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Dear Sir or Madam

One hears a lot of talk about future and niche technologies that would allow cars to produce far lower carbon emissions and pollution: obvious examples being compressed air, hydrogen, and electric/hybrid. Even biofuel is likely to remain a niche technology for a considerable time, because of the logistical problems of growing enough crops to supply all of the world's cars (as it is, steep rises in the price of corn due to the existing demand for biofuel is causing severe hardship in several countries; and there are already signs that large areas of rainforest will be cleared in order to meet the demand for biofuel crops, which is hardly good for the environment). But one almost never hears, either in the media, from the Government, or from environmental groups such as yours, about a technology that has already been with us for many years, that can be installed very cheaply in almost **any** existing petrol car, and which, if governments showed sufficient will, could almost immediately greatly reduce pollution and carbon emissions worldwide. I'm talking of course about LPG.

Although the changes in the Graduated Vehicle Excise Duty and company car tax, together with grants towards the cost of converting, do provide modest incentives to use LPG; compared with what *could* be done, this is scratching the surface; and although there are just over 1,200 petrol stations in the UK that supply LPG, as a proportion of the total this is miniscule; and although in numerical terms, there are a lot of cars already running on LPG, in proportion to the total car population the number is tiny.

Most people haven't even heard of LPG as a car fuel (and those who have mostly aren't aware of the conversion grants). This isn't surprising because it gets almost no coverage in the media, and is rarely mentioned by politicians or environmental groups. There is not a single mention of LPG anywhere on either your or David Miliband's website, even though there is no other environmentally friendly option for most existing cars, and even though electric cars and biofuel are likely to be niche products for the foreseeable future. And I have listened to many documentaries and discussions about global warming and about the measures we should all take in order to be carbon neutral, on television and on the radio; **and not one** has mentioned LPG. Nor have I ever seen LPG mentioned in any newspaper.

In his State of the Union speech, President Bush called on Americans to reduce gasoline consumption by 20% over 10 years: yet by acting now to promote LPG effectively he could achieve greater reductions in fossil fuel consumption, much more quickly. No one in the press seems to have picked up on this.

And yet if everybody converted their existing petrol cars to LPG (and there's no reason why almost everybody couldn't), the impact on the environment would be dramatic, and on global warming would be very large.

Even the mandatory car emission curbs that the EU has just announced ignore LPG and

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completely ignore the problem of existing cars.

Of the few people I have encountered who *have* heard of LPG as a car fuel, most are under the misapprehension that it is unsafe. (A typical comment: “You would have a pressurized tank in your car and if that went off in an accident then boom”). In fact, as I’m sure you are aware, LPG is actually considerably *safer* than petrol or diesel, because LPG fuel tanks are far more robust, and because they contain safety valves to prevent any possibility of an explosion, and to prevent leakage of gas if the fuel pipes are severed.

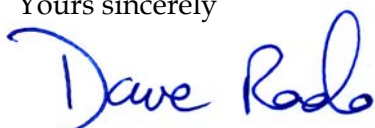
The remainder of people I ask say that they don’t use LPG because far too few petrol stations supply it. And although the UK has one of the highest concentrations of vehicles per mile of road in the world, it is amongst the lowest in using LPG-powered vehicles.

To get the whole country using LPG, the government would need to:

1. Pass legislation so that **all** UK petrol stations must supply LPG by law. I live in Colchester, and at present there are only two petrol stations in the Colchester area which sell LPG: one on the A12 and one in a nearby village – not a single one in the town itself! For people who live in the countryside the situation is worse still. So it’s hardly surprising that so few people are converting!
2. Significantly increase the size of the grant available to convert to LPG while reducing further the amount of car tax all LPG car owners pay (not just for company cars). Fund both by increasing car tax further for petrol- or diesel-fuelled SUVs (but not for LPG-fuelled SUVs or there would be no incentive to convert existing SUVs).
3. Run a **major** public information campaign to increase awareness: (a) of the benefits to the consumer of converting to LPG (reduced fuel consumption and greatly reduced fuel costs, longer engine life, reduced engine noise, as well as the fact that it is far more environmentally friendly); and (b) of the grants that are available towards the cost of conversion and the reduced car tax that LPG owners pay.
4. Introduce phased legislation that **all** new road vehicles must either be LPG-ready or use some other environmentally friendly fuel, phasing out completely the sale of new petrol- or diesel-only road vehicles in the UK within a reasonably short period such as five years.
5. Introduce legislation that second-hand petrol cars cannot be sold in the UK unless converted to LPG first. With the increased grants for the conversion (see **2.** above), this should not be a major issue for people, and the legislation should not therefore need to be phased; but all UK petrol stations would have to be selling LPG before it could be implemented.
6. Lobby at the UN and the EU for international agreements to promote the use of LPG worldwide in a similar way to the above steps. This is by far the most important step of all, but we must start taking serious action ourselves first if we are to have any moral authority when lobbying for others to do so.

Please could you run a campaign to pressure the government to take these steps? If they are sincere about meeting their 2050 carbon emissions target, then surely this is the sort of action they **must take**, not at some time in the future, but **right now**. And please could you start to publicise the scandal of why LPG is getting so little support in the UK?

Yours sincerely



Dave Rado

Dave Rado

From: "Graham Thompson" <graham.thompson@uk.greenpeace.org>
To: "Dave Rado" <dave.rado@dsl.pipex.com>
Sent: 21 March 2007 16:57
Subject: LPG

Hi Dave,

I'm replying to your letter of 21/02/2007 on LPG. I think you have a good idea here in terms of dealing with existing rather than future cars (although my understanding is that CNG is slightly better than LPG on CO2 levels) but the real question here is whether we would get better emissions reduction from a campaign of the sort you suggest than from the strategies we are pursuing now. We only have a limited amount of resources and there are a thousand sources of emissions which need tackling.

The general agreement seems to be that LPG saves around 20% of CO2 emissions, which multiplied up through all the cars on the road is obviously considerable. Furthermore, I'm not aware of any other means of making that sort of saving on an existing petrol driven car, so I'm inclined to think that your idea is worth a look. However, there is also the problem of refitting garages as well as cars, so it's not an effortless procedure. In fact, the measures on your list taken together would be the equivalent of our entire climate campaign plus half of our forests campaign in terms of ambition and difficulty, and I don't think LPG counts for more than everything else we're doing on climate combined.

I'll pass the letter on to our transport campaigner, as I think it's an interesting idea, but I think that the calculation they will do is whether we could get significant take up of LPG with far less ambitious legislative goals. If there is an easy way of doing it, then the lack of alternatives for existing cars would make it appealing, but if the only way to do it would be with measures as comprehensive as yours, then I think we would see it as inefficient use of resources.

If you can refine the campaign down to something a bit more manageable, we would be interested to see your ideas.

Regards,

Graham Thompson
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