

# *carbon focus*

## PRESS RELEASE

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### TRIVIAL TIPS CAUSE CARBON COMPLACENCY: Prioritise Carbon Actions Now!

#### Summary

Depressing and trivial climate change campaigns advising consumers to reduce carbon dioxide emissions are wasting precious time and resources by not distinguishing between big and small savings, alienating people and make them feel overwhelmed and powerless.

The promotion of tips with unquantified and uncontextualised benefits is leading to a 'carbon complacency' where consumers feel they are doing good by doing actions that are actually trivial. Edwin Datschefski says "Trivial-scale tips encourage '**carbon complacency**'. For example people think "I cook my potatoes more efficiently now in the microwave, so it's OK to still run my old 4x4", or "Yes I'm flying to Australia but I only boil as much as I need in my kettle." Other people recognise that small improvements don't make much difference and use that as a reason to justify doing nothing at all.

Consumers need to know where their biggest carbon emissions come from to take effective action. **Carbon focus** is launching a report today that identifies the very few actions that householders can make a real difference. The report written and researched by Edwin Datschefski and Katharine Harborne identifies the few effective actions that householders can **save one tonne of carbon dioxide** every year in the four areas of Travel, Home, Food and Stuff. Katharine Harborne urges "If we are to stand any chance of meeting the government's targets on climate change we need to focus on these actions and obtain high rates of uptake of them in the worst polluting households. " We all need to do everything we can to build a low carbon economy and stop climate change – here is an example of a brilliant focused campaign for effective personal action. A copy of the report can be downloaded at [www.carbonfocus.org.uk](http://www.carbonfocus.org.uk)

-ENDS-

## Notes to Editors

- The UK Climate Change Act requires that carbon emissions are reduced by at least 80% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels. This means a target reduction of 5 tonnes per person by 2050.
- Most recommended actions are trivial in terms of the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> that they save. By trivial we mean saving less than half a percent (0.5%) of a household's 28 tonne average total emissions – i.e. less than 0.14 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> per year. For example:
  - Switching off TV at the mains with no standby (0.07 tonnes)
  - Boil only what you need in your kettle (0.04 tonnes)
  - Refusing plastic carrier bags (0.02 tonnes)
- We believe any household can do four '**one-tonne carbon actions**' which give a 4 tonne total annual saving – see the full report for our list of the one-tonne carbon actions.
- If one third of the UK population saves 4 tonnes apiece it would save 80 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, that's 8th of the nation's emissions.
- The only widely achievable One Tonne Carbon Actions we found that each save 1 tonne of carbon dioxide per year are:

### Travel

- Fly one less long haul trip (Intercontinental)
- Fly three less short haul (Europe) trips
- Get a better car: a 40mpg car instead of a 30mpg one; or a 60mpg car instead of a 40mpg one
- Drive 3000 less miles per year

### Food

- Have 75% of your food be UK-grown AND Seasonal
- Reduce Meat and Dairy consumption by 75%

### Home

- Give your house a Thermal Makeover
- Switch your thermostat 3 degrees lower
- Share your house with an additional person like a friend, relative or lodger

### Stuff

- Shift £2000 of spending from high carbon goods to low carbon goods and services, for example spend on experiences rather than physical goods.

## About *carbon focus*

Carbon Focus is a think tank run by Katharine Harborne and Edwin Datschefski which aims to inform and advise NGOs, government, local authorities, the press and media of the importance of effective change and scientific accuracy in carbon communications.

A copy of the report can be downloaded at [www.carbonfocus.org.uk](http://www.carbonfocus.org.uk)

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