

Sir David King
Chief Scientific Adviser
Room 472,
Office of Science and Technology,
Department of Trade and Industry,
1 Victoria Street,
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9 January 2004

Dear Sir David

Science Interview and Industrial (F gas) Greenhouse Gases

I am writing to congratulate you for your comments about the gravity of the climate change threat, in the interview for SCIENCE magazine, reported today. I very much share your views and hope that you and colleagues will be successful in swinging opinion in or around the US Administration, in favour of the requisite action.

I am also writing as co-ordinator of the Multisectoral Initiative on Potent Industrial Greenhouse Gases (www.mipiggs.org) to express my concern at the current position of the UK Government on the draft EU Regulation on F-gases, and to seek your help in strengthening that position and regulation, on which I attach a briefing by Climate Action Network Europe, and the comments of MIPIGGs.

As you will know these gases are deliberately manufactured and the greatest impact comes from HFCs, a CFC replacement from the fluorocarbon industry. Fortunately alternative technologies developed since 1992 mean that these gases are not required.

In 2000ⁱ Tony Blair said:

... eight years ago Greenpeace began research on Greenfreeze refrigeration technology to reduce the destruction of the Ozone layer. It is now a highly successful example of green organisation and industry working together for the benefit of the Ozone layer. Coca Cola and Unilever have just announced they will move towards such alternative refrigerants such as Greenfreeze by 2005.

HMG announced in its Climate Change Programme at Kyoto that HFCs were "not sustainable in the long term".

Unfortunately the government has since continued to use HFCs in major new office developments, eg Home Office, GCHQ. The 'green housekeeping' policy has not required use of the better alternatives.

Even more worrying, the government now seems to have now moved to a strategy based on emission reduction. For this it is relying on the very industry which is causing all the damage in the first place, and

backing HFCs. It seems that pressure from Ford may be encouraging DTI not to oppose the use of HFCs in air conditioning in cars, and not to require alternatives such as the technically proven CO2 systems.

This is another example of the influence of US industry over UK and European climate policy and practice. The US EPA has given out prizes for HFC production (eg to Honeywell) on the pretext that they are the best way to eliminate CFCs, and does not back the alternatives such as hydrocarbons. This is because of lobbying by the US fluorochemicals industry, which also started the EPEEⁱⁱ, the 'European' f-gas lobbying front organisation.

A clear example of the way US industrial interests affect European climate practice is the take-over of Volvo by Ford. Formerly Volvo was pro-Kyoto. Now it lobbies for HFCs in Mobile Air Conditioning, over the EU regulation.

I would ask you to use your good offices to help ensure the UK position on the EU f gas regulation:

- Requires substitution of CFC and HFC technologies with alternatives
- Sets early phase out dates for HFCs
- Does not allow a significant increase in emissions (the present plan) predicated on optimistic assumptions about recovery to later reduce emissions (despite the 'fridge mountain' debacle)
- Requires consumer advice and awareness measures to avoid HFCs eg labelling on cars 'WARNING contains potent industrial greenhouse gas HFCs - DO NOT RELEASE'

On 14 January there is a Scrutiny Debate on the regulation in the House of Commons. Given the public interest in taking all effective measures to reduce the climate threat I am sure you will understand if we give this letter wider circulation. Good luck with your work regarding the US position on Kyoto.

Yours sincerely

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ⁱ UK Prime Minister's speech to CBI/Green Alliance - 24 October 2000

ⁱⁱ European Partnership for Energy and the Environment