



# LISA LOVES

*\*BIG [carbon] debates!*

Carbon!—we hear that word bandied around these days like nobody's business.

**W**e're meant to save it, offset it, think about how much of it we use, it's the basis of life, we're made from it and if we don't start taking it a bit more seriously then soon it will all be gone and the world will explode – or something? Well, I'll give it a whirl, but in between the school run, running a business, keeping up with the mortgage, dealing with the modern middle class nightmare that is homework and making sure there's enough wine (organic of course) in the fridge (A++ rated) to last the week, I'm afraid my carbon footprint is the least of my worries.

Still, politicians and the media wag their fingers at us as though we're teenagers - walk instead of drive, use low energy light bulbs (mercury-laden by the way), turn the thermostat down and put on a sweater. Okay, I'm happy to do this in the name of energy conservation and the future of the planet but what I, and most of the rest of the population would really love to know is, is it really going to make a difference? And why should I be so worried about it anyway? Surely one person can't be responsible for the entire world going to pot – isn't that the plot of a Superman film?

All I know about carbon is that it's a natural element trapped in vegetation, coal, the earth, oil etc, and that releasing it into the

atmosphere causes the greenhouse effect which is why we should drive a Reliant Robin rather than a Range Rover Vogue monster. Why doesn't someone tell us more about this stuff? I'm sure people would be a lot more willing to give saving it a go if we knew why and, more to the point, that we were being supported. But sitting shivering in our living rooms watching TV by the light of a candle seems a tad masochistic when, if you take a trip to London at any time of the day or night, half the city is lit up like Las Vegas with only five people actually using the light, heat, computers etc. How much carbon would be saved if the Gherkin building was to please switch off the lights at home time?

Does Gordon Brown give Sarah a hard time for using the Downing Street washing machine more than once a day? Is Barack Obama going to refuse Air Force One and switch to video conferencing in the hope we'll all choose Dorset over Benidorm for our summer holiday? I doubt that very much. And we've all seen David Cameron publicly shunning cars but I bet he tucks into his Sunday roast without a care in the world – the global livestock industry reportedly uses just as much energy as transport. And how many times have I heard disinterested friends or family say to me, 'Well Lisa, I'd readily swap my Trojan Warrior Trailblaster for a moped if I thought

that those factories in China would stop throwing out smoke and fumes like there's no tomorrow.' (which by the way, there won't be at this rate!). These are the very same people whose demand for iPods, supermarket clothing and Nikes is the reason for the factories in the first place!

It's all very well for the Government to put the onus on the homeowner to use less energy and transport, and fine us for having too much rubbish, but I can't help feeling that's like using a pneumatic drill to open a pistachio. What about ticking off the car companies, heavy industry, the supermarket chains and most of Canary Wharf?

I'm on my children's Eco-schools Council and it makes me smile right down to my toes to see such passion and commitment about saving energy and doing good for the environment from children as young as seven, to whom this planet, after all, belongs. But it also breaks my heart to think that unless everyone from individuals, business owners, governments and multinational organisations pulls together and takes responsibility for cutting carbon usage then, it seems to me, the earth will surely be doomed. ■

*Passionate as Lisa? Perhaps the responses to our Big Debate over the page will help. If not, then you can find out more and have your say at [www.sustainedmagazine.com/debate](http://www.sustainedmagazine.com/debate)*