Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Inquiry into air quality in Scotland

Written submission from Brian Griffiths

I am a newly retired person who holds engineering qualifications in Renewable Energy Systems that includes a basic understanding of climate change and the environment.

Until recently, I ran a part-time cottage micro-generation business that involved me in a wide variety of activities, ranging from mentoring wind turbine installers to mitigating heat loss from community buildings. This year I wrote a feasibility study on a proposed low-emissions car club for a Fife-based business group.

I actively avoid using the car and tend to walk to all destinations under 3 miles away. As a minimum, I take a daily walk from my home in Crossgates (Fife) to Hill of Beath or Crossgates to Halbeath Leisure Park. I am an asthmatic which is believed to have been caused by my contracting pneumonia as an infant followed by my narrowly avoiding death in a tenement blaze at the age of three.

I have read the minutes of the last meeting of your Group with some interest and it seems that members have covered most areas of the subject in considerable detail. However, there are two factors that I would like to add as a lay person and an asthmatic which I feel gives me a practical insight to the points I now raise:

1) The topic of domestic wood burning (stoves and biomass boilers) was raised and it appears that there is no monitoring of the effect of these on air quality, even though many expert commentators have suggested they are far from green and are contributing to air pollution by a considerable margin. In fact, I recently read that the BMJ have commented that a single log-burning stove produces more PM 2.5 particles than 1000 petrol cars: http://www.bmj.com/content/350/bmj.h2757/rr-1 This falls in with my own subjective observations as I am regularly affected by wood smoke from bonfires when taking my daily walk and this causes me to choke from a considerable distance away. As such, the Scottish Government needs to properly monitor emissions from domestic wood burning and consider banning it from all population centres.

2) My second concern is with traffic calming areas in towns which I feel totally disrupt the traffic flow and results in internal combustion engines, which are often still on their inefficient warm-up cycle, producing far more pollution than cars travelling at a steady 20 mph in third gear on the same road without the obstructions. May I strongly recommend that the Scottish Government arranges for an air quality monitor to be placed between the traffic calming points at Glover Street, Perth for a period of time then remove the islands to allow normal traffic flow at a strictly enforced 20 mph and compare the results which would confirm my assertions or otherwise.
Brian Griffiths,
MCIBS Chartered Banker (retired) PDA Renewable Energy Systems