



Hidden subsidies

Sir,—I endorse Mr Topping's observation (June, 19) regarding the Government's recent announcement that all UK radio broadcasting will be moved to Digital Audio Broadcasting in six years time. It is just another of their

ill-conceived policies which will inevitably lead to further environmental damage and unnecessary wastage.

To give full coverage to rural and Highland listeners, many new transmitter sites will have to be built on hills and mountain-tops. A constant electricity supply will be needed to provide the power required for 24-hour coverage.

The relentless growth in digital broadcasting, mobile and internet usage in recent years leads me to ask the question: how much electrical power is required to fuel this interactive system of broadcasting and communication within the UK?

In July 2008 Christopher Lamour, chief marketing officer of Actix Ltd, wrote in an industry newsletter that, "Each antenna connected to the radio network uses the equivalent amount of energy used to run a typical three-bedroom house in the UK per year."

A recent study undertaken on behalf of Ofcom shows that there are around 40,000 microwave links covering the United Kingdom. In my estimation, rather a lot of electricity would be required to provide the energy to operate all the transmission, electronic and cooling equipment associated

with all these antennae. It is clear that the industry are reluctant to spend the vast sums required to put the necessary infrastructure in place to fit in with the Government's targets so a little incentive is required.

The proposal to use £200 million of public money as well as to levy a "broadband tax" on landline telephones to pay for super-fast internet is quite unjustifiable.

The template for this sort of incentive already exists. In April 2002 Renewable Obligation Certificates, which all licensed electricity companies are obliged to purchase, were issued in order to attract renewable electricity projects to the UK. To date, most of these projects are wind related.

The result for all consumers of electricity is that we pay more for our power and thus subsidise the industry much as we will do for the digital industry.

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