

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT

First Delegated Legislation Committee

DRAFT MOTOR FUEL (COMPOSITION AND  
CONTENT) (AMENDMENT) (NORTHERN  
IRELAND) REGULATIONS 2022

*Tuesday 11 October 2022*

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**Saturday 15 October 2022**

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**The Committee consisted of the following Members:**

*Chair:* JUDITH CUMMINS

Abbott, Ms Diane (*Hackney North and Stoke Newington*) (Lab)

† Aldous, Peter (*Waveney*) (Con)

† Ali, Tahir (*Birmingham, Hall Green*) (Lab)

† Ansell, Caroline (*Eastbourne*) (Con)

† Browne, Anthony (*South Cambridgeshire*) (Con)

† Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh (*Slough*) (Lab)

† Frazer, Lucy (*Minister of State, Department for Transport*)

† Johnson, Kim (*Liverpool, Riverside*) (Lab)

† Jones, Andrew (*Harrogate and Knaresborough*) (Con)

† Lewer, Andrew (*Northampton South*) (Con)

† Lopresti, Jack (*Filton and Bradley Stoke*) (Con)

Mahmood, Mr Khalid (*Birmingham, Perry Barr*) (Lab)

Mohindra, Mr Gagan (*South West Hertfordshire*) (Con)

† Moore, Damien (*Southport*) (Con)

† Qureshi, Yasmin (*Bolton South East*) (Lab)

† Tami, Mark (*Alyn and Deeside*) (Lab)

Williams, Craig (*Montgomeryshire*) (Con)

Jack Edwards, Natalia Janiec-Janick,  
*Committee Clerks*

† **attended the Committee**

# First Delegated Legislation Committee

Tuesday 11 October 2022

[JUDITH CUMMINS *in the Chair*]

## Draft Motor Fuel (Composition and Content) (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2022

4.30 pm

**The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Lucy Frazer):** I beg to move,

That the Committee has considered the draft Motor Fuel (Composition and Content) (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2022.

It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Cummins.

This draft statutory instrument will introduce E10 as standard petrol across Northern Ireland, while ensuring that the existing E5 grade remains available to those who need it. That will bring petrol grades in Northern Ireland into line with those in Great Britain, where E10 was introduced successfully in September 2021. We have completed the notification procedures required under the Northern Ireland protocol, meaning that an introduction in Northern Ireland is now possible.

E10 petrol contains up to 10% renewable ethanol, double the amount that can be blended into E5 petrol. The change is a crucial step in maximising the bad-fuel blending capacity in the UK fuel market and driving transport decarbonisation. It will also support the UK's biofuel and agricultural sectors.

I will go through some aspects in a little more detail, starting with why E10 is needed. It will allow us to cut carbon emissions from cars, motorbikes and other petrol-powered equipment in use today simply by increasing the limit to which renewable fuel can be blended into standard petrol. Introducing E10 across the whole of the UK could cut transport carbon dioxide emissions by 750,000 tonnes a year, the equivalent of taking 350,000 cars off the road or all the cars in North Yorkshire. The measure is therefore one of the few available to us with an immediate impact, providing the basis for a step change in renewable fuel blending. E10 petrol is a proven fuel that has been introduced successfully in Great Britain and in many nations around the world, delivering carbon savings immediately.

The UK has a valuable bioethanol industry, which has already benefited from the increased demand created by the introduction of E10 in Great Britain. Following our policy announcement to introduce E10 across the UK, one large facility operator announced that it would recommence production. The domestic bioethanol industry supports high-skilled, green jobs, and improves our energy independence, delivering on a range of Government priorities such as growth and energy security. Such facilities also play a significant role in their local economy, employing hundreds of skilled workers directly and supporting thousands of jobs in the wider community. That community includes the agricultural sector, with

locally grown feed wheat used to produce ethanol and by-products such as animal feed supplied to livestock farmers in place of soy imports.

To address the position on older cars, more than 95% of petrol-powered vehicles on the road are compatible with E10 petrol. That figure is increasing all the time. All new cars manufactured since 2011 are compatible with E10 petrol, and most cars and motorcycles manufactured since the late 1990s are approved by manufacturers to use E10. Some older vehicles, however, are not cleared to use E10. That is why the draft instrument includes provision to keep E5 petrol available in the higher-octane Super grade. The same set of derogations and exemptions that apply to the supply of E10 in Great Britain, in cases of supply issues or infrastructure constraints, will also apply in Northern Ireland.

We also launched a comprehensive campaign involving local radio, roadside posters, social media and information at forecourts. It informs motorists in Northern Ireland of the changes to petrol this autumn, subject to the approval of this draft instrument, and it directs vehicle owners to the gov.uk online compatibility checker to ensure that everyone is clear on the right fuel for their vehicle or equipment.

In conclusion, in proposing this draft statutory instrument, my Department has considered carefully a balance of interests. It recognises the need to maximise our efforts to decarbonise vehicles on the road today and to support our domestic renewable fuel industry, while maintaining access to a suitable petrol grade for all. Introducing E10 petrol in Northern Ireland this November strikes the right balance. I commend the statutory instrument to the Committee.

4.35 pm

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Cummins. I warmly welcome the Minister to her place.

Around a quarter of the UK's carbon emissions originate from transport, and cars make up a significant proportion of that sector. The last Labour Government set up the renewable transport fuel obligation and introduced E5 petrol in the UK. That was groundbreaking in helping to lower emissions. We must now build on that good work. I am afraid to say that the Government's measures in these regulations demonstrate a lack of ambition.

At present, E5 fuel in Northern Ireland contains up to 5% ethanol. The regulations will only require E10 petrol to contain at least 5.5% ethanol—a minor increase. The Government have previously stated that the figure is just a minimum, but that argument fails by its own logic. The explanatory memorandum states that the industry would not increase ethanol content to above 5% “without a legislative mandate”. That stands to reason. After all, no supplier would want to be left out in the cold. Following that same logic, what incentive is there for retailers to supply E10 petrol at anything above the 5.5% ethanol, something which the Government clearly view as welcome? I would be extremely grateful if the Minister addressed that particular point. Perhaps she could state the average ethanol content in E10 petrol in the rest of the UK, given that the measure has been in place for many months.

I want to touch on the sourcing of bioethanol. What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that the supply chain does not inadvertently lead to global environmental impacts? Last year, the Government stated that the use of imported bioethanol that could potentially contribute to deforestation was “minimal”. Would the Minister clarify just how minimal the figure is? What safeguards are being put in place to ensure that we do not inadvertently contribute to deforestation through increased demand for ethanol for E10 petrol?

From 2030, new petrol and diesel cars will no longer be sold within the UK. However, given the lifespan of new cars, reducing the environmental impact of petrol will be vital in fighting the climate crisis for many decades to come. As the Climate Change Committee noted, the net zero strategy baseline assumes that manufacturers continue to improve conventional vehicle efficiencies in line with previous regulations and that hybrids with a significant zero-emission range will make up a growing and substantial portion of the new car market, yet the Government’s intention is to require only nominal improvements. What assessment have the Government made of the CCC’s recommendation to incentivise efficiency improvements in conventional vehicles?

We will not oppose the statutory instrument. However, I sincerely hope that for the sake of our environment and our country the Minister will listen very carefully to calls to show far greater ambition in this area.

4.39 pm

**Lucy Frazer:** I thank the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green for his comments and kind words—*[Interruption.]* I thank the hon. Member for Slough for his comments and kind words at the beginning of his speech. He is absolutely right to say that vehicles on roads are responsible for a significant portion of our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Transport is responsible for around 24% of carbon in the UK, and 90% of that comes from road emissions, so the hon. Gentleman made a very important

point at the outset. He said that we were not ambitious enough, but I remind him that the biofuel supplied under the RTFO saved 5.24 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2020—equivalent to taking 2.5 million vehicles off the road—and of course, that is just one aspect of our plan for decarbonisation. In this area, it is important to ensure that we maintain the right balance, as I said in my speech.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned a number of issues that do not directly relate to the statutory instrument, but which are important and are being addressed by Government. He talked about deforestation and the supply chain, but he will know that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is looking closely at measures to ensure that we plant enough trees. He also talked about the impact on cars more broadly, but he will know that with our zero-emission vehicle mandate, we are phasing out fuel. He asked whether car manufacturers and suppliers will go above the 5.5% level; I would like to reassure him that the targets for the overall blending levels under the RTFO were increased in 2022, and we will continue to increase them until 2032. For all those reasons, and those I outlined at the beginning of the sitting, I commend the regulations to the Committee.

**Mr Dhesi:** On that point, would the Minister outline what incentives are in place for retailers to supply E10 petrol at anything above the 5.5% ethanol level?

**Lucy Frazer:** We know that diesel manufacturers are producing it at higher than the 5.5% level. It is in their interest to do so in relation to the environment more broadly, and because we will expand the market. In the long run, those fuels will be cheaper for both consumers and suppliers.

*Question put and agreed to.*

4.42 pm

*Committee rose.*





