



THE RT. HON. JOHN REDWOOD, MP

**HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA**

14th March 2006

Please now find attached the rather disappointing reply from the Government in response to our representations concerning low energy light bulbs. You will see that EU regulations unfortunately prevent ministers from taking up your suggestion.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'John Redwood', written in dark ink.

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Department for Environment
Food and Rural Affairs

The Rt Hon John Redwood MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

5th March 2006

From the Minister of State for Climate Change & Environment
Elliot Morley MP

Dear John,

Thank you for your letter of 7 February referring to correspondence you have received from a number of your constituents about energy efficient light bulbs.

Firstly, I would like to assure you that this Government is fully committed to taking action to reduce energy demand in the UK. We recognise that reducing energy demand will benefit a range of important objectives, including better energy security; reducing carbon emissions, which are the primary cause of climate change; the alleviation of fuel poverty; and enhancing economic competitiveness. Improved energy efficiency is one of the key means of delivering the reductions in demand we need. To this end, the Government has put in place a comprehensive package of policies and measures to drive an increase in energy efficiency across all sectors of the economy.

In regards to low-energy light bulbs, we fully recognise the significant contribution they can make to energy demand reduction in the UK, and we are working hard to encourage their take-up as widely as possible. However, the use of VAT to influence consumer purchasing decisions is not an option currently available to us. VAT is governed by EU agreements, which allow us to maintain our existing zero rates, but prevent us from extending them or introducing new ones. Therefore we would not be in a position to be able apply a zero rate of VAT to energy efficient light bulbs, even if Ministers chose to do so.

That said, I am confident the package of policies and measures we have in place is strong enough to deliver the level of take-up we need - current projections show that around 100 million low-energy bulbs are likely to be in use in the UK by 2010. The key policies and measures in place to achieve this include: the Energy Efficiency Commitment, which requires energy suppliers to encourage and assist households to achieve energy efficiency improvements; programmes to alleviate fuel poverty;



improved product standards and labelling; and raised building standards, which require new housing to have a minimum number of energy efficient fittings.

A new EU directive, the Eco Design for Energy Using Products (EUP) framework directive, is intended to provide a more streamlined and effective route for setting EU-wide environmental requirements for traded goods. This will provide the forum for considering options and priorities for establishing energy efficiency standards for energy using products and could in principle consider whether there is a case for setting EU-wide standards for light bulbs.

Also, the Market Transformation Programme (MTP) supports measures such as the mandatory EU Energy labelling scheme which, for domestic light bulbs, has been mandatory since 1 January 2001. Energy labels provide clear and easily recognisable information about the energy consumption and performance of domestic products on a 7-point scale ranging from "A" (most efficient) to "G" (least efficient), thus enabling consumers to make a considered choice when purchasing energy consuming products. Furthermore, minimum energy performance standards have resulted in the removal of the most inefficient fluorescent lamp ballasts from the market. (Lamp ballasts are required to control the current passing through fluorescent discharge tubes, which dissipate energy and can affect the light output efficiency of the fluorescent tube itself).

MTP also works with the Lighting Association, the Lighting Industry Federation, the Energy Saving Trust and Energy Efficiency Partnership, to promote energy efficient lighting which is both commercially viable and acceptable to consumers. The Energy Saving Trust endorses and vigorously promotes the best lighting products under its Energy Efficiency Recommended scheme.

Looking to the future, we can expect further advances in lighting technologies including, for example, solid state LEDs which have the potential to provide high efficiency, low cost and long-life alternatives for a range of ordinary, decorative and reflector bulbs. When there are acceptable energy efficient alternatives across the whole range of lighting products, it would be easier to achieve a consensus on a European-wide ban on low-efficiency lighting products, if it were still necessary.

I also fully agree with your constituents that the public sector has a key role to play in furthering sustainable development through its procurement of goods and services. In October 2003 Ministers across Whitehall signed up to a wide range of measures designed to achieve the sustainable buying of products.

We are continuing to explore ways to further enhance our energy policy, including as part of the Climate Change Programme review, which is due to conclude shortly, and the Energy Review currently underway. In the meantime, I hope this letter goes some way to reassure you that the Government is committed to reducing UK energy demand and is working hard to tackle the issues your constituents have raised.

*Yours
Elliot*

ELLIOT MORLEY