



NEIL PARISH

Member of Parliament for Tiverton & Honiton

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The report on "Improving air quality" from 4 Select Committees of the House of Commons was published on 15 Marchⁱ. Both this report and earlier reports express some frustration that the speed of the roll-out to full electrification of road transport is too slow. The report also articulates the link between CO₂ and NO_x/particulate matter reduction in pursuit of air quality improvements. Specifically it recommends that policies to achieve CO₂ reductions be combined with air quality targets (see recommendation 25).

We need to take a candid look at what measures might be taken in the time period between now and full electrification to ensure that road transport can make an immediate contribution to improving air quality as well as reducing CO₂ emissions. To some degree motorists are taking decisions into their own hands. The combination of the diesel emissions scandals, persistent air pollution and concerns about electric vehicle cost and charging infrastructure has pushed a growing number to switch to petrol vehiclesⁱⁱ. From a NO_x perspective this is a welcome development as petrol cars emit 10 times less NO_x than diesel cars. However, the carbon emissions from petrol are higher than from diesel and as a consequence carbon emissions from road transport are risingⁱⁱⁱ. As the transition to ULEVs accelerates, as well as improving air quality, the Government has a duty to keep carbon emissions under control if we are to have a hope of reaching our own Carbon Budgets.

Controlling carbon emissions in conventional petrol vehicles has to be as much about the fuel as tailpipe emissions and driving behaviour. Blending more lower carbon renewable fuel into petrol is a sensible measure from a CO₂ emissions reduction perspective. The current blend of renewable bioethanol in petrol is 5%. Increasing this level to 10% would not only reduce CO₂ emissions (by 1.3 million tonnes, the equivalent of taking a further 700,000 cars off the road) but would also improve air quality by reducing particulate matter and carcinogens which negatively affect human health^{iv}.

The petrol fuel specification was amended in 2013 to allow for 10% bioethanol in petrol (known as E10) so this is not a barrier to its introduction. In March Parliament also approved the amended RTFO and Greenhouse Gas Reporting Regulations (published on 13 March) so fuel suppliers have an increasing renewable fuel target to reach. The only remaining barrier to the increased blending of



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bioethanol seems to be the will of the fuel suppliers and/or the Government to ensure that this happens. We understand that fuel suppliers may now be considering using imported crop-based biodiesel, which the Government has gone to great lengths to discourage, or even buying out of their obligation rather than supplying E10.

It seems to us that the considerations of human health, air quality improvements and carbon reductions should override the necessarily narrow commercial considerations of the fuel suppliers. Additionally we currently have a domestic bioethanol industry which has the capacity to produce over 50% of the UK's E10 requirement, but this industry is in very poor shape because Government has taken so long to give any clarity to UK renewable fuel policy.

We would strongly urge the Government to put its full support behind the introduction of E10. Ideally this should come in the form of a mandate on fuel suppliers. We understand that there will shortly be a Consultation paper going out on aspects of fuel labelling which will include references to E10. This would therefore be the logical time and opportunity to propose to mandate E10.

We believe that the Government cannot afford to ignore the introduction of E10 which will have so many environmental, health and economic benefits. This would be a contribution to linking up carbon reduction and air quality targets as recommended by the Select Committees and it would also demonstrate the Government's determination to get to grips with both problems in the immediate term.

We would be grateful if we could collectively meet with yourself and your officials to discuss this issue as a matter of urgency.

Neil Parish MP

Nick Dakin MP

Cc: Rt Hon, Chris Grayling MP, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Therese Coffey MP



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Signatories

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Lord Haskins

ⁱ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvfru/433/433.pdf>

ⁱⁱ According to the SMMT, over the last 2 years (April 2016 to April 20 18) the share of petrol cars as a percentage of new car sales has increased from 47% to 60% - <https://www.smmt.co.uk/vehicle-data/car-registrations/>

ⁱⁱⁱ SMMT data shows that tailpipe emissions rose 0.8% in 2017 due to the increase in petrol vehicle sales - <https://www.smmt.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/SMMT-CO2-report-2018-2-page-summary-FINAL.pdf>

^{iv} <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-017-00041-5> (Brazil), <http://www.eesi.org/articles/view/ethanol-reduces-a-variety-of-harmful-emissions-new-study-finds> (Switzerland) and <https://www3.epa.gov/ttnchie1/conference/ei13/modeling/boulton.pdf> (Canada)