

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.