

Dr Evan Harris MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

|                                |
|--------------------------------|
| CHIEF EXECUTIVE<br>REFERRED TO |
| 11 JAN 2007                    |
| ACTION TAKEN                   |
| OXFORD                         |

Ms Caroline Bull  
Chief Executive  
Oxford City Council  
Town Hall  
St Aldate's  
Oxford OX1 1BX

26<sup>th</sup> December 2006

Please quote in future correspondence: EH/SL.ox.Bull

*Ms Bull,*

**Re: Climate Change**

Thank you for your letter of the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006. I welcome the Motion, and read it with interest.

I thought you would be interested to see a letter I have written to my constituents on the subject of the "Big Ask" and environmental change generally, and I would be happy to work the Council to promote our common and shared objectives.

With best wishes.

**Dr Evan Harris MP**  
Oxford West and Abingdon

Enc: Copy of letter from Dr Harris to constituents on climate change

Please send correspondence to:  
Oxford West & Abingdon Liberal Democrats  
Constituency Office: 27 Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HU  
Tel: 01865 245584/Fax: 01865 245589

## Dr Evan Harris MP

Thank you for your communication supporting the Friends of the Earth campaign 'The Big Ask', calling for a new climate change law, that would tackle the main cause of climate change – CO2 emissions .

In fact I have been actively supporting the Friends of the Earth "Big Ask" lobby on climate change – I met with my constituent Thom Yorke of Radiohead who has been fronting the lobby to help publicise the campaign. Please see enclosure for more details or see the foe website [http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/news/thom\\_yorke\\_mp\\_lobby.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/news/thom_yorke_mp_lobby.html).

I can assure you that tackling climate change is an extremely high priority for Liberal Democrats. We strongly agree with Sir David King, the government's Chief Scientist, that climate change poses the greatest threat to the planet, even greater than that of global terrorism.

The last century has seen the Earth experience the greatest period of warming in the last thousand years. The force behind this is the release of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane, which are at their highest ever recorded levels. We are already witnessing the impact of a changing climate across the globe, the destructive hurricanes in the US, and extensive flooding closer to home. Yet these are only a precursor to far worse possible events, which could happen as a result of climate change induced by human activities.

**The government is not delivering on actions necessary to tackle this threat. Domestic targets of a 20% cut in greenhouse emissions on 1990 levels by 2010 look certain to be missed if the current trends continue.** International targets agreed under Kyoto are more modest still, but even these could be missed if the Government does not take further action. Carbon emissions are up by 3 per cent since 1997.

**Liberal Democrats therefore recognise that in order to cut UK emissions by at least 60% by 2050, the UK must have binding annual targets, to secure and monitor year on year reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.** There needs to be a real and firm commitment at national and international levels if we are to successfully tackle climate change. Following the publication of the recent report on the Review of the Sustainability of Existing Buildings, Liberal Democrat Local Government Shadow Secretary Andrew Stunnell MP highlighted the imperative for the Government to set clear targets to cut carbon emissions. A copy of his comments is enclosed. **We are also leading the challenge in Parliament and have initiated four of the last five debates in the Commons on this most serious of issues.**

A copy of the Liberal Democrat policy briefing on climate change, "A Strategy for Sustainability", is enclosed. Further detailed information on our environmental policies can be found on our website at [www.libdems.org.uk](http://www.libdems.org.uk).

Please send correspondence to:  
Oxford West & Abingdon Liberal Democrats  
Constituency Office: 27 Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HU  
Tel: 01865 245584/Fax: 01865 245589

We are trying to build a cross-party consensus on the issue of climate change in order to ensure that this issue remains at the top of the political agenda. We are pleased that the Conservatives, Plaid Cymru, the SNP and the DUP have also called for annual targets. In our view, targets are a key first step to change providing that there is also the political will to adopt measures such as our proposed green tax switch – taxing pollution, with lower taxes on income – to change our behaviour.

The Liberal Democrat parliamentary party allocated our recent opposition debate day to climate change with a particular attempt to highlight the practical measures needed to deal with the fastest growing area of carbon emissions - cars and air travel. You can read our debate on green taxes in full on the parliamentary website at

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/cm061016/debtext/61016-0004.htm#06101625000160>

where you will see we pressed for a reform of vehicle excise duty to levy £2000 a year on new purchases of the most carbon-emitting cars and also for a quadrupling of air taxation and a reform to base it on emissions rather than on each passenger. **We are the only party to have set out such radical, clear and detailed plans for environmental taxation.**

I thought it was significant that the Government did not criticise either of these individual proposals - although fulminating in the usual partisan way in general - which suggests to me that there may be movement here shortly. The Conservatives, I am afraid, have still failed to come up with a single specific proposal that would help tackle climate change even though their rhetoric is now much better than it was. **Our efforts in the Liberal Democrats are now to concentrate on practical proposals so that the debate moves beyond aspirations and onto solutions.**

The Rough Guide to Climate Change, has contacted MPs to find out how seriously they consider the issue of climate change, what we can do as a country to make a difference and whether this issue has impacted our own lifestyle choices. The results for all MPs will be published in The Independent. A copy of my own response is enclosed.

I also tabled Early Day Motion 2656, “Ban the Bulb Campaign”, which called on the Government to do all they can to remove inefficient incandescent light bulbs from the UK market . A copy of the EDM and more background is enclosed.

Again, thank you for writing and sharing your concerns for the need to have proper parliamentary action on climate change.

**Dr Evan Harris MP**

Oxford West and Abingdon

Enc: “Government Must Set Clear Targets to Cut Carbon Emissions” – Press Release  
Q & A on climate change, EDM 2656 “Ban the Bulb Campaign” and Thom Yorke/FoE extract  
Liberal Democrat detailed policy sheet

**STOP PRESS: Although the Government announced a climate change bill in the Queen’s speech, the bill must provide for annual targets for carbon emissions and specific measures needed to achieve those targets. I enclose also a copy of the response from my colleague Chris Huhne MP, the Liberal Democrat Shadow Environment Secretary.**

Please send correspondence to:  
Oxford West & Abingdon Liberal Democrats  
Constituency Office: 27 Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HU  
Tel: 01865 245584/Fax: 01865 245589