

Anonymous written evidence

I would like to write about the rising amount of air pollution from residential wood burning. This includes woodstoves, open fires, bonfires, BBQs, firepits and the new trend of outdoor chimneys.

Defra and council monitors are often placed to capture pollution from road traffic and are very often missing this pollution. Citizen monitoring, whilst using less accurate monitors, picks up a far more realistic image of what is happening in our residential areas.

An increasing number of people are being affected by this form of air pollution – indeed, woodburning is one reason why the Government PM2.5 targets were missed last year. Nor is it environmentally friendly – the CO2 released won't be absorbed within the timeframe we have and it also produces methane, a potent greenhouse gas, black carbon and pollutants.

With respect to woodstove burning, it's mainly carried out by people on-grid with another form of heating, and by those who are more affluent ie. woodstove use is predominantly a choice and not a need. Neighbours though, have no choice in the air they breathe which is very unfair. School playgrounds next to homes who burn wood also have no choice in the air the children breathe, likewise hospitals and care homes who are situated next to homes who burn wood.

Neighbours of woodstove users find it difficult to open windows and dry clothes on the line. This decreases air quality inside their own home and increases mould. Sometimes people are having to invest in clothes dryers, dehumidifiers and air filters plus alterations to windows and doors to stop the smoke entering their house – living next to those who burn wood can be very expensive.

People with respiratory conditions can find it difficult to breathe when the air is full of woodsmoke, some unable to go outside when it's smokey, affecting life quality and mental health. People don't just use woodstoves in Winter or in the evening – some use them all year round and all day. This affects neighbours ability to enjoy their outside space in addition to the above problems.

PM2.5 is linked to pretty much every non-communicable disease there is and that produced by woodstoves causes £1bn per year in health care costs.

There is no good reason for allowing this to continue – it harms health and air quality, and contributes to climate change and biodiversity loss. The UK needs to move to cleaner forms of energy.

The general public seem very unaware that burning wood is harmful to air quality and the environment – this needs to be rectified by a national education campaign discouraging people from burning wood. Defra gives advise to burn clean, but the air pollution scientists I read say you can't burn clean, only less dirty. We have far cleaner forms of heating now and we need these to be adopted much quicker, with better grants. Firepits and outdoor chimneys should be banned immediately as they are totally unnecessary lifestyle gimmicks. We need proper clean air zones where no burning is allowed to give people a choice in what they breathe. Caroline Lucas and Jenny Jones have set out a wonderful new Clean Air Act which would not only improve air quality and human health, but the environment as well. The best thing for the UK's air quality would be if this were made law.

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