

British Candlemakers Federation Comment on the UK Government Clean Air Strategy 2019

The government has just released the 'Clean Air Strategy 2019'. This strategy sets out (www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-air-strategy-2019) how the government intends to tackle all sources of air pollution. This covers the plans to reduce emissions from all the major sources such as transport, industry and farming. Also included is a chapter on how to improve air quality in the home.

The whole strategy is a 100 page document and candles are mentioned once, briefly. Rather predictably, media attention has focused disproportionately on candles. This is because candles make a 'good' media story. Obviously, the emissions from candles is miniscule in proportion to that from other sources.

On the day of the launch, the co-leader of the Green Party, Jonathan Bartley, was interviewed on talkRadio (<https://tinyurl.com/yabdq47q>). He accused Michael Gove's Clean Air Strategy of avoiding the major causes of air pollution, by focusing on scented candles and wood-burning stoves. "We know it's emissions from transport. This is the problem with Gove's report, it really ducks the issue. It sounds like a good game then you delve into the detail and find things like scented candles". Mr Bartley claimed the strategy has ignored how transport impacts on air quality. "Forty thousand premature deaths are linked every year to air pollution. It's an invisible killer, it is serious. We can't go after scented candles."

Within homes, most emissions will come from sources such as cooking, cleaning products and building materials. Another major source will be the burning of wood and coal for heating. Used sensibly, scientific studies have shown that candles are safe for home use. The levels of emissions from candles are well within World Health Organisation guidelines. The British Lung Foundation is of course very concerned with the level of pollutants and gives advice on how to reduce them. But even they concede that candles are unlikely to pose much of a health risk.

Candle organisations within Europe have been working hard to promote candle safety. There are three European standards concerned solely with emissions from candles. It has been found that emissions from well-made candles are low and are within safety guidelines. Candle emissions are small compared to other sources within homes.

