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PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE
AND MINISTER FOR VETERANS

D/US of S/TW 4200/06/C/LN

8th August 2006

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your letter of July 18 to Des Browne about our greenhouse gas emissions from aviation. I am replying as this matter falls within my area of responsibility.

The role of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is to defend the UK and its interests, and strengthen international peace and stability. In line with the government's sustainable development strategy, set out in *Securing the future*, MOD is committed to the new purpose and principles for sustainable development and the new shared priorities. This is exemplified in several areas. We have set up a partnership agreement with the Carbon Trust; the Trust provides support to MOD in reducing carbon dioxide emissions through improving energy efficiency and the implementation of low carbon technologies. This includes work with the Royal Air Force (RAF) Utility Management Bureau Service. In addition, the RAF now has 17 sites registered under the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme Regulations 2003 and has 7% of electricity supplied from climate change levy exempt sources and 2.5% from Combined Heat and Power.

Other work on sustainable development includes ongoing efforts to improve the condition of the 179 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) for which we have responsibility. Following £2.5 million of capital works undertaken as a result of funding made available at the end of 2004, the number of our SSSIs in England in favourable or unfavourable but improving condition has increased from 70.7% in 2003-04 to 78.1%.

Our nation has a right to defend itself and, as a leading member of the international community, we have a responsibility to help others. To achieve these two imperatives, we have a system of graduated readiness that aims to ensure that the right Force Elements (such as a ship, a brigade, or an aircraft) are ready to deploy when needed. The Armed Forces, including the RAF, use a combination of individual and collective training to meet their complex training commitments. This training is critical if the Armed Forces are to meet their operational commitments at home and overseas. Therefore, we have no plans to reduce the environmental footprint from essential military flying unless it could be done without putting our people at risk or weakening operational capability. We need to continue to deliver our core task to produce battle-winning people and equipment.

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Nevertheless, work is progressing to record and monitor annual carbon dioxide emissions from military aviation based on actual fuel used, and to establish baselines. Current best estimates of emissions are based on the quantities of fuel delivered (not consumed) to UK Royal Air Force Bases. In 2004, the only year for which we have data currently available, the Royal Air Force was supplied with 826,143,673 litres of aviation fuel, which would equate to 2,220,000T carbon dioxide. It is anticipated that future reporting will also include figures for the Royal Navy and the Army.

More widely, we are supporting the Government's scheme to offset carbon dioxide emissions from central government civilian air travel. Carbon dioxide emissions created by official air travel will be offset by investing in projects that prevent an equivalent amount of emissions to the atmosphere.

We are also collecting data on the MOD's use and emissions of fluorinated greenhouse gases. They are used primarily in refrigeration and fire protection systems, which have relatively low emission rates (primarily from system failures), and the substances are recovered and recycled during normal maintenance procedures. The quantities that we procure cannot therefore be directly equated to emissions. Moreover, the most commonly used hydrofluorocarbons generally have lower global warming potentials than the ozone depleting substances they are replacing.

Defence is also contributing more widely to government efforts to deliver a better quality of life through sustainable development. Ian Andrews, the Second Permanent Under Secretary, leads a high-level pan-government committee, the Sustainable Operations Board. The Board developed and recommended a set of targets for improving *Sustainable Operations on the Government Estate*. These targets were launched on 12 June 2006 and backed by the Prime Minister. In particular there is a commitment that the Government Office Estate will be carbon neutral by 2012, and will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 30% by 2030 relative to 1999/2000 levels.

Historically, MOD has managed to reduce its energy consumption in line with government targets. Our Sustainable Development Report for 2003/04 stated that over the 10 year period from 1989/90 to 1999/2000 MOD had reduced energy use by 19% and in the four years between 1999/2000 and 2003/04 reduced carbon emissions by 5%. For the same period, MOD purchased 6% of its electricity from renewable sources exempt from the climate change levy.

We are also committed to reporting our sustainable development performance. Progress on sustainable development including data on our greenhouse gas emissions and offsetting carbon dioxide emissions from air travel, will be made available in MoD's Annual Sustainable Development Reports. The 2005 Report is due to be published in August this year and I shall ensure you are provided with a copy.

I hope this is helpful.

TOM WATSON MP

