



Members of the Public's Questions to Environment Committee

Question from Anthony Baker

When ever the weather is dry I find people are lighting bonfires that are terribly smoky and pollute the atmosphere to the extent that it sometimes difficult to avoid. I live in Lower Randwick (top of Cashes Green). From my garden I can see parts of Rodborough, Selsley, and Ruscombe and there is nearly always a bonfire somewhere, its so unnecessary I have a garden bin collected fortnightly and a compost bin in the garden anything else I take to the local tip (which is rare) when we talk about global warming and polluting the atmosphere I believe we should start at home first and consider our neighbours. Garden waste which is often wet leaves/grass etc causes the most smoke and when we all like to dry our washing on the line instead of using the tumble drier its only fair that ban such bonfires should be considered. Many people and children have health conditions which are affected by this type of pollution.

1. Could the Environment Committee please consider a ban on domestic bonfires

Reply

The Committee acknowledges Mr Baker's question and thanks the Environmental Protection Manager for his specialist advice which informs our considered response.

The current legislative landscape is robust and allows a proportionate response to the issue of smoke from bonfires. This view is shared across the country and we are not aware of any authorities that have sought to ban bonfires, other than on designated, discrete public areas to reduce the risk of moorland or woodland fires. In addition, there would be considerable difficulties in enforcement of a ban and potential resource implications, given that officers cannot currently provide 24-hour cover. Additionally, defining bonfires would be difficult, given the prevalence of fire pits, chimineas , metal incinerator bins, barbecues, etc.

Rather than a ban on bonfires, a better approach is to educate and encourage people to change their behaviour, in line with our 2030 vision, and use alternative disposal methods, for example via recycling centres, green waste collection services and composting, reducing potential nuisance and air pollution. The council is proactive in encouraging people to give up bonfires and there is extensive detail on the SDC website that Parish Councils could also adopt and promote, including information on how to report pollution from a bonfire.

The council is also proactive in dealing with smoke nuisance. Those who create unreasonable disturbance by having frequent or particularly smoky fires will be subject to enforcement action.

Question from Alick Miskin

Potential cyclists see roads as too dangerous to cycle on, given traffic speed and volume. Latest survey data shows half of UK residents won't return to public transport and car journeys are now up on pre-Covid levels. Stroud's separated bike paths are all based on old railway tracks or the towpath and none go where commuting cyclists now need them - to secondary schools, rail stations, workplaces or supermarkets. It's impossible to commute safely from Stroud to Gloucester, Cheltenham, Cam/Dursley, Bussage or Chalford and even Nailsworth requires flights of steps, precipitous inclines and 'cyclists dismount' signs. And with ever more 'road-locked' houses (e.g. 111 on the Daniels site, 55 off Dudbridge Hill) traffic pollution and carbon output will climb further. Light segregation (as proposed for Cainscross Road) is dangerous and doesn't comply with LTN1/20. It's a mess.

1. With electric bikes now flattening our hills, why can't SDC adopt a really bold approach to properly separated cycle infrastructure? And at least address some easy wins like signage and connectivity to encourage leisure cycling (try using NCR45 from Cherington to Stonehouse and on to Gloucester)?

Reply

Stroud District Council recognises the importance of cycling and walking throughout the district and the role it will have to play in the Council's aim to become carbon neutral by 2030. We are committed to working with Gloucestershire County Council to provide a coherent and safe cycling and walking network within the district and support the recently adopted Gloucestershire Local Transport Plans goal to deliver more sustainable transport options. Further to this, we believe that the emerging Stroud Local Cycling and Walking Plan (LCWIP) and further LCWIPS for other parts of the district, which are being discussed on the agenda today, will provide a focus for future investment, and present a deliverable solution to walking and cycling in the district.

Funding will always be the main challenge in providing a cycling and walking network, and although the District Council has committed a further £200k to our cycling and walking budget, on top of the £300k which has been allocated over the past 3 years, it is recognised that there is only so much that can be achieved with this amount. The programme of LCWIPs embarked on by the County Council will provide a solid investment programme going forward, enabling us to tap into wider sources of investment which should help to deliver significant improvements to the network over the next few years.

Whilst segregated solutions will always be preferred, the feasibility of such solutions will always have to be weighed up against a number of factors such as cost, potential number of users, other road users and physical constraints. As highlighted by the question, this may result in the simple solution of improved signage which we will work with the County Council to deliver.