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Kit Malthouse MP
House of Commons
London
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Your ref: G Puttock
Our ref: MC2019/05352/TV

9A March 2019

Dear Kit,

Thank you for your letter of 26 February to the Secretary of State on behalf of your constituent about wood burners. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

The increase in popularity of wood burning stoves and coal fires is having an impact on our air quality and now makes up the single largest contributor to our national emissions of particulate matter (PM) at 38%. This compares with industrial combustion (16%) and road transport (12%). The tiny particles in smoke can enter the bloodstream and attach to internal organs risking long term health issues as well as having more immediate impacts on some such as breathing problems or asthma attacks. So far, we have focused on raising consumer awareness about the impact of burning solid fuels on our health and that of our neighbours and working with industry to help reduce harmful emissions by encouraging people to shift from using wet/unseasoned wood to dry wood, which can halve emissions of soot and smoke.

Defra's Clean Air Strategy was published in January 2019. This recognises that so far, the public debate about air pollution has been focused on outdoor sources of air pollution, particularly emissions from cars and other vehicles. One aim of the Strategy is to raise awareness of the breadth of everyday activities that contribute to air pollution. Many of these activities take place in and around the home. This is important because, alongside our strong commitment to meeting our legally binding targets to reduce the amount of pollution in our atmosphere, the Government's priority is to minimise human exposure to air pollution.

We have already begun work to take these actions forward and consulted on the cleaner domestic burning of solid fuels and wood between August and October 2018. The proposals in this consultation included:

- Restrictions on the sale of wet wood for domestic burning so that it can only be purchased in volumes over a specified cut-off point.
- Applying sulphur standards and smoke emission limits to all solid fuels.
- Phasing out the sale of bituminous or traditional house coal.

We are currently analysing the consultation responses, and intend to publish our formal response to this consultation in early 2019. I hope this letter reassures your constituent that we are not considering banning domestic burning. The Government recognises that households have installed wood-burning stoves and the Government is not seeking to prevent their use or installation, however, we are keen to encourage consumers to switch to cleaner burning. This will directly benefit consumers in their homes, as well as improving the local environment.

Yours sincerely,

Thérèse

DR THERESE COFFEY MP

