



Rt Hon Malcolm Wicks MP
House of Commons
Westminster
London

OPEN LETTER

28th February 2006

Dear Mr. Wicks,

Global warming is a real and present danger. Leading scientists agree that the increase in world temperature is caused by the burning of fossil fuels, and that this is leading to climate change on an unprecedented scale.

The future is not encouraging. Recently, James Lovelock suggested that we were already 'past the point of no return.' It is difficult to know if this is true. But as feedback mechanisms start to accelerate the warming process, the true scale of our challenge and predicament will become clear.

No individual alone can be expected to resolve this situation. Society as a whole needs to change. We need to focus on sustainability and energy efficiency, while significantly reducing our dependency on coal, oil and gas. This clearly places a huge responsibility on governments the world over to bring about permanent changes in the way people live their lives.

We therefore welcome your latest proposal to increase the tax burden for 4x4 vehicle owners. However, in our view the proposed increase to £200 is unlikely to lead to a major shift in people's choice of domestic car. The SUV is hugely popular in the UK, in 2005 more than 180,000 were sold, which suggests that a much higher rate of tax will be required to reverse this trend.

We respectfully ask that you seriously consider a much higher increase in the taxation for 4x4 motor vehicles. Not because the pollution by this group of vehicles contributes significantly to UK CO₂ emissions, nor because we believe



that there is an important social or safety issue to be addressed. We ask because we believe your proposal provides the Labour Government with a golden opportunity to show that the Government is ready to tackle global warming and climate change head on and that we as individuals must be held accountable for our impact on the world we live in.

Taxing 4x4 owners will go to the heart of 'the right to individual choice' and we expect, cause a huge debate. And it will also, I would like to hope, signal that the government is ready to act effectively. If the Government is serious about tackling global warming (and we believe that it is) we must as individuals be rewarded for making sound environmentally choices. If we on the other hand don't then there have to be a penalty that over time will force personal choice and our society in a new direction. And I much prefer a financial penalty to one where the polar caps are melting, the golf stream disrupted and rising sea levels are threatening our country.

Please Minister, do not let this opportunity slip away.

On behalf of Carbon-info's steering committee, I thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Flemming Bermann

Flemming Bermann
Chairman