

Frequently Asked Questions - Smoke Control Areas

Q: Why are Wirral council creating this Smoke Control Area?

A. Most of Wirral is already covered by Smoke Control Areas (SCA) but these were made a long time ago and in a fragmented and piecemeal fashion. Therefore, by introducing this new **SCA** there will be no changes in the rules for the vast majority of residents of Wirral. Creating this new SCO will make it easier for the Council to administer and enforce the rules in the smoke control area. It will also provide clarity for residents and businesses in the city.

Q. What are the rules in a Smoke Control Area?

A. You cannot emit smoke from a chimney unless you're burning an authorised fuel or using 'exempt appliances', for example specific burners or stoves. You must not buy an unauthorised fuel for use in a smoke control area, unless it is to be used in an exempt appliance. You can be fined up to £1,000 if you break the rules. You can visit the Government Website Smoke Control Area Rules for more information.

Q. What are authorised fuels?

A. Authorised fuels are fuels which are authorised by Statutory Instruments (Regulations) made under the Clean Air Act 1993. These include inherently smokeless fuels such as anthracite, semi-anthracite, gas, low volatile steam coal and specific brands of manufactured solid smokeless fuels. These fuels have passed tests to confirm that they can burn in an open fireplace without producing smoke. A list of fuels which are authorised for use in Smoke Control Areas is available from Defra - Authorised Fuels

Q. Where can I buy authorised fuel from?

A. New legislation called the Air Quality (Domestic Solid Fuels Standards) (England) Regulations 2020 came into effect on 1 May 2021, which means that the sale of wood for domestic combustion in England must have the "Ready to Burn" logo. This is the responsibility of the supplier, although there are a few exceptions. Authorised smokeless fuels are sold by some hardware shops, petrol filling stations and DIY stores and are clearly labelled 'ready to burn'.

Q. What can I burn in an open fire place?

A. You must not burn any wood on an open fire, although a small amount of kindling or timber wood can be used to light the fire. You can only burn fuel on the list of authorised fuels.

Q. Can I still use a barbecue, chimenea, fireplace or pizza oven with a Smoke Control Area?

A. Yes. You can use outdoor barbecues, chimeneas, fireplaces or pizza ovens within a Smoke Control Area, however if any of these appliances release smoke through a chimney of a building (i.e. a summerhouse) they can only burn authorised fuel or must be exempt appliances.

Q. Can I still use my non-exempt appliance?

A. Yes, but only with authorised fuels. The list of authorised fuels is available on Defra's website, and have the "Ready to Burn" logo shown here.

Q. Are you banning all wood and coal burning stoves?

A. No. You can use your existing stove with the authorised fuel, or if you wish to purchase a new stove, choose an exempt appliance.

Q. Does a Smoke Control Area apply to garden bonfires?

A. No. You are allowed garden bonfires in Smoke Control Areas, however you must follow the Government's rules on bonfires. We do discourage people from having garden bonfires which can cause serious nuisance to neighbouring properties.

Q. What are the health impacts of wood/coal burning stoves and open fireplaces?

A. In the UK, the single biggest source of particulate matter air pollution (PM2.5) is from domestic burning. We spend over 90% of our time indoors, and having a wood burning stove lit has a negative impact on indoor air quality. This makes it a significant risk to public health. Everyone is at risk from indoor air pollution, but you are more vulnerable if you have COPD, asthma or other lung conditions or are elderly or a child. Particulate matter air pollution can cause coughs, dizziness, inflamed airways and shortness of breath. It increases the risk of pneumonia, COPD and lung cancer, as well as heart disease and stroke, leading to early death. It can also impact pregnancy and the development of children's lungs.

Q. I have or want to use a wood burning stove, how do I minimise indoor air pollution from it?

A. • Choose an energy efficient stove which is 'Ecodesign Compliant' more information about these types of stoves can be found at www.hetas.co.uk. These are energy efficient appliances that have been independently verified by HETAS, to help lower UK emissions and improve air quality.

- Use fuel labelled Ready to Burn for both wood and manufactured solid fuels.
- Ensure that you have it serviced and swept regularly– 40% of chimney fires take place between January and March
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for refuelling

Q. I make/import/distribute appliances that burn unauthorised fuels in the Smoke Control Area. What do I have to do?

A. You must apply for an exemption if you make, import or distribute appliances that will be used to burn unauthorised fuel in smoke control areas. An "appliance exemption" shows that fuel-burning appliances- for example stoves, ovens, boilers etc- emit smoke below the acceptable limits. You do not need an exemption if the appliances are used with authorised fuels.

Q. Will using authorised fuels cost me more money?

A. Authorised solid fuels are designed to be more efficient at burning so are cheaper than using coal. However, if you are concerned about the cost of heating your home as you are on a low income there is help and advice available. Under the government's 'Affordable Warmth' scheme you may be able to get financial help for energy-saving home improvements. For example, you live in social housing and your home has an energy efficiency rating of E, F or G, you may also be able to get help with insulation or installing a heating system for the first time. If you're not sure what efficiency rating your home has, check its energy performance certificate. Alternatively, ask your landlord or housing association. For more information on these schemes, and full eligibility criteria, go to the website Simple Energy Advice UK or Tel: 0800 444202 It's also worth checking if you qualify for the government's Warm Home Discount, a £140 annual credit paid to your energy account. Find out if you're eligible at the website Warm Home Discount Scheme.

Q. I use or want to use a wood burner/biomass boiler in my business, is that allowed in a Smoke Control Area?

A. All commercial biomass boilers that burn wood and coal in a Smoke Control Area need to be Defra 'exempt appliances'. A list of exempt appliances is listed on the Website: Defra Exempt Appliances. All commercial biomass boiler manufacturers are required to meet Defra exemption requirements under the Clean Air Act 1993, more information on specific requirements is provided at environmental.protection.org.uk.

Q. I want to set up a restaurant with a log burning oven, can I do this?

A. If you wish to install a log burning pizza oven in your food business, then there are some solid fuel pizza ovens included in the list of exempted appliances that you may use. As well as authorised fuels the list of exempted appliances can be found on the government website:

<https://smokecontrol.defra.gov.uk/appliances.php>. Please remember that any appliance giving off cooking fumes must be properly ventilated to outside air. This will require adequate ventilation which doesn't cause a nuisance to neighbours and filtered mechanical extract ventilation with an outlet at high level.