

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
16 DECEMBER 2021
APPENDIX I

Question from Councillor Moffat

To the Executive Member for Sustainable Development

What action does Scottish Borders Council intend to take to reduce any pollution caused by log burners which have been identified as a significant source of pollution and a serious health hazard?

Reply from Councillor Aitchison

The Clean Air Act regulates emissions from commercial and residential premises in Smoke Control Areas. Many parts of the Scottish Borders are covered by Smoke Control Areas where you can't emit smoke from a chimney unless you're burning an authorised fuel or using exempt appliances (e.g. burners or stoves). A fine of up to £1000 can be issued if you are found to have broken this ruling. Scottish Borders Council's Environmental Health Team investigate all complaints of smoke nuisance, irrespective of whether the premises is in the aforementioned smoke control areas and offer advice to residents in respect of the law and good practice.

Additional Response

Councillor Moffat himself recognises that in rural areas in particular we have seen recently the benefits of these devices for heat, cooking and have arguably, in some areas, saved illness or worse during the prolonged electricity failures. This has also saved emergency services time. Many communities have no alternative to electricity and, until such time as there are alternatives must rely on such sources. Wood burning is not illegal although I have reservations around biomass as an alternative. Investment for such progress is required from both governments to allow these changes. I would also point out that we are working towards a "just" transition, which means the rural areas should not be adversely affected by changes to the law or availability of means of power. I have looked into the particular particle PM 2.5 referred to in correspondence. The 2.5 refers to the size of the particle in microns, which is small enough, if inhaled, to bypass human defences. Whilst studies show in Asia unfortunately this is a significant problem, in Europe levels have been falling in recent years due to various "clean air" measures and changes in old habits like e.g. the burning of heather in rural areas. In the UK, pollutant levels are monitored by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. (DEFRA)