

Burning crops – where should ethanol come from?

The government is keen to introduce plant based material into petrol for our vans and cars. They see this as a green option, and claim that moving to a ten per cent content in petrol is the equivalent of taking 300,000 cars off the road.

Given their strong wish to limit the number of cars this is another good argument to limit the number of additional people we invite into our country each year to live here, as many of them will naturally want a car.

I have other important questions for the government about its belief in the power of ethanol. Which crops does it recommend for the production of this material? Is the aim to grow more corn or wheat, or to take it from willow and other trees, or some other plants? Is the intention to grow our needs in the UK or does the government wish to add to our import bill? If the aim is to grow more at home, what crops will it displace or can it be an extension to the useful growing areas?

I would want the government to facilitate home production of the ethanol feedstock and the home processing of the crops. I would wish to see these fuel crops as an addition to what we are already growing for food. My concern rests with the current policy from the agriculture section of the Environment Department, which seems keener on wilding, taking land out of useful production.

We cannot afford to simply add ethanol to a long list of things we import, transferring the jobs and incomes out of the UK and reducing the taxable capacity of our economy as a result. We do not want another Drax on our hands, where we import timber across the Atlantic to burn in the power station, with considerable environmental costs for long distance transport, and a net loss to the UK economy of the work and incomes timber growing and logging produces.