is within 10 metres of any surface water or wetland, namely a river, burn, ditch, wetland, loch, transitional water or coastal water in that you did store fertiliser on land that was within 10 metres of the Ordie Burn (at National Grid Reference Number 03678 34335); CONTRARY to the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 Regulation 44(1)(b) Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003 Section 20(1)

Press release: Smart meter enabled technology could see electric car owners cut bills and make money

- growing number of electric car owners could save and even make money from innovative technology by selling energy back to the grid
- smart energy innovations, including smart tariffs, could save the UK as much as £40 billion between now and 2050

Energy Minister Claire Perry today (16 August 2018) hailed OVO Energy for its "innovative" electric vehicle (EV) products – enabled by smart meters – which could see millions save and even make money from their electric cars.

OVO Energy, based in Bristol city centre and London, is one of just a few companies already using smart meters to offer innovative products, such as rewarding customers for charging their electric vehicles at off-peak times. These offers, made possible thanks to a smart meter, help customers use energy at times when there is less demand on the grid, in turn saving money on their bills.

Smart charging and Vehicle to Grid charging could become a cornerstone of the way we use energy in the UK, with more than 8 million people in Britain considering buying or leasing an electric vehicle in the next 5 years. With this technology, customers will not only be able to choose to use energy at the cheapest times but also make money by selling energy from their vehicle's battery at times when it is most in demand. This will support the growth of renewable energy generation in the UK.

Smart energy innovations, such as smart tariffs and smart charging, could save the UK as much as £40 billion between now and 2050.

Smart meters also support OVO's intelligent platform VCharge, which is

enabling residential appliances such as electric vehicles, electric heaters and in-home batteries to help balance the grid and reduce energy costs.

Energy and Clean Growth Minister Claire Perry said:

> More than 11 million meters are already empowering consumers to reap the rewards of a smarter energy system, putting homes and small businesses on the road to a smarter future.
>
> Smart meters will be the cornerstone of a cleaner, flexible and efficient energy system, saving the country tens of billions of pounds.
>
> New innovative products and tariffs like these will put consumers in the fast lane when it comes to control of their energy use, saving and even making them money when using their electric vehicles.

These products are just one of the ways smart meters save money. They put people in control of their energy use by showing them how much energy they use in pounds and pence via an easy to understand In-Home Display. With this information at their fingertips, consumers can easily understand how they can make small changes to the way they use energy in order to use less and save money on their bills – up to £1.2 billion a year by 2030.

Stephen Fitzpatrick, CEO and Founder, OVO said:

> Getting the smart meter rollout right should be the top priority for the government and the energy sector in the UK right now so it’s encouraging to see the minister here today.
>
> The smart meter rollout is a huge and complicated programme. However, there’s no question it needs to be done as we can’t build the energy system of the future unless we know accurately how much energy people are using and when.
>
> OVO is using technology like electric vehicles, smart electric heat and batteries to help lower energy bills for consumers and enable us to use more renewable energy. None of this technology will work without smart metering.
>
> We welcome the government’s recent efforts to improve the delivery of smart meters but there is still more work to do.

At OVO’s offices, the minister also met with their smart meter installation engineers, who undergo thorough training ahead of installations. When having a smart meter installed all homes and small businesses benefit from a free visual safety check of their gas appliances and electricity supply; and the past 18 months alone, installers have raised 430,000 safety notices for

issues not related to smart meters during installation visits as part of the free visual safety check provided.

More than 400,000 meters are being installed by energy suppliers across Great Britain each month. Consumers can call their supplier and book and appointment to have one installed.

More than 500,000 households in the South West have already had a smart meter installed and those still without one could save a collective £50 million if they had a smart meter installed. If every household in Great Britain got a smart meter, we could save enough energy to power every household in Exeter, Plymouth and Swindon for 2 years.

Apprentices powering Hinkley Point C

Separately, the minister also visited new nuclear site Hinkley Point C today, where a 250-strong apprentice force is powering this Somerset nuclear project – site owners, EDF expect 1,000 apprentices to work on the project during its lifespan.

Hinkley Point C is the UK's first new nuclear power station in a generation and is poised to make a major contribution to the UK's move to reduce carbon emissions through clean energy production.

Nuclear energy already provides around 20% of the UK's electricity from existing sites and Hinkley Point C's future output will significantly boost this figure. The clean electricity it will generate upon completion is all part of this government's modern Industrial Strategy, which actively encourages clean growth in business and energy production, helping to create better higher-paying jobs across the UK.

Hinkley Point C remains on track to meet its next major milestone, the 2019 nuclear concrete construction target of completing the foundations for the first reactor. Energy production is expected to start in 2025.

Notes to editors

82% of people with smart meters say they have a better idea of their energy costs and 8 out 10 people with smart meters say they would recommend them to friends or family.

For more information about the benefits smart meters can bring and to dispel myths surrounding them view our explainer '[Smart meters – the smart choice]'.