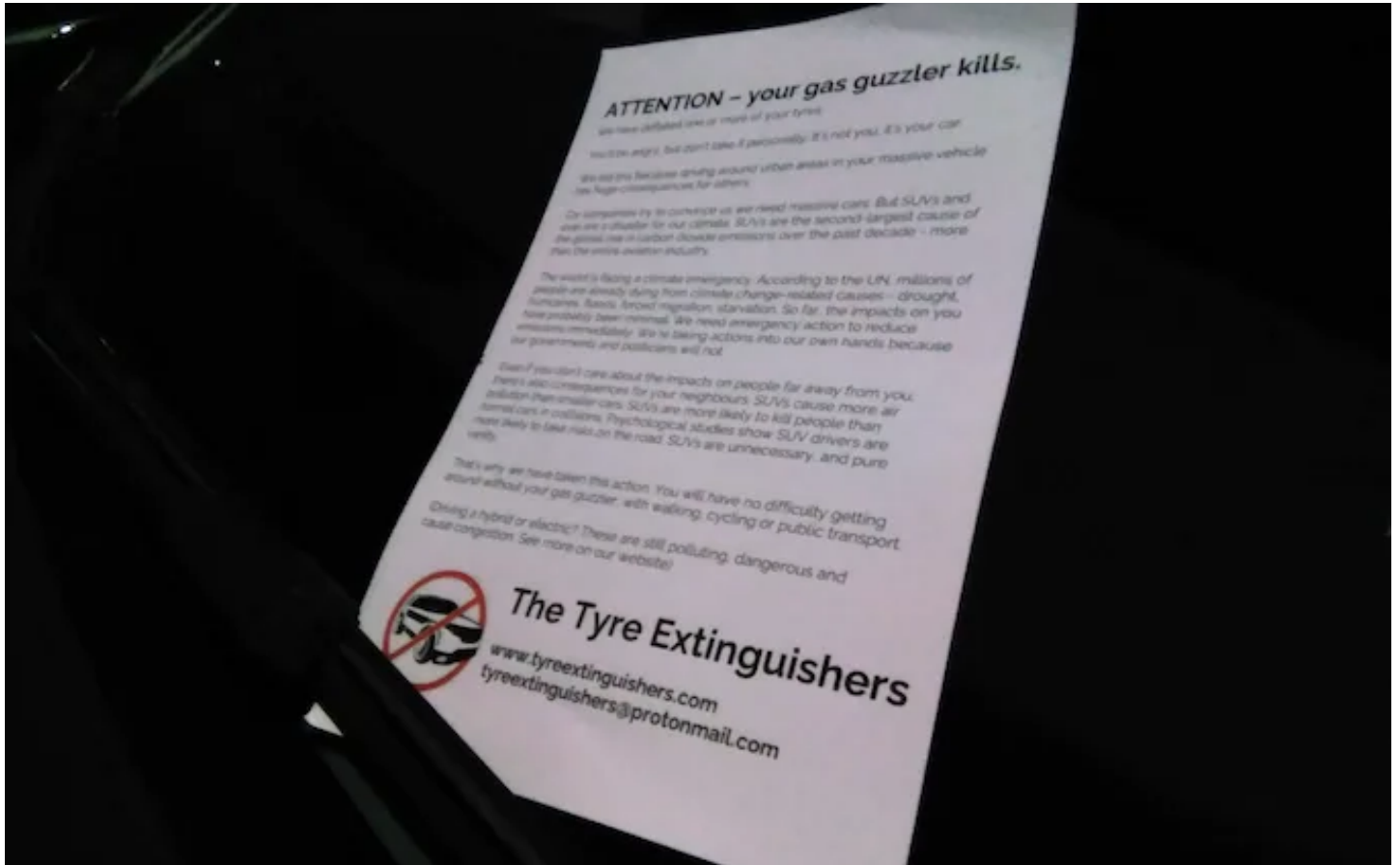


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The group left leaflets, explaining their actions, on the windscreens of the cars they had vandalised

Climate activists use couscous as a weapon in bizarre war on 'Chelsea tractors'

Tyre Extinguishers group vows to combat 'racist' air pollution by using couscous or lentils to let the air out of SUV tyres

By Olivia Rudgard, ENVIRONMENT CORRESPONDENT

8 March 2022 • 6:04pm

Climate activists have declared war on “[Chelsea tractors](#)” as they let down hundreds of tyres in middle-class neighbourhoods.

A group dubbing themselves the “Tyre Extinguishers” targeted hundreds of SUVs in cities including London, Bristol and Brighton on Monday night and told drivers to walk, cycle or take public transport instead.

In instructions published online, activists were encouraged to “target posh/middle-class areas” and deflate the tyres of large four-wheel-drive cars using lentils or couscous placed inside the valves to let the air out.



A member of the climate protest group is photographed deflating the tyres of a 4x4 parked on the street

Electric cars, as well as petrol and diesel vehicles, were targeted, as the group said these were still “polluting, dangerous and cause congestion”.

The group vowed to carry on targeting SUVs until they were banned or “taxed out of existence” as they said air pollution was “racist” and SUV drivers “tend to be richer, and therefore tend to be white”.

A representative for the group said: “Members are free to repeat the action whenever works for them, so it could happen tonight, and the night after, etc. We will repeat this until it is impossible to own an SUV in Britain.”

The group said it had “no official connection with any other movement” but the activity echoes that of direct action environmental groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Insulate Britain.

A spokesman for [Extinction Rebellion](#) said the project was “not an Extinction Rebellion action”.

‘Indiscriminate harassment’

Kate Basker, 33, from Bristol, who runs a digital marketing agency with her husband, said finding her tyres let down had made her worry about missing crucial hospital appointments.

She is pregnant and also has multiple sclerosis, meaning she sometimes relies on the car to get around when she can't walk or use public transport.

"Our car is on a public street, we can't have it off the road. I now feel quite vulnerable that someone is going to keep doing this to us, and it's going to happen on a day when I really need it.

"It's just indiscriminate harassment of people," she said.

William Lowe, 42, who runs gin business Cambridge Distillery, found a flat tyre on his electric Land Rover, making him half an hour late for a meeting about sustainability and waste reduction.

He and his wife use the four-wheel-drive for farm visits twice a week, and he said they "very carefully" chose it for its low emissions.

He said: "This is a blunt force and myopic attempted solution to a sophisticated and nuanced problem. To my mind, they've achieved only one goal which is to rally the very people that they should be trying to motivate in support against them.

"How you can take a subject which is so pressing, and relevant to every living person, and manage to unite them against you is an act of incredible incompetence."



Tyre Extinguishers

How To Spot An SUV

Why Are You
How To
How To Deflate

SUVs and 4x4s are easy to recognize because they are much larger than ordinary cars, towering above them and taking up huge amounts of space.

Some common (but not universal) characteristics of SUVs are:

- High ground clearance (greater distance between the ground and the chassis of the car)
- Taller than most other cars
- Coarser or larger tires than normal

Some common brands:

- Land Rover Discovery

The group posted instructions to their website on how to distinguish SUVs from other cars

Last year, motorways and slip roads around London and the south of England were deliberately blocked by [activists from Insulate Britain](#), an Extinction Rebellion splinter group who were calling for the Government to fund mass home insulation.

In that project, activists tried deliberately to get arrested and sent to prison in an effort to embarrass the Government as it prepared to host Cop26, the international climate conference which took place in Glasgow.

By contrast, “Tyre Extinguisher” activists have “no plans to get arrested”, the group said.

Police in Brighton and Cambridge are investigating the reports, with Cambridgeshire Constabulary treating the incidents as suspected criminal damage.

A spokesman for the Metropolitan Police said: “We are aware of a statement by Tyre Extinguisher alleging damage to vehicles at various locations in London by them.

“We ask that reports of this nature are made through the Met’s website and we will assess these to establish whether offences have been committed.

“At this time, we are not aware of any investigations being launched.”

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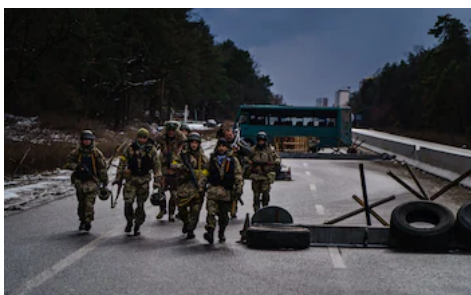
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