

October 2021 Newsletter

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# AIR POLLUTION THEME OF THE MONTH: BONFIRES

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## What are the rules around garden bonfires?

With Bonfire Night rapidly approaching, now is the time to start considering discussing safe and healthy bonfires. The rules around garden bonfires are shrouded in confusion and urban myths such as only being able to burn after a certain time. So, what are the rules? You are not allowed to burn domestic waste, it should be recycled. However, there are no laws against bonfires in England. To both improve health and safety, and to reduce the impact on air pollution, consider attending a regulated bonfire event for Bonfire Night instead of having one in your garden.

### Garden bonfires commonly asked questions

Have you ever wondered what happens if you make a complaint to the Council about bonfires? Or what the laws around bonfires are?

**Q: What are the laws around bonfires?**

A: There are no laws banning bonfires, and the Council has no power over irregular or one-off fires. There is however, something called a "statutory nuisance", covered by the Environmental Protection Act 1990. If smoke from bonfires causes either an unreasonable or substantial interference with a person's use or enjoyment of a home or other premises or causes or is likely to cause injury to health then it can be considered a statutory nuisance.

It is illegal, however, to dispose of waste that has not come from your property, so trade or business waste cannot be burned at home.

**Q: What happens if there is considered to be a “statutory nuisance” ?**

A: If sufficient evidence is provided that a statutory nuisance is occurring, an abatement notice can be served by an enforcement officer. This requires whoever’s responsible to stop or restrict the smoke.

**Q: What type of air pollution do bonfires cause?**

A: Bonfires emit high levels of particulate matter and smoke. Burning plastics, rubber or painted material creates noxious fumes that have poisonous compounds. The smoke and particles can have a damaging effect on people’s health.

**Q: How do I report a bonfire nuisance?**

A: The first thing to do is to talk to your neighbour, as you may be able to resolve the problem first. An informal approach is usually preferable, as involving the council can sometimes damage relations with your neighbours. If the situation still is not resolved after this, you can report a bonfire on Sandwell Council’s website.

**What can you do to help stop air pollution from bonfires?**

- Educate and spread the word to friends, family and neighbours about why they are damaging to your health as well as the potential for creating a statutory nuisance
- Avoid having bonfires
- If you still plan to have a bonfire, only burn dry materials, and let your neighbours know first

## Sandwell’s Air Quality Dashboard showing real-time air pollution data around Sandwell is live!

Thanks to the hard work of Air Quality Technician Amarpal Mahal, and the Highways team, the network of air quality sensors is now linked to Sandwell’s bespoke online Air Quality Dashboard. The dashboard shows the air quality levels outside all the faith centres taking part in the project.. The dashboard can be viewed at this webpage:

<https://portal.earthsense.co.uk/SandwellPublic>. The link is also available on Sandwell’s Faith Centre Air Quality [project webpage](#).

**USE THE AIR QUALITY INDEX TO PROTECT YOURSELF**

IF YOU ARE PLANNING OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES CHECK SANDWELL’S AIR QUALITY DASHBOARD AND USE THIS AIR QUALITY INDEX TO HELP PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS FROM THE EFFECTS OF LOCAL AIR POLLUTION.

UK Air Pollution Band	Action for at-risk individuals*	Action for general population
Very Low	<b>Enjoy</b> your usual outdoor activities.	<b>Enjoy</b> your usual outdoor activities.
Relatively Low		
Moderate	Adults and children with lung problems, adults with heart problems, who experience symptoms, should <b>consider reducing</b> strenuous physical activity, especially outdoors.	<b>Enjoy</b> your usual outdoor activities.
High	Adults and children with lung problems, and adults with heart problems should <b>reduce</b> strenuous physical exertion outdoors. People with asthma may find they need to use their reliever inhaler more often. Older people should also <b>reduce</b> physical exertion.	Anyone experiencing discomfort such as sore eyes, cough or sore throat should <b>consider reducing</b> activity particularly outdoors.
Relatively High	Adults and children with lung problems, adults with heart problems, and older people, should <b>avoid</b> strenuous physical activity. People with asthma may find they need to use their reliever inhaler more often.	<b>Reduce</b> physical exertion, particularly outdoors, especially if you experience symptoms such as cough or sore throat.
Extremely High		

*\* Adults and children with heart or lung problems are at greater risk of symptoms. Follow your doctor's usual advice about exercising and managing your condition*

## Car Free Friday event at the Yemeni Community Association

The Yemeni Community Association have been encouraging their worshippers to leave their cars at home when they attend prayers, as a step to improving local air quality.

Ragih Muflihi, CEO of the Yemeni Community Association, said, "It is important to us that we were able to be a part of this programme. We know that air pollution has a negative effect on the health of our worshippers and we want to ensure they have clear information that can make a difference to them and our future generations."

Councillor Suzanne Hartwell and Councillor Ahmad Bostan visited the centre on Friday 22 October to see the "Car Free Friday" in action.



## Sandwell Breathes event to commemorate Interfaith Week and Clean Air at the Balaji Temple

The Shri Venkateswara Balaji Temple in Tividale, Oldbury are hosting Sandwell Breathes, a day event focussing on Interfaith Week and Clean Air, 10-4pm on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2021. The event is free, with a warm welcome to the temple, an opportunity to learn more about the temple and air quality, a meal, yoga session at 11:30am and a workshop and discussion at 1:30pm. There will also be activities for children, and nature walks.



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If you have any questions about the content of this newsletter, please contact a member of the Air Quality team via [pollution\\_control@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:pollution_control@sandwell.gov.uk). The content of this email is correct at time of circulation.