

A response to the EDM on climate change

The UK has been one of the biggest cutters of carbon dioxide emissions worldwide. Since 1990 UK carbon emissions are down by 43% compared to a target of 40%. The UK met its first carbon budget in 2008-12 and outperformed targets in the second budget 2013-17. All looks good for outperforming again in the current budget up to 2022. In contrast Germany was only trying to get 40% below 1990 by 2020 but is a long way off hitting that target, last seen only 27% below. German carbon output is more than twice the UK's. China and the USA are the two largest worldwide contributors.

If we look at carbon dioxide per head the USA at 15.7, Germany at 9.7, China at 7.7, Russia at 12.3 and the EU average at 7.0 are all well above the UK at 5.7. This is a global issue which needs global policies. The UK is active in pressing for international targets and agreements. It makes little sense for one country to cut back if others do not, and even less sense if a country like the UK cuts back on its own use of energy for production and transport, only to import items that are energy intensive from elsewhere. It is bad for UK jobs and the balance of payments if we uniquely have dear energy that prices industry out of the UK.

The UK government claims to be the greenest ever, and has put a lot of effort into technological alternatives to encourage fuel saving and substitution. The EDM does not recognise any of this. It does ask the government to make more money available for a "green deal". I would need to know how much is being sought and how it is proposed it should be spent. I am always happy to support initiatives to promote fuel saving and would be willing to look at further good suggestions. We need to avoid initiatives that do not make overall net reductions, or destroy jobs and create fuel poverty.

As the EDM says, the good news is we all have access to technology which means we can make a difference ourselves. Ultimately it is about how we all live our own lives. I have taken action to curb draughts and heat loss at home. I try to buy locally sourced food as it makes little sense to bring in food from the continent by ferry or airfreight when we can grow it nearby. I have improved my heating controls and heat my home to lower average temperatures by flexing the temperature to my use of the rooms. I have proposed removing VAT on all green products once we are out of the EU and allowed to do so, as I want better draught excluders, insulation materials and control systems to be cheaper and more accessible.

The public is keen to see cleaner air by setting higher standards on particulates and smoke, and to pursue commonsense policies to promote better insulation, greater fuel efficiency and fewer food miles. It is also important for individuals to choose to limit family size if they care about the demands on planetary resources. The UK rightly does not favour any government controls on such matters in the way China did for many years. Governments can help create a climate where people self impose sensible limits on population growth in the interests of sustainability and limiting demands on resources, and can control migration levels.