

21st February 2020

Government's plan to ban the sale of housecoal is disproportionate and will have unintended consequences

Nigel Yaxley, Managing Director, CoalImp, says:

"Households that rely on domestic coal could see at least a 30 per cent increase in their annual fuel bill if they have to switch to manufactured smokeless fuels. Given large numbers of these households are already below the poverty line, a ban on the sale of domestic coal could see thousands pushed into a position of fuel poverty. The elderly would be amongst the hardest hit by a ban, as 37 per cent of the customers served by coal merchants are 65 and over, more than double the figure for the UK population as a whole.

"If, as CoalImp believes is more likely, some households switch to burning wet wood, pollution will increase dramatically. Evidence shows that all forms of wood emit more pollution than coal per unit of heat when burnt on an open fire. Even kiln dried wood, falsely described by Government as cleaner, is 25% more polluting in terms of PM_{2.5} particles. Although Government plans to ban some sales of bagged wet wood, it will still be readily available in rural areas where coal is mainly burnt.

"The housecoal ban is clearly disproportionate because a recent report published by Defra confirms that wood is the main problem – causing around 40% of national PM_{2.5} emissions compared to coal at less than 2%."

In a further unintended consequence, this ban may force the closure of heritage railways. Yaxley adds: "British built steam trains were designed to run on British coal. This draconian ban on house coal will cause UK producers to cease production of this high quality coal, and our steam locomotives may no longer be able to source the bituminous lump coal they need from foreign suppliers – or at least not at a price they can afford. This would lead to the demise of these much loved visitor attractions"

Ends

For Additional Information

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Notes for Editors

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