

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1090/09
by Ashley Mote (NI)
to the Commission

Subject: Compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulb decision makes no sense

Since the world's consumption of energy for all lighting needs totals less than two per cent of all energy consumption, why is the Commission attaching so much importance to the introduction of CFL bulbs?

Why is the EU demanding that Britain throw away a lighting technology which is tried-and-tested, safe and silent, and delivers what is needed: good light at full strength at the flick of a switch? Why are Britons being told (not asked) to replace it with an alternative which is clumsier, more expensive, does not work as well, makes some people ill and could do more environmental harm than good?

Does the Commission not know that one of the side benefits of the present range of bulbs is the heat they generate (as much as 95%), which reduces the need for other forms of heating? That heat will be lost by switching to CFL bulbs. It will have to be made up by the increased use of central heating, for example, or electric fires. That in turn will place a higher demand for energy on power stations. Is the Commission aware that even the British Government admits that the total hoped-for saving would be equivalent to the output of a single small coal-fired power station?

Indeed, does the Commission understand that, assuming it matters, the carbon footprint of CFL bulbs is higher because they contain complex chemicals and electronics which ordinary bulbs do not? They generate more carbon in the manufacturing process and disposal at the end of their working life is more environmentally and industrially expensive.

Finally, why the headlong rush to force CFL bulbs on the British people when the much better alternative of LED lights is only a few years away? Since they will be substantially cheaper and more cost-efficient, will involve no health or safety hazards, and will almost certainly be more acceptable to the public, why not wait?