

Press release: Call for evidence to help improve air quality launched

Householders and businesses are being asked for their views on proposals to cut harmful emissions caused by the burning of dirtier fuels.

A [call for evidence](#) on the use of house coal, smokeless coal, manufactured solid fuels and wet wood used for heating homes has today been launched to help the government reduce harmful emissions of soot and smoke, as action continues to improve air quality.

The government is considering a range of options to tackle these emissions, these include:

- Encouraging consumers to switch from house coal by only allowing the sale of low sulphur smokeless alternatives
- switching from wet wood to dry wood
- the introduction of sulphur limits for all smokeless solid fuels
- and new powers for local authorities to take action for persistent smoke offences where local amenity is harmed
- The government is not considering banning domestic burning, and is not seeking to prevent the use or installation of wood-burning stoves

The call for evidence will inform our understanding of what impact these measures could have if introduced.

While we are keen to encourage consumers to switch to cleaner wood burning, which will directly benefit them in their homes and improve the local environment, the government is not considering banning domestic burning. Many households have installed wood-burning stoves, and we are not seeking to prevent their use or installation.

While air quality in the UK has improved significantly in recent decades, with reductions in emissions of all of the key pollutants, domestic burning of house coal (the typical black fuel), smokeless solid fuels (smokeless coal, for example, or manufactured solid fuels which are made from coal and other ingredients) and wood are the single largest contributors of harmful particulate matter (PM) emissions, accounting for around 40% of total UK PM_{2.5} emissions in 2015. In fact, a wood burning stove can emit more PM than a diesel HGV or passenger car.

The tiny particles in smoke can enter the bloodstream and have been found in internal organs risking long term health issues as well as having more immediate impacts in some people such as breathing problems or asthma attacks.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

We all have a role to play in improving the air we breathe. Many of

us enjoy a cosy fire in our homes, but burning dirtier fuel has a real impact on the quality of air for our family and friends around us.

We must be mindful that pollution is about more than just transport. Poor air quality affects public health, the economy, and the environment, which is why we are determined to do more. However, if we make the switch to burning cleaner domestic fuel, we can continue to enjoy burning wood and smokeless coal in stoves and fires in our homes.

Many consumers are unaware of the impact on their health or the environment from burning solid fuels, or indeed which are the cleanest fuels to buy. That is why the government is already working with industry to raise consumer awareness of the benefits of cleaner fuels, such as 'Ready to Burn' wood, where a logo clearly identifies wood that is certified as clean and ready to burn.

Consumers can already take action by buying the most efficient stove, using high quality fuel and regularly servicing their appliance.

Last year the government confirmed it would end the sale of all new conventional petrol and diesel cars by 2040 as part of a £3.5 billion plan to tackle nitrogen dioxide emissions. The UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations produced by Defra and the Department for Transport, outlined how councils with the worst levels of air pollution at busy road junctions and hotspots must take robust action.

The call for evidence will feed into the government's Clean Air Strategy, which will be published for consultation in 2018. This will further address wider sources of air pollution.