



Briefing

Carbon Quotas

How we can all fight climate change

We know that we all face potentially catastrophic climate change (see the Green Party Policy Pointer on Climate Change). And we know it is mainly caused by carbon dioxide given off by burning fossil fuels like petrol, gas and coal. So we must reduce our use of carbon based fuels.

Part of any policy to reduce emissions must be greater use of renewable energy sources, like wind and wave power. But we also need to reduce energy use. We believe we need a fair and transparent system to do so, and one that gives each person a direct connection to the carbon emissions associated with their lifestyle. We believe that the threat of climate change is so serious that we need a system, carbon quotas, that is guaranteed to achieve reductions.

Carbon Quotas would work like this

- each year a carbon budget would be set for the UK. The budget would define the total amount of carbon dioxide that can legally be emitted and thus the total number of carbon quota units available

- this budget would be successively reduced each year in line with targets for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions
- about half the carbon quotas would be distributed, free of charge, to all the adults in the country. Each person would have a 'carbon account' and would receive the same number of carbon units
- parents may receive a lower allocation on behalf of their children
- the rest of the carbon units would be sold by the Government to companies and other organisations
- whenever you buy fossil fuels or airline tickets your carbon account card would be debited. You would have to pay in carbon units as well as in pounds and pence
- if you buy other goods or services that involve carbon emissions in their manufacture or delivery, then the units the manufacturer has used will be reflected in the price
- you will be able to sell excess carbon units, or buy extra units if you need it at a wide range of outlets, like petrol stations or from energy companies.

Why give everyone the same quota? Surely people living in rural areas will need more?

Many factors influence how much carbon dioxide each person emits, including how many people they live with, the number of air flights they take, and how they travel to work. Those in rural areas may need more for petrol, but they may be able to use less in other ways. Giving everyone the same amount, and letting them decide how to use it, is the simplest and fairest thing to do.

What would happen to a poor pensioner who ran out of units in mid-winter?

Quotas would be allocated monthly rather than annually to make budgeting easier. Pensioners would receive the same quotas as every other adult, but extra help could be given to them to make sure they can live comfortably within their allocation, such as grants for insulation and energy efficient appliances.

Won't this mean the end of cheap air fares?

It would discourage unreasonable expectations of air travel. Aviation is a major and growing cause of global warming. One return trip to New York would require around two thirds of the initial annual allocation.

What will happen to visitors to the UK?

They would buy carbon units which would be available for sale at petrol stations and other outlets.

How will the government ensure that fossil fuels are not sold without people paying for carbon units?

The supply of fossil fuels is already tightly controlled for the purposes of collecting tax so there should be no insurmountable problems in ensuring that carbon units are paid.

What's the point if other countries like the US and China do nothing?

This policy is the domestic counterpart of the international policy of Contraction and Convergence that we would press all countries to adopt.

Will we rely entirely on this policy to reduce emissions?

No. There would also be a major programme of investment in energy conservation, energy efficient appliances, public transport and renewable energy technology.

To join the Green Party or obtain copies of our manifestos or other policy leaflets please contact us at Green Party, **1a Waterlow Road, London N19 5NJ. Telephone: 020 7272 4474** or visit our website at **www.greenparty.org.uk**.

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