



Asthma + Lung UK Scotland

Asthma + Lung UK Scotland is the nation's leading lung health charity, representing the 1 in 5 people diagnosed with a lung condition. We campaign to prevent new lung conditions and support those living with conditions to get better diagnosis, care and treatment.

It is estimated that around 2,500 people die each year from air pollution. That is part of the reason why one of our main priority areas for prevention is air pollution. We are grateful for the opportunity to respond to the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee's call for written views on Cleaner Air for Scotland 2 (CAFS2) and other policy areas covering air quality in Scotland.

Cleaner Air for Scotland 2

It should be noted that Asthma + Lung UK Scotland is a member of the CAFS2 Ministerial Group, the Delivery Group, the Public Engagement Working Group and the Health Working Group. Our Policy and Public Affairs Officer chairs the Health Working Group.

When CAFS2 was published, we cautiously welcomed the plan as we believed that the health section could have proposed stronger actions, such as health alerts for the most vulnerable and those working in primary care.

There is no safe level on air pollution. Particulate matter (PM) and nitrogen dioxide are particularly damaging. When people are exposed to high pollution levels, for example on a busy road or during a high pollution episode, they breathe in these toxic materials to their lungs. Many people initially experience immediate symptoms such as irritated airways, feeling out of breath and coughing. People with a lung condition suffer further with high levels of air pollution, which can dangerously exacerbate symptoms, leading to an asthma attack or a COPD flare-up.

Alongside road traffic, wood and coal burning is a major source of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) pollution, the most worrying form of pollution to human health. CAFS2 sets out several actions on domestic burning but it lacks effective timescales.

Domestic burning has become a growing problem as result of the cost of living crisis and any action promised at the date of publication appears to be limited, most likely because of the cost of living crisis. There is evidence that for many people, the primary reason for domestic wood burning is predominantly aesthetic reasons, rather than as a primary source of heating¹. This impacts on local communities making domestic burning a social justice issue. Just as with transport emissions, those most at risk from air pollution from wood burners are less likely to be the cause of such air pollution.

As members of the various groups overseeing implementation of CAFS2, we believe that there has been limited progress and funding to date and we would like to see more drive from Scottish Government Ministers to deliver on the aims of CAFS2. Scotland can be a leader in air pollution reduction, and we do not want to see this chance being missed for the benefit of the 1 in 5 people living with a lung condition and those at risk of developing lung conditions because of air pollution.

Ultimately, the biggest driver in reducing air pollution and emissions comes from behaviour change. The Scottish Government must improve its messaging around air quality and environmental issues

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[Wood burning air pollution in UK has doubled in a decade | Air pollution | The Guardian](#)

with investment in public messaging campaigns to support the modal shift needed towards cleaner and active transport and reducing dependency on health and climate harming energy sources. We are concerned about the rise in misinformation and rhetoric that causes unnecessary fear and alarm on the purpose of schemes like the Low Emission Zones.

Low Emission Zones (LEZs)

Asthma + Lung UK Scotland has long supported Low Emission Zones and we welcome the opportunity to raise our support and our concerns with the Committee.

Low Emission Zones are a crucial tool in reducing air pollution in our city centres, but they are not the silver bullet and must be accompanied by a suite of strategies that reduce poor air quality across Scotland. We therefore repeat our calls for LEZs to be implemented in other cities and large towns in Scotland.

There are improvements already being witnessed in Glasgow with reductions in air pollution greater than Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee being reported by Friends of the Earth Scotland.² With the exception of 2020 when the pandemic first resulted in lockdowns, last year was the first that Scotland did not breach legal air quality limits.

When consulted in 2021 we strongly encouraged councils responsible for the LEZs in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee to have the shortest grace period possible. It is regretful that only Glasgow will begin enforcement of Low Emissions Zones this year, with the three other cities taking the longest possible period before enforcement.

In the consultation, we also stressed the importance of expanding boundaries of the new Low Emission Zones, and we would like to hear from the Scottish Government and councils what plans they have to assess the existing boundaries and what other areas within each city could benefit from a Low Emission Zones or similar schemes to reduce poor air quality.

Asthma + Lung UK Scotland has used polling through Opinion Matters to track public support for Low Emission Zones and we consistently find majority support for LEZs, especially in places where they are implemented. Polling between 2020 and 2023 shows support for LEZ's at 55%, with 24% undecided.

Currently, our biggest concern with LEZs is that non-compliant buses may be taken out of city centres and moved into more suburban or rural areas. This has been raised with us by supporters of Asthma + Lung UK Scotland and Members of the Scottish Parliament from all parties and representing many parts of Scotland. We would like to hear from the Scottish Government what discussions they have held with bus operators on this issue and what plans they have to prevent shifting air pollution from city centres to other areas.

² [Scotland meets air pollution limits thanks to clean air zones - Friends of the Earth Scotland \(foe.scot\)](https://www.foe.scot/news/scotland-meets-air-pollution-limits-thanks-to-clean-air-zones)