

SANDWELL AIR QUALITY

NEWSLETTER



THE HEADLINES

THE TRUE COST OF BURNING WOOD

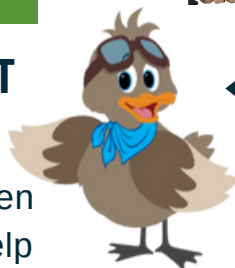


IS WOOD BURNING JUST BURNING A HOLE IN YOUR POCKET?

Learn more about the true financial costs of wood burning stoves

AUNTIE DUCK OUT AND ABOUT IN SANDWELL

Find out what Auntie Duck has been up to recently and how you can help her fly into your community



AUNTIE DUCK'S CORNER

ACTIVE TRAVEL UPDATES



Read about the A457 Cycle Lane Launch Event and find some Active Travel Tips to help you save money and keep fit this Winter

THE TRUE COST OF WOOD BURNING

>>> IS WOOD BURNING JUST BURNING A HOLE IN YOUR POCKET?

Dr. Brown and Dr. Gesche Huebner undertook research to compare the costs of using a wood burning stove with other heating options. They took into account the cost of installation and maintenance, as well as changing energy prices over 15 years. They reported four main findings from their study:

Wood burners are generally a more costly way to heat a home

A study of two typical urban households found that running an existing wood burner costs about **15% more** annually than a gas boiler. For new wood burners, the cost increases to **24% more** when used for 20% of heating needs and nearly **50% more** when used for 80%

Wood is often more expensive as a fuel than people realise

Some media claim wood burners are cheaper, but this is based on very low-cost wood estimates. Research shows wood is pricier, especially in small amounts. Only bulk online orders match low-cost claims, but they require storage space. Single bags from stores or garages can cost over four times the industry's suggested price.

One wood burner is not enough to heat a whole house

To heat a whole house with wood you would typically need two wood burners, as they are designed for a single room. A survey found that 28% of wood burner users rely on two or more. In a three-bedroom home, using two wood burners for 80% of heating costs nearly 50% more than a gas boiler, while using one as a secondary source is about 15% more expensive than using only a gas boiler.



Heat pumps are a cheaper way to heat a home than wood burners, and are also better for the environment

Heat pumps are cheaper and better for the environment than wood burners, especially in well-insulated homes. A study showed that heating with an air source heat pump is at least 6% cheaper than with wood or gas. Unlike heat pumps, burning wood produces more CO₂ than gas or oil and harms forests. Wood burners are costly and polluting, especially when there are lots in cities.

>>> JOIN US FOR CLEAN AIR NIGHT 2025!

Global Action Plan and Impact on Urban Health have launched a campaign to highlight the negative health, environmental, and financial impacts of wood burners. Evidence shows wood burning harms your wallet, your health, and the planet. Join us on January 24, 2025, for **Clean Air Night**, where we'll shed light on the uncozy truth about wood burning.

Visit the Global Action Plan website for more information:

<https://www.actionforcleanair.org.uk/campaigns/clean-air-night>





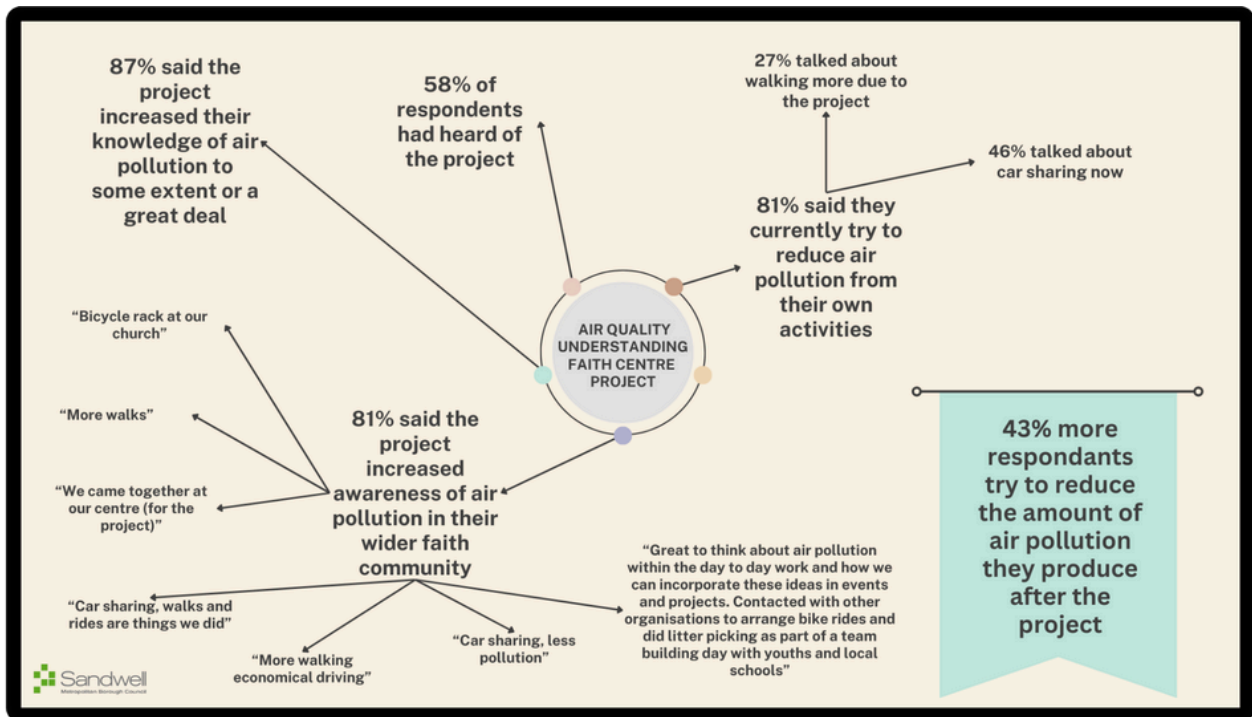
➤➤➤ END-OF-PROJECT REVIEW APPROVED BY DEFRA

In the last issue, we shared that the Faith Centre's end-of-project review had been submitted to Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). We are now pleased to announce that Defra has officially approved the review, showing strong support for the project's work and success.

If you would like to read the review, then please follow this link to access the full document:

<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/download/972/fai-th-communities-for-clean-air---project-evaluation-report>

➤➤➤ KEY HEADLINES FROM OUR FAITH CENTRES PROJECT



FURTHER WORK WITH FAITH CENTRES

We continue to work with our faith centres to raise awareness about air pollution in Sandwell. To help keep everyone informed, we are continuing to update the noticeboards in all our participating faith centres with information on air quality, climate change, and Active Travel. Auntie Duck, our children's story book and associated resources are also available (for free) to all our faith centres. The resources can be sent directly to your centre or you can ask us to visit and do a book reading in person!



AUNTIE DUCK CORNER

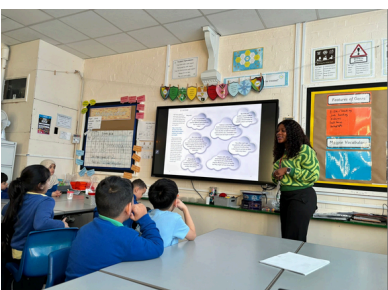
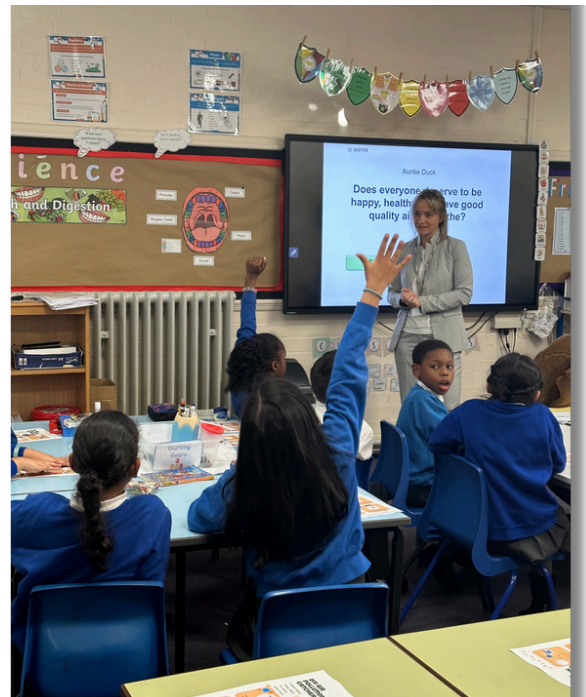
»»» AUNTIE DUCK BOOK READING AND ACTIVE TRAVEL SESSION AT TIVIDALE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL



On 26 November Tividale Primary School celebrated national 'Safeguarding Day' by having a quacking good time with Auntie Duck! Year 3 and Year 4 students enjoyed listening to the story of Auntie Duck followed by an Active Travel session. The children got the low-down air pollution and how to make healthier travel choices for them and our planet. Thanks to Auntie Duck, they discovered many of the hidden dangers of air pollution and the superpowers of walking, cycling, and scooting active travel options!

The session included a fun word search, a guide on how to make their own DIY air pollution catchers, and a lively discussion about how choosing active travel can make a real difference. All the children received Auntie Duck stickers, which they absolutely loved. They had a fantastic time, actively participating and sharing ideas on how they and their families could take small steps to reduce local air pollution.

The day was a great success, with students not only enjoying the activities but also gaining valuable insights into safeguarding their health and the environment. Many left feeling inspired to adopt more eco-friendly habits and share with others what they learned.



AUNTIE DUCK CORNER

BOOK READING SESSION AT OLDBURY LIBRARY AND MORE SESSIONS PLANNED

During the Ask About Asthma Week in September, we had a lovely book reading session at Oldbury Library. Whilst Tina read the story, the book was also shown on a large TV screen and this was followed by a quiz and other fun activities, including learning how to make an air pollution catcher! Additional sessions are lined up at more libraries across Sandwell, and more are planned for the Winter Festival, with sessions also being made available for home-schooled groups.



AUNTIE DUCK IN SANDWELL LIBRARIES

The story of Auntie Duck has now been added to all twenty Sandwell libraries, so it can be borrowed like any other book for reading at home. Visit any library in Sandwell, and unless she's been borrowed already, you'll find Auntie Duck waiting for you!

AUNTIE DUCK BOOK READING AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR ALL

Would you like us to host an Auntie Duck book reading session at your school, faith centre, community event, youth camp, or charity event? Just reach out to us at pollution_control@sandwell.gov.uk, and we'll be happy to arrange it.

Alternatively, if you'd prefer us to send the resources for your own use, simply drop us an email at the address above and we'd be more than happy to send them across to you.



➤➤➤ A457 CYCLE LANE LAUNCH EVENT

Following the completion of the new A457 cycle route in Smethwick, Sandwell Council partnered with British Cycling and Sustrans to offer a free guided ride to showcase the new cycle path. A bunch of enthusiastic cyclists enjoyed a 40-minute ride along the route on Friday, 27 September.

Led by British Cycling, who hold led rides to help people build confidence and improve their cycling skills, the 5-mile round trip started at Galton Bridge Rail Station in Smethwick. During the afternoon 33 people also enjoyed free bike repairs, security advice, free locks and lights, and 14 cyclists joined the guided ride. It was lovely to see so many local residents came out to show their support along the way.



➤➤➤ BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE PROJECTS AND EVENTS

Sandwell MBC is dedicated to promoting active travel including the provision of advice and information on our cycling infrastructure through walking and cycling maps.

We also want to highlight the additional benefits of walking and cycling, such as improved health and environmental impact, while addressing challenges to enable accessibility for everyone. We aim to change perceptions and encourage a positive view of active travel options.



TRAVELWISE WEEK

The 16th – 22nd September saw many schools take part in TravelWise Week, making use of fun and educational resources such as ‘The TravelWise Train’ to help children be more mindful of their surroundings on their journey to and from school.



MEET OUR ACTIVE TRAVEL HERO OF THE MONTH

Claire is our Active Travel Hero for this month! She cycles almost everywhere: including making her work site visits, shopping, taking the children to clubs, family days out and visiting friends and family. Check out Claire’s profile to discover how she got into cycling and what it’s been like commuting by bike!

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!

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Q&A

Hello, my name is
CLAIRE

Birmingham

Age: 41

MY BIKE



TOP TIPS:

- ✓ Do Bikeability level 2 and 3 courses –these gave me the confidence to cycle on the road.
- ✓ Invest in puncture proof tyres if you can – I haven't had to change a tyre in many years!
- ✓ Cycle in your normal clothes – I just cycle a bit slower so I don't get sweaty, it's not a race!
- ✓ See if your workplace has a Cycle to Work scheme, this can save you a lot of money when buying a new bike.

Q: When did you start cycling to get around Sandwell?
A: When I started working for Sandwell Council in January this year.

Q: Where do you cycle to and from regularly?
A: We replaced our car with a cargo bike a few years ago so I cycle for most of my journeys.

Q: How do you plan your bike routes?
A: I use Google Maps, especially Street View, to choose quieter roads and roads with cycle lanes. Cycle Streets is also sometimes helpful.

Q: What bike do you have?
A: I have an electric cargo bike. I also have a Liv hybrid bike especially designed for women which I find very light and comfortable.

Q: What is your favourite part about cycling?
A: I love being able to get my exercise in without trying! I find cycling is often quicker than driving at busy times as you can speed past the traffic and park your bike right next to your destination, for free. Also, you often get to take a more scenic route when you cycle. Finally, it's really important to me to reduce my carbon footprint and help make our streets safer by cycling.



>>> MODESHIFT STARS

Modeshift STARS is a national awards scheme that rewards schools for supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable and active travel. We are supporting schools with their Travel Plans and to implement various Active Travel/AQ Initiatives e.g Living Streets WOW Walk to school programme, Bikeability training, and Park and stride schemes to reward schools for their efforts towards safer and more sustainable travel in order to gain their Modeshift accreditation.



>>> MODESHIFT STARS ACCREDITATION SUCCESS!

Congratulations to **Yew Tree Primary School**, **Albert Pritchard Infant School** and **Wood Green Junior School** for attaining their **Modeshift STARS Green Approved Travel Plan Accreditation!**



>>> ENCOURAGE YOUR SCHOOL TO JOIN MODESHIFT STARS!

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!

To get started, just send an email to Suzy_Street-Hall@sandwell.gov.uk. Don't miss this opportunity to make a positive impact and celebrate your school's achievements!

WARM UP THIS WINTER: WALK FOR HEALTH AND CLEANER AIR

Breathe Easy and Keep Warm This Winter!

Stay active for your health and help us keep our air cleaner. Just one brisk walk a week—to work, school, or the shops—can make a difference!

Stay Warm, Help the Air!

Walking warms you up naturally and by not using your car, you are also not contributing to local air pollution. Bundle up, skip the car, and enjoy the fresh air.

Stay Fit, Cut Emissions!

Keep active without adding to winter air pollution. Each walk keeps you in shape and reduces your carbon footprint..

Boost Energy, Breathe Easier!

Walking outdoors boosts energy and mood while contributing to cleaner, healthier air for all..



➤➤➤ STEP INTO WINTER WITH SANDWELL STRIDE



Don't let the cold keep you indoors this winter! **Sandwell Stride**, led by Sandwell Council's Public Health Development team, offers you a great way to stay active, meet people and be eco-friendly during the colder months. With free friendly walks that happen every week, all year round, through Sandwell's beautiful parks, green spaces and along canal paths you will have a great time. Whether you're looking for a brisk warm-up or just want to soak in the winter scenery, there's no better way to enjoy the season. Just bundle up and join us — no booking required! For details on all the walks, check out [Ramblers Wellbeing Walks Sandwell](#).

This winter, let's walk together for warmth, fitness, stay local and reduce your air pollution footprint.