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Dear Mr Birkett,

### **Oxides of Nitrogen Abatement Standards**

Thank you for your email on the above subject, addressed to the Secretary of State, which has been passed to me as an official in the Division with the most direct interest in vehicle emission standards.

Air quality targets and vehicle emission standards are set at a European level through negotiations in which the United Kingdom plays an active part. The air quality targets are challenging, but the Government is committed to taking all reasonable steps to meeting them. In order to encourage early uptake of new emissions standards by operators of heavy vehicles, the Government has offered reductions in Vehicle Excise Duty through Reduced Pollution Certificate schemes. These schemes have, in the past, required compliance only with the particulate matter aspects of the relevant standard. The scheme currently being offered for early uptake of the Euro V standard, which differs from Euro IV only in terms of the permitted emissions of Oxides of Nitrogen, however, requires compliance with all aspects of the standard, including those for on-board diagnostics and performance monitoring.

The Government supports the aims of the London Low Emission Zone, but the details of the scheme are, as you will be aware, a matter for Transport for London.

Devices do exist that might be retrofitted to heavy duty vehicles in order to reduce tailpipe emissions of Oxides of Nitrogen. The option of approving any of these devices on the basis of the manufacturer's specification and approved quality control procedures, or through independent testing, remains open to Transport for London or the operators of any other eventual low emission zone in the event that they chose to set local emission limits that required them. The retrofitting of devices for control of Oxides of Nitrogen to older cars and vans would not be likely to be cost-effective for the owners, and would be technically very difficult in many cases. The Department has no current plans to introduce its own approval scheme for retrofitted Oxides of Nitrogen control devices.

Overall air quality in the United Kingdom has improved significantly in recent years, and the Department for Transport is actively involved in the formulation and delivery of policies designed to maintain those improvements. The problems of poor local air quality, particularly in urban areas such as London, is one that can only be effectively addressed

through an integrated approach that includes general measures such as the Euro emissions standards for vehicles and the introduction of cleaner fuels.

The Department's aim is to produce policies that are, as far as possible, technology neutral. To do otherwise would distort the market and would stifle the enterprise and innovation upon which we all rely for new solutions to pressing environmental problems.

Cost-benefit analysis permits policy options to be ranked in terms of their impact upon the economy as a whole. It takes into account a very wide range of factors, including, in the case of environmental policies, impact upon public health, and is an essential tool in policy formulation. There is little likelihood of the Department moving away from the use of cost benefit analysis.

Yours sincerely,

**Simon Davies**