

September 2023 Newsletter

AIR POLLUTION THEME OF THE MONTH: WOOD BURNING & CYCLING



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MEET RAJ

Age: 35
Walking Commuter Hero
Oldbury

Q & A


Q: When did you start walking to work?
Raj: I've been walking 2.6 miles to work for 9 years! I first started after I missed the bus and just decided to walk the route instead.

Q: How do you plan your route?
Raj: At first I followed the route my bus was taking, and as my confidence grew and I spoke to colleagues about it, I found a better route to work.

Q: Why do you walk?
Raj: Its more convenient than the bus for me. I felt my stamina and fitness improve and it improved my mental health.

Raj's Top Tips

1. Start small and build- go for small walks around your local area to build stamina and slowly increase
2. Comfy shoes!!!
3. Fitbit/step counter- helps keep track of your goal and walk more
4. Listen to music or a podcast, just don't use noise cancelling headphones!



Raj: Active Travel Hero

Raj is our active travel hero this month! Raj walks across Oldbury to get to work, and sometimes walks to and from Birmingham! Check out her top tips below to learn more about how she got into walking.

Are you an air quality champion or active travel hero or want to shout out someone else who is? Just email us so we can share your story.

Curious about Cycling?

Did you know there are a wide range of community rides and lessons available across local parks in Sandwell, in partnership with British Cycling? Below are just a few of the sessions on offer:

- West Smethwick Park - Weekly led rides on Thursdays at 1pm
- Lightwoods, Bearwood - Led rides on Tuesday and Friday mornings 11-12pm
- Victoria Park, Tipton- Weekly “Gentle Pedal in the Park” session on Wednesdays at 9:30am
- Friar Park Millennium Centre, Wednesbury- Weekly led ride on Mondays at 10am, by The Leisurely Pedal, in partnership with Cycling UK

To find out more details and to join in other upcoming rides go to the - [Let's Ride - Homepage \(letsride.co.uk\)](https://letsride.co.uk).

Don't forget, you can plan your own cycling route using Sandwell's interactive cycle map! <https://sandwell.activemap.co.uk/>



Can Your Community Centre Host Cycling Lessons?

British Cycling are offering a wide range of cycling offers that could be perfect for your local community. Cycling offers include women only “Breeze Rides” for all abilities, community group rides and organised free group rides.



Cycling Joy

We believe the world would be a better place if the whole of Britain got cycling.



Breeze Rides

Women only rides – Breeze offers fun, free bike rides for women of all abilities. It doesn't matter if you're keeping fit, young at heart, wise beyond your years, or baffled by gears. Every woman is welcome on a Breeze ride.

Community Groups Rides

Get involved with British Cycling's Community Groups. Meet and ride with like-minded people, share experiences together and make lasting friendships.

Guided Rides

Organised rides. Free and friendly local rides, led by knowledgeable Ride Leaders. If you want to cycle more but are looking for adventure without the admin, Guided Rides are for you.



CONTACT US: stephenbrown@britishcycling.org.uk

Let's Ride - www.Letsride.co.uk

Air Quality in the News: Wood Burning Stoves

For the sake of public health, we must change the way we talk about burning wood

When we think of air pollution we tend to think of industrial smog and heavy traffic.

Thankfully, technological interventions and changes in manufacturing over the last few decades have reduced air pollution due to less coal and diesel burning. But why is harmful fine particulate matter pollution not decreasing as was predicted only a decade ago?

This is because in the last 10 years, air pollution from wood burning stoves has doubled. Domestic combustion – the burning of solid fuels including wood burning stoves and open fires – is now the number one source of harmful fine particulate matter in the UK, accounting for 27.5% of PM2.5.



And worryingly, sales of wood burning stoves continue to go up, having increased by almost 40% in the last year.

Research has found that most people who burn wood do so for the aesthetic purpose of creating a cosy, warm atmosphere, rather than out of necessity for

heating or cooking. And yet awareness amongst the UK population of the contribution of domestic wood burning to air pollution remains low.

Given this lack of awareness, there's massive potential to improve public health if we can communicate effectively about how woodburning contributes to air pollution.

Toxic health impacts

Wood burning affects everyone – both the health of the people who choose to burn, and people in their neighbourhoods. But not everyone is affected equally. If you live in a city, are from a minoritised ethnic community, or if you are a child, older person, or person with a health condition, you're more likely to get ill because of air pollution. Research from Asthma + Lung UK [shows that 85% of people living in areas with illegal levels of NO2 make up the poorest 20% of the UK population.](#)

Every time you smell wood burning, you're inhaling toxic air. Considering air pollution contributes up to 43,000 deaths in the UK (up to 4,000 of those in London) it's clear that reducing wood burning is an urgent public health issue. That's particularly the case in urban areas where the evidence shows that most people have other heat sources and burn for [aesthetic purposes.](#)

Read the full article by Rachel Pidgeon here: <https://airqualitynews.com/health/for-the-sake-of-public-health-we-must-change-the-way-we-talk-about-burning-wood/>

If you have any questions about any of the items featured in this or previous newsletters, or maybe you have a story you would like to share about what your centre is doing to help improve local air quality, please contact us at pollution_control@sandwell.gov.uk.