

SANDWELL AIR QUALITY NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE:



THE HIDDEN DANGERS OF WOOD BURNING



CLEAN AIR NIGHT 2025



AUNTIE DUCK IN SANDWELL LIBRARIES



HANG-OUT WITH AUNTIE DUCK



RECOGNISING AUNTIE DUCK SCHOOLS



ACTIVE TRAVEL INITIATIVES



MEET OUR ACTIVE TRAVEL HERO



WOOD BURNING STOVES : A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR YOUR HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

2

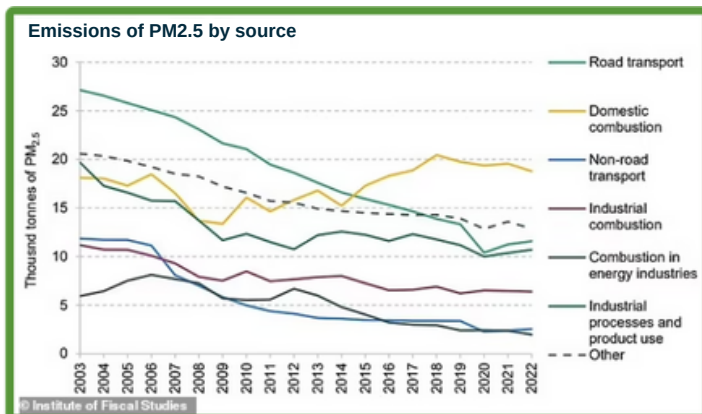


There's something comforting about a warm fire in winter, but did you know that wood and coal burning contribute to nearly **61,000** premature deaths in Europe each year?

Wood-burning stoves are often seen as a cleaner and more attractive alternative to open fires. However, burning wood isn't necessarily a safer or greener option. Across the UK, there has been an **89% increase in PM2.5 emissions** from wood burning as a fuel since **2010**.

Wood smoke contains harmful fine particles (**PM2.5**) and toxic gases like carbon monoxide and formaldehyde. Breathing in these pollutants increases the risk of **heart disease, strokes, asthma, and COPD**.

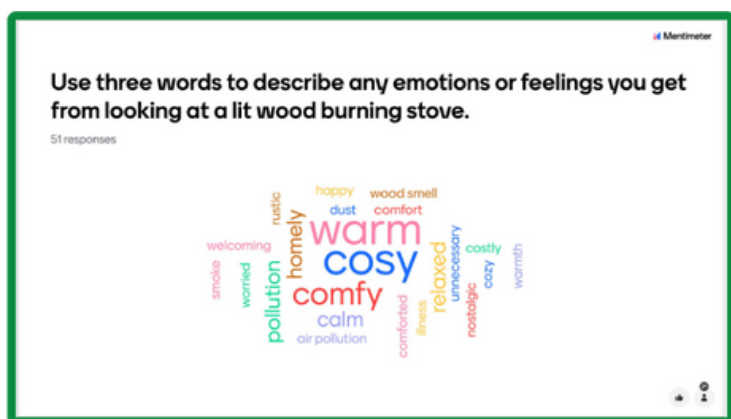
In the **West Midlands**, wood burning accounts for **20% of PM2.5 pollution**, and related deaths are estimated at **2,070 per year**. Shockingly, PM2.5 emissions from wood burning in the area were **seven times higher** than levels recorded in 2008–2010.



The only source of PM2.5 emissions that has increased since 2003 is domestic combustion, according to the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) report

>>> RAISING AWARENESS ON WOOD-BURNING STOVES - CLEAN AIR NIGHT 2025

Educational campaigns like **Clean Air Night** (www.cleanairhub.org.uk/clean-air-night) play a key role in raising awareness about how wood-burning stoves affect health and the environment. As part of **Clean Air Night 2025** held on **Wednesday, 22 January 2025**, the air quality team hosted two interactive webinars to bust some of the common myths about the financial, health, and environmental effects of wood-burning stoves.



Attendees' responses to the question 'use three words to describe the emotions you get when looking at a lit wood burning stove'

When asked how a lit wood-burning stove makes them feel, attendees' responses matched surveys from Ireland and the UK, where it was found that, most people use them for the **aesthetics appeal** and the **cosy atmosphere**.

But looks aren't everything!

While a wood-burning stove may create a warm atmosphere, it's important to consider the **hidden health and environmental impacts**.



.....WOOD BURNING STOVES : A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR YOUR HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

3

That's why at the webinars, we shared practical tips to help reduce emissions and protect both our health and the environment.

Feedback from attendees included comments that they found the session eye-opening and that the information shared had changed their perspective on wood-burning stoves.

So, what can we all do?

People who rely on solid fuel stoves as their only source of home heating can adopt the following measures to reduce emissions:

- ✓ Check pollution levels before lighting up your wood-burning stove.
- ✓ Burn small, hot fires with good airflow.
- ✓ Use only authorised fuel—never burn waste, plastics, or treated wood.
- ✓ Ensure proper ventilation and have your stove serviced annually.
- ✓ Install a carbon monoxide monitor for safe wood burner use.
- ✓ If possible, reduce or stop using solid fuel stoves altogether.



For more information about wood-burning stoves, visit the Sandwell air quality website here:

<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/consumer-advice/air-quality/5>

>>> SANDWELL SMOKE CONTROL AREA LEAFLETS NOW AVAILABLE

Are you a resident, canal boater, or retailer in Sandwell? Do you know the rules of a Smoke Control Area? We now have information leaflets available for all. You can access and download these here: <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/download/1066/sandwell-smoke-control-area-information-leaflets>

Information for householders

Maintain your stove and flue
Solid fuel stoves and flues must be maintained. If they are not, they will pollute the air and increase the risk of fire. It is your responsibility to ensure that your stove and flue are in good working order. This includes checking for blockages, ensuring that the stove is properly sealed, and ensuring that the flue is clear of obstructions. If you are unsure, contact a qualified stove engineer.

Do you really need to burn?
If you are unsure if you need to burn, contact your local council. They can provide advice on whether you need to burn and what type of fuel you should use. If you do need to burn, make sure you are using the correct type of fuel and that you are following the manufacturer's instructions.

CLEANER AIR FOR ALL IN SANDWELL
Information for residents living in a Smoke Control Area and how to comply with the rules.
• If you are a resident, you must only burn authorised fuel.
• If you are a canal boater, you must only burn authorised fuel.
• If you are a retailer, you must only sell authorised fuel.
• If you are a resident, you must only burn fuel in a Smoke Control Area.
• If you are a canal boater, you must only burn fuel in a Smoke Control Area.
• If you are a retailer, you must only sell fuel in a Smoke Control Area.

What happens if I break the rules?
If you are found to be breaking the rules, you may be fined. If you are found to be breaking the rules, you may be fined. If you are found to be breaking the rules, you may be fined.

Information for canal boaters

Benefits of maintaining your stove and flue
Maintaining your stove and flue will help to reduce pollution and improve the efficiency of your stove. It will also help to prevent fires and other accidents. If you are unsure, contact a qualified stove engineer.

Going greener
If you are a canal boater, you can help to reduce pollution by using a wood-burning stove. Wood-burning stoves are a greener alternative to other types of heating. They produce less pollution and are more efficient.

CLEANER AIR FOR ALL ON SANDWELL'S WATERWAYS
Information for residents living in a Smoke Control Area and how to comply with the rules.
• If you are a resident, you must only burn authorised fuel.
• If you are a canal boater, you must only burn authorised fuel.
• If you are a retailer, you must only sell authorised fuel.
• If you are a resident, you must only burn fuel in a Smoke Control Area.
• If you are a canal boater, you must only burn fuel in a Smoke Control Area.
• If you are a retailer, you must only sell fuel in a Smoke Control Area.

What happens if I break the rules?
If you are found to be breaking the rules, you may be fined. If you are found to be breaking the rules, you may be fined. If you are found to be breaking the rules, you may be fined.

Information for retailers

Selling coal: The rules
If you are a retailer, you must only sell authorised fuel. This includes coal, coke, and other solid fuels. You must also ensure that you are following the manufacturer's instructions.

Trading Standards Law
If you are a retailer, you must also ensure that you are following the Trading Standards Law. This includes ensuring that you are selling goods that are of a satisfactory quality and that you are providing accurate information.

SELLING WOOD AND SOLID FUELS IN SANDWELL? DO YOU KNOW THE RULES?
If you are a retailer, you must only sell authorised fuel. This includes wood, logs, and other solid fuels. You must also ensure that you are following the manufacturer's instructions.

What happens if I break the rules?
If you are found to be breaking the rules, you may be fined. If you are found to be breaking the rules, you may be fined. If you are found to be breaking the rules, you may be fined.

AUNTIE DUCK CORNER

>>> BOOK READING SESSIONS IN SANDWELL LIBRARIES

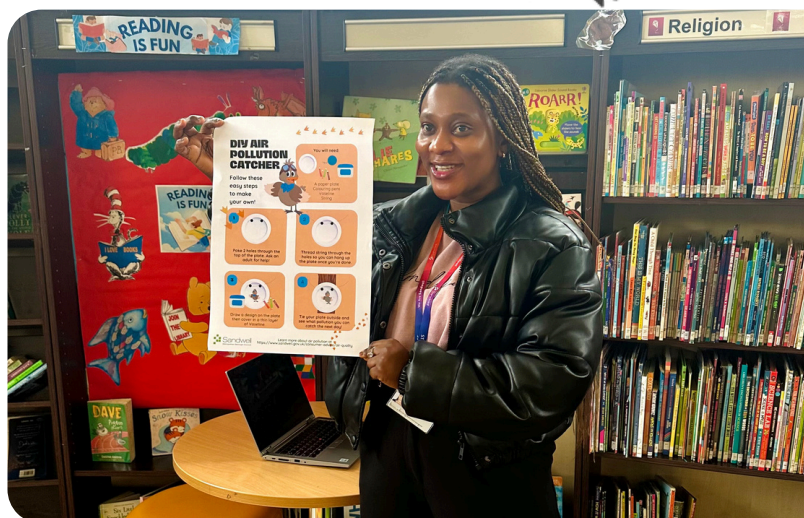
4



Over the last three months, we've hosted several book reading sessions in libraries across Sandwell. We held two sessions at Glebefields Library, attended by Year 3 students from Jubilee Park Academy on the 29th of November 2024, and Year 4 students on the 6th of December 2024.



On the 24th of February, we hosted home-schooled groups that regularly visit Cradley Heath Library.



On the 13th of February 2025, we welcomed Year 3 and Year 4 students from Bearwood Primary School to Thimblemill Library.



The sessions were both fun and educational, with the students impressing us with their brilliant contributions to the topic of air pollution.



Each student eagerly participated in building an air pollution catcher and completing a word search activity, which they found incredibly exciting.

Their feedback was overwhelmingly positive, making the experience truly rewarding for everyone involved.

Auntie Duck Says, "Teach Kids for Clean Air!"



>>> SCHOOLS THAT ARE SIGNED UP TO AUNTIE DUCK



WE WISH TO RECOGNISE THE FOLLOWING SCHOOLS:

- ALBERT PRITCHARD INFANT SCHOOL
- WOOD GREEN JUNIOR SCHOOL
- YEW TREE PRIMARY SCHOOL
- TIVIDALE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL
- OLD HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY
- CAPE PRIMARY SCHOOL
- BRANDHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL
- BRICKHOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL
- CROCKETTS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL
- FERNDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL
- HARGATE PRIMARY SCHOOL
- ROUNDS GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL
- RYDERS GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL
- ST MARTIN'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL
- ST MATTHEW'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL
- MOAT FARM JUNIOR SCHOOL

For signing up for Auntie Duck and now fostering a sense of environmental stewardship into their students

BOOK-READING SCHEDULE

14
APRIL

BLEAKHOUSE LIBRARY

🕒 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

📍 Bleakhouse Library, Oldbury



ROUNDS GREEN LIBRARY

🕒 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

📍 Rounds Green Library, Oldbury

16
APRIL

23
APRIL

BRANDHALL LIBRARY

🕒 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

📍 Brandhall Library, Oldbury

<<< COME AND HANG-OUT WITH AUNTIE DUCK!

Join us at these libraries as we explore the topic of air pollution with Auntie Duck! It promises to be fun and educational!

>>> DIVE INTO THE WORLD OF AUNTIE DUCK!

Bring Auntie Duck's adventures to life at your school, faith centre, community event, youth camp, or charity gathering! Let us host an engaging and fun-filled book reading session that's sure to captivate and inspire. Just email us at pollution_control@sandwell.gov.uk and we'll take care of the rest!

Prefer to host your own session? No problem! Reach out to the same email, and we'll gladly send you all the resources you need to make it a success. Don't miss out—let's make learning fun and impactful together!

“Knowledge is the Best Filter!” - Auntie Duck



>>> GET READY FOR Sustrans BIG WALK AND WHEEL!



Your school's best five days will determine your final position, but you can log journeys on all ten days if you wish.

Schools will be entered into a daily prize draw for rewards including equipment and accessories if over 15% of your pupils walk, use a wheelchair, scoot or cycle on that day of the challenge.

How many active journeys will your pupils make?

Register your school now for the UK's biggest walking, wheeling, scooting and cycling to school challenge: <https://bigwalkandwheel.org.uk/register>

Sustrans Big Walk and Wheel is taking place **24 March- 4 April 2025** to inspire pupils to make active journeys to school, improve air quality in their neighbourhood and discover how these changes benefit their world.

It is open to all primary and secondary schools in the UK, including SEN/ASN/ALN schools. It is free to take part and there are daily prizes to be won.

On each day of the challenge, schools compete to see who can get the highest percentage of their pupils walking, using a wheelchair, scooting or cycling to school.



>>> SCHOOL RESOURCES

Help reduce air pollution and learn about the benefits of active travel for yourself, your school, your neighbourhood, and even the world.

Free resources include:

- curriculum linked lesson plans
- school assembly presentation
- top tips
- inclusivity guide

Access free resources:

<https://bigwalkandwheel.org.uk/resources>



ACTIVE TRAVEL INITIATIVES

7

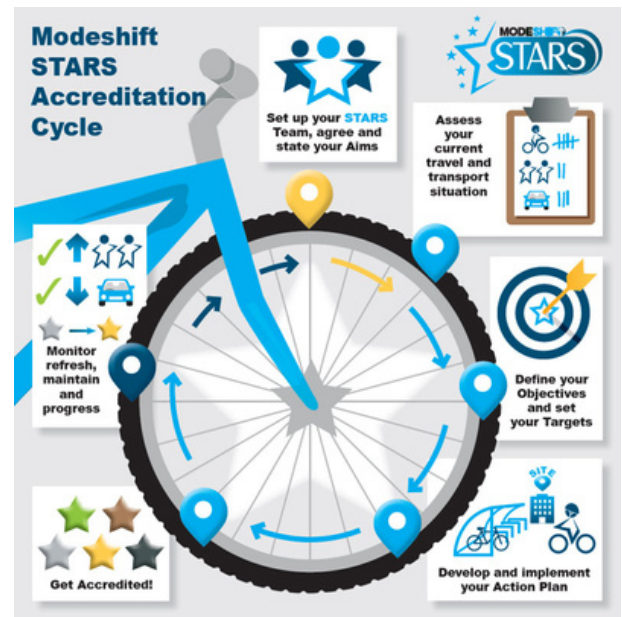
>>> HAS YOUR SCHOOL SIGNED UP FOR MODESHIFT STARS?

We are supporting schools in creating their own Travel Plans and implementing various Active Travel initiatives which encourage safer and more sustainable travel to school. Successful schools are rewarded with nationally recognised Modeshift STARS accreditation.

We're inviting more schools to sign up for Modeshift STARS. Many of the activities you're already doing could help you earn recognition and rewards towards your accreditation. For more information:

<https://modeshiftstars.org/education/>

To start your school's journey, just send an email to Suzy_Street-Hall@sandwell.gov.uk



<<< BIKEABILITY

Bikeability is being delivered FREE of charge to Sandwell Primary Schools by Bikeright. Bikeability cycle training equips children with vital life skills.

Pupils not only learn to cycle, they gain independence, social skills and a sense of wellbeing. After Bikeability, children are better at responding to risk and report increased confidence. For more information:

<https://www.bikeability.org.uk/>

To get started just send an email to Louise_Bodlovic@sandwell.gov.uk



>>> LIVING STREETS WOW!

WOW is a pupil-led initiative where children self-report how they get to school every day using the interactive WOW Travel Tracker.

If they travel sustainably (walk/wheel, cycle, or scoot) once a week for a month, they get rewarded with a badge. It's that easy! It's simple to run and children love taking part. For more information:

<https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/>

Send an email to

Suzy_Street-Hall@sandwell.gov.uk to get started.



>>> MEET OUR ACTIVE TRAVEL HERO FOR THIS MONTH

Lina is our Active Travel Hero for this month! She runs to and from work and almost anywhere she can. Check out Lina's profile to discover what motivates her to run and her tips for anyone who fancies giving it a go!





Hello, my name is

LINA

 Droitwich Spa

Age: 46

MY RUNNING SHOES



Q&A

Q: When did you start running to get around Sandwell?

A: I've been a distance runner for 20 years but only started run-commuting recently to save time and stay motivated.

Q: Where do you run to and from regularly?

A: I regularly run 2 miles to Droitwich Station, take the train to Smethwick Galton Bridge, then run 1.5 miles to the Council House in Oldbury, 2-3 days a week, fitting in club runs or extra miles as needed.

Q: How do you plan your routes?

A: I use maps, apps, and train times to plan efficient routes. Online tools help, but I also check area overviews for the best options.

Q: What gadgets do you have?

A: I have an Apple Watch, which I wear all the time. It's a lot more sophisticated than the £10 Casio watch I used when I first started running! It measures distance, pace and heart rate.

Q: What is your favourite part about running?

The beauty of running is how versatile it is. You don't need a gym or expensive equipment, and you can run as you like, at your pace. My main motivator is the Marathon but I also enjoy having time outdoors and space to think.

TOP TIPS:

- ✓ Planning is key! The night before, pack a bag with everything you need – clothes, toiletries, towel etc
- ✓ Consider your safety when planning your route, especially when it's dark or if there are busy roads to cross.
- ✓ Allow plenty of time for the active part of your journey, especially if you need to catch a train or bus. This helps you arrive at work energised rather than stressed.
- ✓ If you are new to running, build up your distance gradually before introducing it into your commute.

 Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council



Would you like to be our next Active Travel Hero, or know someone who should be? Just drop us an email at pollution_control@sandwell.gov.uk