PREM 19/2197

CONFIDENTIAL FILING

Reduction in Government Circulars.

GOVERNMENT MACHINERY

MAY 1979

PREM 19/2197

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
NEW COVER							
~~4-8-82~~							
~~28.6.83~~							
~~4.7.83~~							
~~4.8.83~~							
~~30.8.83~~							
~~2.7.84~~							
~~26.7.84~~							
~~8/8/84~~							
~~4.7.85~~							
~~30/7/85~~							
~~31.7.86~~							
6.7.87							

file AB
a Bg

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

6 July 1987

Dear Robin,

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 2 July about the number of circulars issued by Government Departments to local authorities in 1986/87, and has noted the position without comment.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the other members of Cabinet and to Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours,

David.

DAVID NORGROVE

Robin Young, Esq.,
Department of the Environment.

KB

cc B9

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Prime Minister

The DTI stands out, showing an increase in circulars since 1979. Agree to enquire why?

No - they were a lot lower in absolute terms than many others. DRN 3/7.

PRIME MINISTER

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

On 29 July last year, I reported to you on the 7th year of the exercise to reduce the number of circulars issued by Government Departments to local authorities. I now report similarly on the 8th year of the exercise which ended on 31 March 1987.

Annex A shows that in the year ended 31 March 1987, 306 circulars were issued by "Whitehall" Departments, a decrease of 8% from 1985/86. When Scottish and Welsh Office figures are added, the result is a total of 480 issued in Great Britain, a decrease of 4% since 1985/86.

As you know, the very large reduction in the Government's first year in office has been followed, except in 1985/86, by a steady reduction in subsequent years and the total has been well below the target of a reduction by two-thirds of the circular issued in the last year of the Labour administration. This year's figure of 480 represents, in fact, a reduction of 74% from the 1979 figure of 1,873 (see Annex B). I would not, however, recommend that the target be amended to, say, a reduction of 75% from the 1979 figure. The scope of the legislative programme in the forthcoming session points to the need for some flexibility in approach to ensure that the essential communication required between local and central government is not hampered by arithemetical restraints. Nevertheless, I trust that Cabinet colleagues will continue to keep a close watch on the situation in their own Departments to ensure that the number of circulars is kept to the absolute minimum. As the figures in Annex B show, some Departments have been far more successful than others in reducing the number of

circulars they issue. I hope that those which have made least progress so far will be able to achieve greater reductions in this and subsequent years.

I am copying this minute to other members of the Cabinet and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

NR

2 July 1987

ANNEX A

NUMBER OF CIRCULARS ISSUED TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

"WHITEHALL DEPARTMENTS"	(1) 1985/86 year ended 31/3/86	(2) 1986/87 year ended 31/3/87	Comparison Column (2) as % of Column (1)
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food:-			
To Port Health Authorities etc. (meat importation)		25	
Other circulars		13	
MAFF TOTAL	34	38	118%
Department of Education and Science:-			
Circulars		8	
Administrative memoranda		2	
Circular Letters		40	
DES TOTAL	48	50	104%
Department of Employment:-			
(Careers service circulars)	2	nil	-
Department of the Environment:-			
Published circulars		21	
Circular letters		32	
DOE TOTAL	62	53	86%

	1985/86 (1) year ended 31/3/86	1986/87 (2) year ended 31/3/87	Comparison Column (2) as % of Column (1)
Department of Health and Social Security:-			
Local Authority circulars		13	
Local Authority social services letters		12	
Housing benefit circulars		13	
DHSS TOTAL	35	38	109%
Home Office:-			
To Local Authorities		38	
To Police Authorities only		22	
HOME OFFICE TOTAL	80	60	75%
Department of Trade and Industry:-			
Weights and measures		8	
Technical guidance notes etc		19	
Other circulars		21	
DTI TOTAL	49	48	98%
Department of Transport:-			
Main circulars		10	
Circulars (roads)		9	
Security advice circulars		-	
DTp TOTAL	22	19	86%

	1985/86 year ended 31/3/86	1986/87 year ended 31/3/87	Comparison Column (2) as % of Column (1)
TOTAL FOR "WHITEHALL DEPARTMENTS"	332	306	92%
Welsh Office	23	27	109%
Scottish Office	145	147	101%
TOTAL FOR GREAT BRITAIN	500	480	96%
NUMBERS OF CIRCULARS ISSUED TO HEALTH AUTHORITIES			
Department of Health and Social Security	484	490	101%
Welsh Office	83	87	104%
Scottish Office	120	156	130%

ANNEX B

Circulars issued to Local Authorities

"Whitehall" Departments	year ended April 79	year ended April 80	year ended March 86	year ended March 87	% change since 1979
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food	102	75	34	38	- 63%
Department of Education and Science	127	31	48	50	- 61%
Department of Employment (Careers Service circulars)	51	28	2	nil	-100%
Department of the Environment	222	70	62	53	- 76%
Department of Health and Social Security	64	11	35	38	- 41%
Home Office	151	76	80	60	- 60%
Department of Trade and Industry	45	58	49	48	+ 7%
Department of Transport	41	6	22	19	- 54%
Total for Whitehall Depts.	803	355	332	306	- 62%
Welsh Office	623	101	23	27	- 95%
Scottish Office	447	215	145	147	- 67%
Total for Great Britain	1873	671	500	480	- 74%
DHSS Circulars to Health Authorities	1235	866	484	490	- 60%

NOTE: Totals for Great Britain in the years 1981 - 1985 were as follows:

1981	614	1983	562	1985	465
1982	592	1984	506		

GOUT MACH

CIRCUIT

5/79



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

31 July 1986

Dear Robin,

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 29 July about the number of circulars issued by Government departments to local authorities.

The Prime Minister has noted the assessment that the total of circulars issued appears to be stabilising around the 500 mark. She recognises that the number of circulars has to stabilise at some point, but she has commented that 500 a year is far too high. Departments must aim for further reductions.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the members of the Cabinet and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

Yours,
David.

DAVID NORGROVE)

Robin Young, Esq.,
Department of the Environment.

10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister!

For GB this is the first increase in circulars since 1979. The number has to stabilise at some point. But agree that 500 a year still seems too many and that departments should look for a further reduction?

DRN
30/7

Yes - it is ridiculously large

CC(85)

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

PRIME MINISTER

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

On 27 June last year, Patrick Jenkin reported to you on the 6th year of the exercise to reduce the number of circulars issued by Government Departments to local authorities.

I now report similarly on the 7th year of the exercise which ended on 31 March 1986. (As a result of the decision to bring the circular year - previously May to April - in line with the financial year, the 11 month figures for 1984/5 in the last report have been annualised).

Annex A shows that in the year ended 31 March 1986, 332 circulars were issued by "Whitehall" Departments, a pro-rata increase of 13% from 1984/5. When Scottish and Welsh Office figures are added, the result is a total of 500 issued in Great Britain, a pro-rata increase of 7% from 1984/5. As you know, the very large reduction in the Government's first year in office has been followed by a steady reduction in subsequent years, and the total has been well below the target of a reduction by two thirds of the circulars issued in the last year of the labour administration. This year's figures of 500 represents, in fact, a reduction of 73% from the 1979 figure of 1,873 (see Annex B). Clearly, it was easier in the early years to trim the previous excesses and, although it is too early to be certain, the total appears to be stabilising around the 500 mark. (The 1983/4 figure was 506).

In my Department, instructions have been issued that the ceiling figure of a reduction by two thirds from the 1979 level must be regarded as an upper limit, not an allocation, and that the policy must be to keep the numbers as low as possible. I hope that Cabinet colleagues will keep a close watch on the situation in their own Departments to ensure that the number of circulars continues to be kept to the absolute minimum. As the figures in Annex B show, some Departments have been far more successful than

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

others in reducing the number of circulars they issue. I hope that those which have made least progress so far will be able to achieve greater reductions this year.

In the last three years, the figures for DHSS communications to health authorities have not been available when the main report has been prepared. This year, however, total figures are included at the end of Annexes A and B, and it can be seen that the number reduced by 8% over the past year.

I am copying this minute to other members of the Cabinet, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

N R

29 July 1986

ANNEX A

NUMBER OF CIRCULARS ISSUED TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

	1984/85 (1) 12/11ths of number issued in year	1985/86 (2) 12 months ended 31/3/86	Comparison Column (2) as % of Column (1)
"WHITEHALL DEPARTMENTS"			
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food:-			
To Port Health Authorities etc. (meat importation)		21	
Other circulars		13	
MAFF TOTAL	35	34	97%
Department of Education and Science:-			
Circulars		9	
Administrative memoranda		2	
Circular letters		37	
DES TOTAL	43	48	111%
Department of Employment:-			
(Careers service circulars)	1	2	200%
Department of the Environment:-			
Published circulars		31	
Circular letters		31	
DOE TOTAL	56	62	110%

		1984/85 (1) 12/11ths of number	1985/86 (2) 12 months ended	Comparison Column (2) as % of Column (1)
Department of Health and Social Security:-				
Local Authority circulars			17	
Local Authority social services letters			7	
Housing benefit circulars			11	
	DHSS TOTAL	35	35	100%
Home Office:-				
To Local Authorities			54	
To Police Authorities only			26	
	HOME OFFICE TOTAL	59	80	135%
Department of Trade and Industry:-				
Weights and measures			1	
Technical guidance notes etc			38	
Other circulars			10	
	DTI TOTAL	44	49	111%
Department of Transport:-				
Main circulars			6	
Circulars (roads)			4	
Trunk road management and maintenance notices			-	
Security advice circulars			12	
	DTp TOTAL	19	22	115%

TOTAL FOR "WHITEHALL DEPARTMENTS	292	332	113%
Welsh Office	43	23	53%
Scottish Office	130	145	111%
TOTAL FOR GREAT BRITAIN	465	500	107%

NUMBERS OF CIRCULARS ISSUED TO HEALTH AUTHORITIES

Department of Health and Social Security:-

Multidisciplinary		91	
Single discipline		239	
Unavoidables		154	
TOTAL	524	484	92%

ANNEX B

Circulars issued to Local Authorities

"Whitehall" Departments	year ended April 79	year ended April 80	year ended April 81	year ended April 82	year ended April 83	year ended April 84	year ended March 85	year ended March 86	% change since 1979
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food	102	75	91	80	63	52	35	34	- 65%
Department of Education and Science	127	31	32	43	43	42	43	48	- 62%
Department of Employment (Careers Service circulars)	51	28	12	8	9	2	1	2	- 96%
Department of the Environment	222	70	70	74	69	51	56	62	- 72%
Department of Health and Social Security	64	11	14	18	23	36	35	35	- 45%
Home Office	151	76	80	80	86	81	59	80	- 47%
Department of Trade and Industry	45	58	60	46	50	52	44	49	+ 9%
Department of Transport	41	6	5	6	4	13	19	22	- 46%
Total for Whitehall Depts.	803	355	365	355	347	329	292	332	- 59%
Welsh Office	623	101	69	97	61	64	43	23	- 96%
Scottish Office	447	215	180	140	154	113	130	145	- 68%
Total for Great Britain	1873	671	614	592	562	506	465	500	- 73%
Circulars to Health Authorities	1235	866	695	654	607	581	524	484	- 60%

GOUT MACH
REDUCTION
IN
GOUT CIRCULARS
5/79





NBPM
AT 3/7

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434
My ref:

Your ref:

30 July 1985

Dear Andrew

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Further to my Secretary of State's minute of 27 June, I enclose a schedule giving figures of "circular-type" communications issued by DHSS to health authorities in the 11 months ended 31 March 1985. You will observe that overall the number of such communications has continued to decline.

I am sending a copy of this letter and its enclosure to the Private Secretaries to the other members of the Cabinet and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

Alan Davis

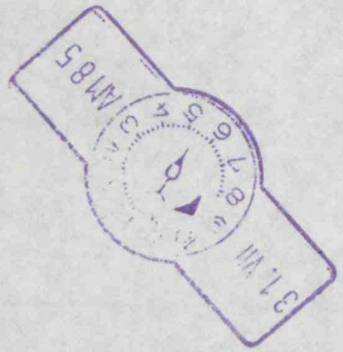
A H DAVIS
Private Secretary

Andrew Turnbull Esq

FK/11

Category	Description	No. issued in baseline period (1 May 78–30 Apr 79)*	No. issued in first year of controls (1 May 79–30 Apr 80)	No. issued in second year of controls (1 May 80–30 Apr 81)	No. issued in third year of controls (1 May 81–30 Apr 82)	No. issued in fourth year of controls (1 May 82–30 Apr 83)	No issued in fifth year of controls (1 May 83–30 Apr 84)	No issued in sixth year of controls (1 May 84–31 March 85)	% target reductions	% reduction over 6 years
1. Multi-Disciplinary	Circulars and Notices used to convey to Health Authorities instructions, guidance or information of an interest to more than one discipline	176	68	66	62	68	81	93	50%	58.6%
2. Single Disciplinary	Material which, in general, is of an ephemeral interest to a single discipline within the NHS, issued in letter form (ad hoc or in a numbered series), bulletins or information sheets	702	450	322	301	293	278	255	25%	55%
3. Unavoidables	Dealing with personnel, pay and training (issued essentially by the DHSS on behalf of the NHS), hazardous equipment or safety warnings, those calling for statistical returns and those issued to Family Practitioner Committees dealing with fees and conditions for independent contractors	357*	348	307	291	246	222	132	No Target	27.9%

*baseline for cat. 3 is calendar year 1978



Govt MACH
Redn in Govt Circulars
May 79

31 VIII 87 6 5 4 3 AM85

FLE

DA

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

1 July 1985

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 22 June reporting on the number of circulars issued by departments to local authorities. She agrees that a further reduction of 9% in the latest year represents a very satisfactory outcome.

(Andrew Turnbull)

John Ballard, Esq.,
Department of the Environment.

CC(85) 6

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Prime Minister (2)

A satisfactory outcome. A 9 per cent reduction in 1984-85 compares with an average of 7 per cent in the previous 4 years. The figure is about ¼ of Labour's last year in office.

AT 27/6

PRIME MINISTER

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

On 28 June last year I reported to you, in respect of England, on the 5th year of the exercise to reduce the number of circulars issued by Government Departments to local authorities.

I now report similarly on the 6th year of the exercise, which ended 31 March 1985 instead of 30 April as in previous years. I introduced this minor change in order to bring the "circular year" in line with the financial year because Departments' activities are generally geared to the April-March cycle and some standardisation is helpful on efficiency and forward-planning grounds. To achieve a fair comparison, therefore, the figures for 1984/85 have been compared with 11/12ths of the 1983/84 total reported last year.

Annex A shows that in the 11 months ended 31 March 1985, 266 circulars were issued by "Whitehall" Departments, a pro-rata reduction of 12% from 1983/84. When Scottish Office and Welsh Office figures are added, the result is a total of 424 issued in Great Britain, a pro-rata reduction of 9% from 1983/84. (Figures for previous years at Annex B). I think you may agree that once again there has been a very satisfactory reduction in numbers.

Figures for DHSS communications to health authorities will, as in the last 2 years, be forwarded separately to your Private Secretary as soon as they become available.

I am copying this minute to the other members of the Cabinet, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

PJ

P J

27 June 1985

ANNEX A

NUMBERS OF CIRCULARS ISSUED TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

	1983/4 (1) 11/12ths of number issued in year	1984/5 (2) 11 months ended 31/3/85	Comparison Col (2) as % of Col (1)
"WHITEHALL DEPARTMENTS"			
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food:-			
To Port Health Authorities etc. (meat importations)		17	
Other Circulars		15	
MAFF TOTAL	48	32	67%
Department of Education and Science:-	38	39	103%
Department of Employment:-			
(Careers Service Circulars)	1	1	100%
Department of the Environment:-			
Published circulars		27	
Circular letters		24	
DOE TOTAL	47	51	109%
Department of Health and Social Security:-			
Local authority circulars		19	
Local authority social services letters		6	
Housing benefit circulars		7	
DHSS TOTAL	33	32	97%

	1983/4 (1) 11/12ths of number issued in year	1984/5 (2) 11 months ended 31/3/85	Comparison Col (2) as % of Col (1)
Home Office:-			
To local authorities		37	
To police authorities only		17	
HOME OFFICE TOTAL	74	54	73%
Department of Trade and Industry:-			
Weights and Measures, Technical Guidance Notes etc.		33	
Other Circulars		7	
DTI TOTAL	48	40	83%
Department of Transport:-			
Main Circulars		6	
Circulars (Roads)		6	
Security Advice Circulars		4	
Trunk Road Management and maintenance notices		1	
DTp TOTAL	12	17	142%
Total for "Whitehall" Departments	301	266	88%
Welsh Office	59	39	66%
Scottish Office	104	119	114%
TOTAL FOR GREAT BRITAIN:	464	424	91% (i.e. a reduction of 9% on 1983/4).

ANNEX B

	(1) 12 months ended 30/4/79	(2) 12 months ended 30/4/80	(3) 12 months ended 30/4/81	(4) 12 months ended 30/4/82	(5) 12 months ended 30/4/83	(6) 12 months ended 30/4/84	(7) Col (6) totals as % of Col (1) totals
"WHITEHALL DEPARTMENTS"							
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food:-							
To Port Health Authorities etc (meat importations)	70	54	71	61	53	36	
Other circulars	32 102	21 75	20 91	19 80	10 63	16 52	51%
Department of Education & Science	127	31	32	43	43	42	33%
Department of Employment (Camera Service circulars)	51	28	12	8	9	2	4%
Department of the Environment:-							
Published circulars	64	24	28	35	31	26	
Circular letters, etc	109	37	39	30	30	25	
Letters to water authorities	49 222	9 70	4 71	9 74	8 69	- 51	22%
Department of Health & Social Security:-							
Local authority circulars	21	5	6	13	9	25	
Local authority social services letters	43	6	8	5	5	3	
Housing benefit circulars	- 64	- 11	- 14	- 18	9 23*	8 36	56%
Home Office:-							
To local authorities	118	49	58	57	68	62	
To police authorities only	33 151	27 76	22 80	23 80	18 86	19 81	54%

* revised figure

ANNEX B

ANNEX B

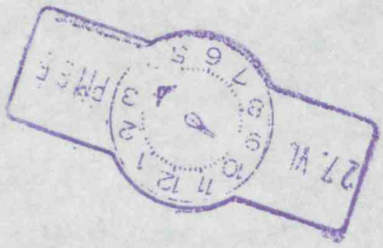
	12 months ended 30/4/79	12 months ended 30/4/80	12 months ended 30/4/81	12 months ended 30/4/82	12 months ended 30/4/83	12 months ended 30/4/84	Col (6) totals as % of Col (1) totals
Department of Trade (and Industry, from 6/83):-							
Weights and measures technical guidance notes, etc.	26	39	37	27	29	38	
Other circulars	19 45	19 58	23 60	19 46	21 50	14 52	115%
Department of Transport:-							
Main circulars	12	2	1	3	1	2	
Circulars (roads)	29	4	4	3	3	4	
Security advice circulars	- 41	- 6	- 5	- 6	- 4	7+ 13	32%
Total for "Whitehall" Departments	803	355	365	355	347*	329	41%
Welsh Office	623	101	69	97	61	64	10%
Scottish Office	447	215	180	140	154	113	25%
TOTAL FOR GREAT BRITAIN:	1873	671	614	592	562*	506	27% (i.e. reduction on 1978/79 of 73%)

* revised figure

\+ previously issued by Dept. of Trade

Govt. Mach May 1979

Reductions in Govt Circulars



CCNO

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

My ref:

Your ref:

DwB
8/8

8 August 1984

Dear Andrew

CIRCULARS

Further to my Secretary of State's minute of 28 June, to which you referred in your letter of 2 July to John Ballard, I enclose a schedule giving figures of "circulars-type" communications issued by DHSS to health authorities in the 12 months ended 30 April 1984. You will observe that, overall, the number of such communications has continued to decline.

I am sending a copy of this letter and enclosure to David Peretz (H M Treasury), John Graham (Scottish Office), Steve Godber (DHSS), Colin Jones (Welsh Office) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office), and to Sir Robin Ibbs.

Yours,

Andrew Allberry

ANDREW ALLBERRY
Private Secretary

Andrew Turnbull Esq

Category	Description	No. issued in baseline period (1 May 78-30 Apr 79)*	No. issued in first year of controls (1 May 79-30 Apr 80)	No. issued in second year of controls (1 May 80-30 Apr 81)	No. issued in third year of controls (1 May 81-30 Apr 82)	No. issued in fourth year of controls (1 May 82-30 Apr 83)	No issued in fifth year of controls (1 May 83-30 Apr 84)	% target reductions	% reduction over 5 years
1. Multi-Disciplinary	Circulars and Notices used to convey to Health Authorities instructions, guidance or information of an interest to more than one discipline	176	68	66	62	68	81	50%	60.8
2. Single Disciplinary	Material which, in general, is of an ephemeral interest to a single discipline within the NHS, issued in letter form (ad hoc or in a numbered series), bulletins or information sheets	702	450	322	301	293	278	25%	53.2
3. Unavoidables	Dealing with personnel, pay and training (issued essentially by the DHSS on behalf of the NHS), hazardous equipment or safety warnings, those calling for statistical returns and those issued to Family Practitioner Committees dealing with fees and conditions for independent contractors	357*	348	307	291	246	222	No Target	20.8

*baseline for cat. 3 is calendar year 1978

Gert Mach : Gert. Curators 5/79

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

26 July, 1984

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND HEALTH AUTHORITIES

The Prime Minister has noted the report, attached to your letter to David Barclay of 24 July, on the progress being made in Wales to reduce the number of Departmental circulars to local authorities and health authorities. She very much hopes that every effort will be made to hold down the number of circulars and if possible reduce it.

I am copying this letter to David Peretz (HM Treasury), John Graham (Scottish Office), Steve Godber (Department of Health and Social Security), Mary Brown (Lord Gowrie's Office), Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office) and to Sir Robin Ibbs (Efficiency Unit).

(Andrew Turnbull)

Miss J. Roberts,
Welsh Office.

MPO 4077 Ovington
3963

Y SWYDDFA GYMREIG
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switsfwrdd)
01-233 8545 (Llinell Union)

ODDI WRTH YSGRIFENNYDD
PREIFAT YSGRIFENNYDD
GWLADOL CYMRU

WELSH OFFICE
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switchboard)
01-233 8545 (Direct Line)

FROM THE PRIVATE SECRETARY
TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR WALES

24 July 1984

Dear David,

I am writing to report progress in the year 1 May 1983 to 13 April 1984 in the campaign to reduce the number of departmental circulars.

During this period, the Welsh Office issued 64 circulars to local authorities. I attach a table showing our progress since May 1979. This demonstrates that the figure has now levelled out at roughly 10% of that which applied in 1978/79. In addition, officials have been asked to keep essential circulars as short as possible.

We have also issued 156 circulars to the health authorities. This represents a further substantial reduction from the previous year's figure.

As in the past, my Secretary of State will continue to keep a close watch on the number and length of circulars issued. Realistically, however, there is unlikely to be scope for further significant reductions and his concern now will be to keep the numbers down to the current level.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of the Cabinet and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Yours sincerely

Judy Roberts

MISS J H ROBERTS

D Barclay Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

WELSH OFFICE

CONTROL OF CIRCULARS

1. Circulars to Local Authorities

Year	No Issued
1978/79	623
1979/80	101
1980/81	69
1981/82	97*
1982/83	61
1983/84	64

*increase resulted from introduction of separate Rate Support Grant arrangements in Wales

2. Circulars to Health Authorities

Year	No Issued
1978/79	782
1979/80	471
1980/81	383
1981/82	451*
1982/83	236
1983/84	156

*increase resulted from work on NHS re-organisation.

JUL 1984

FILE

RM

B/C: N. OWEN

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

2 July, 1984

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 28 June and welcomes the reduction in circulars to local authorities. She has noted that, after the very large reduction in the Government's first year in office, the number of circulars has been falling by on average 7 per cent a year. She hopes this progress will be maintained.

I am sending a copy of this letter to David Peretz (HM Treasury), John Graham(Scottish Office), Steve Godber (DHSS), Colin Jones (Welsh Office), Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office) and to Robin Ibbs (Efficiency Unit).

(A. Turnbull)

J. Ballard, Esq.,
Department of the Environment.

10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister (2)

After a cut to about ⅓rd of Labour's circulars in the Government's first year, the number has been reduced by on average 7 per cent a year in the subsequent 4 years.

Agree I acknowledge good progress while hoping that reduction continues?

AT
29/6

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

cc NO

PRIME MINISTER

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

On 27 June last year I reported to you, in respect of England, on the fourth year of the exercise to reduce the number of circulars issued by Government Departments to local authorities.

I now report similarly on the fifth year of the exercise, ended 30 April 1984. The Annex to this minute shows that 329 circulars were issued by "Whitehall" Departments to local authorities during the period, representing a 59% reduction on the number issued during the last 12 months of the Labour administration. When Scottish Office and Welsh Office figures are added, the result is a total of 506 issues in Great Britain during the period, representing a reduction of no less than 73% on the comparable figure for 1978/79. I think you may agree that this is a very satisfactory outcome. With each successive year of the exercise, since the initial 64% cut achieved in 1979/80, the reduction has become progressively larger.

Figures for DHSS communications to health authorities will, as last year, be forwarded separately to your Private Secretary as soon as they become available.

I am copying this minute to the other members of the Cabinet, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

PJ

P J

28 June 1984

jgh/k

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

ANNEX

	(1) 12 months ended 30/4/79		(2) 12 months ended 30/4/80		(3) 12 months ended 30/4/81		(4) 12 months ended 30/4/82		(5) 12 months ended 30/4/83		(6) 12 months ended 30/4/84		(7) Col (6) totals as % of Col (1) totals
"WHITEHALL DEPARTMENTS"													
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food:-													
To Port Health Authorities etc (meat importations)	70		54		71		61		53		36		
Other circulars	32	102	21	75	20	91	19	80	10	63	16	52	51%
Department of Education & Science		127		31		32		43		43		42	33%
Department of Employment (Careers Service circulars)		51		28		12		8		9		2	4%
Department of the Environment:-													
Published circulars	64		24		28		35		31		26		
Circular letters, etc	109		37		39		30		30		25		
Letters to water authorities	49		9		4		9		8		-		
		222		70		71		74		69		51	22%
Department of Health & Social Security:-													
Local authority circulars	21		5		6		13		9		25		
Local authority social services letters	43		6		8		5		5		3		
Housing benefit circulars	-	64	-	11	-	14	-	18	9	23*	8	36	56%
Home Office:-													
To local authorities	118		49		58		57		68		62		
To police authorities only	33	151	27	76	22	80	23	80	18	86	19	81	54%

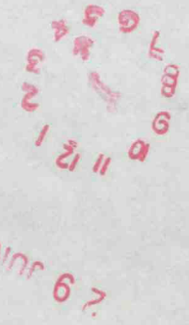
* revised figure

	12 months ended 30/4/79		12 months ended 30/4/80		12 months ended 30/4/81		12 months ended 30/4/82		12 months ended 30/4/83		12 months ended 30/4/84		Col (6) totals as % of Col (1) totals
Department of Trade (and Industry, from 6/83):-													
Weights andmeasures technical guidance notes, etc.	26		39		37		27		29		38		
Other circulars	19	45	19	58	23	60	19	46	21	50	14	52	115%
Department of Transport:-													
Main circulars	12		2		1		3		1		2		
Circulars (roads)	29		4		4		3		3		4		
Security advice circulars	-	41	-	6	-	5	-	6	-	4	7+	13	32%
Total for "Whitehall" Departments		803		355		365		355		347*		329	41%
Welsh Office		623		101		69		97		61		64	10%
Scottish Office		447		215		180		140		154		113	25%
TOTAL FOR GREAT BRITAIN:		1873		671		614	-8%	592	-3.6%	562*	-5.1%	506	-10.0%	27% (i.e. reduction on 1978/79 of 73%)

* revised figure

\+ previously issued by Dept. of Trade

GNT MACH: Reduction in Gnt Circulars
May 79



LW

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

My ref: J/PSO/14393/83
Your ref:

31/8

30 August 1983

Dear Tim,

Thank you for your letter of 11 August, about circulars to local authorities.

My Secretary of State is taking appropriate steps within this Department to ensure compliance wherever possible with the Prime Minister's view that circulars should be reduced in length. No doubt colleagues in other Departments concerned are taking similar action.

Meanwhile, I enclose the DHSS figures promised in the penultimate paragraph of my Secretary of State's minute of 27 June to the Prime Minister. You will observe that, overall, the number of "circular-type" communications to health authorities has continued to decline.

I am sending a copy of this letter and its enclosure to the Private Secretaries to other members of the Cabinet and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely

Helen Ghosh

MRS H F GHOSH
Private Secretary

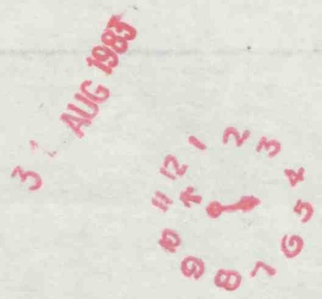
Tim Flesher Esq

Category	Description	No.issued in baseline period (1 May 78-30 Apr 79)*	No.issued in first year of controls (1 May 79-30 Apr 80)	No.issued in second year of controls (1 May 80-30 Apr 81)	No.issued in third year of controls (1 May 81-30 Apr 82)	No.issued in fourth year of controls (1 May 82-30 Apr 83)	% target reductions	% reduction over 4 years
1. Multi-Disciplinary	Circulars and Notices used to convey to Health Authorities instructions, guidance or information of an interest to more than one discipline	176	68	66	62	68	50%	62.5%
2.Single Disciplinary	Material which, in general, is of an ephemeral interest to a single discipline within the NHS, issued in letter form (ad hoc or in a numbered series), bulletins or information sheets.	702	450	322	301	293	25%	51.4%
3. Unavoidables	Dealing with personnel, pay and training (issued essentially by the DHSS on behalf of the NHS), hazardous equipment or safety warnings, those calling for statistical returns and those issued to Family Practitioner Committees dealing with fees and conditions for independent contractors.	357 *	348	307	291	246	NO TARGET	16.5%

* baseline for cat. 3 is calendar year 1978

Goo Naen May 79

Reduction in Goo Circulars



c. HO NIO
WO MOD
HMT MAFF
FCO SO
DES WO
WPO DTI
DTrans. DHSS
CS-HMT WPS
Dieng. Dieng
CDL CO
(DEW.)

HL

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

11 August 1983

Dear Helen,

Thank you for your letter of 3 August about circulars to local authorities. The Prime Minister agrees with the approach set out in your letter to the reduction of circulars to local authorities. She has commented however that if we cannot reduce the number of such circulars by very much we should try to shorten them instead.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the other members of Cabinet and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

Tim Flesher

Tim Flesher

Mrs. Helen Ghosh,
Department of the Environment.

TMP

VM

Agreed - try shortening them instead!

MT

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

My ref: J/PSO/13380/83

Your ref:

Prime Minister:

Do you accept the Environment Secretary's view that the number of circulars to local authorities cannot and should not be reduced further by a great deal?

TT 4/8

3 August 1983,

Dear Tim

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

My Secretary of State has seen your letter of 1 July, recording the Prime Minister's comments on progress with reducing the number of Circulars.

Mr Jenkin attaches great importance to keeping down the number of Circulars issued by his Department, and to continued vigilance in questioning the need for Circulars. Our figure in 1982/83 was, of course, below the "target" set at the beginning of the exercise - and, indeed, represented the lowest figure achieved in the period.

However, my Secretary of State has doubts about achieving again the very dramatic reduction that occurred in the first year of the last Parliament. That reflected a major and once-for-all change in the way in which Departments dealing with local government go about their business. So far as DOE is concerned, my Secretary of State considers that the approach to the issue of circulars is now broadly on the right lines - though he will continue to seek further reductions wherever possible.

The approach suggested in your letter would, of course, have major implications for other Departments as well as for DOE. So far as I am aware, no other Minister's office has responded to your letter. But if there were to be a new initiative in this field it would, in my Secretary of State's view, have to be preceded by collective discussion of the issues - and, in particular, of the need to continue to communicate Government policies to local authorities whilst avoiding the issue of unnecessary advice.

I am copying this to Private Secretaries to members of the Cabinet and to Richard Hatfield.

Yours sincerely

Helen Ghosh

MRS H F GHOSH
Private Secretary

T Flesher Esq

Govt Mach.
May '79,
Reduction of
Govt Circulars.

4 AUG 1983

FILE

SH

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

1 July, 1983

The Prime Minister has seen your Secretary of State's minute of 27 June about circulars to local authorities. She was pleased with the progress on the reduction of circulars which has been made over the course of the previous Parliament but is slightly concerned that nearly all the reduction took place in the first year. She very much hopes therefore that we shall be aiming for a similar proportionate reduction in the first year of this Parliament. On this basis, she has agreed that your Secretary of State may make a statement in the House to indicate progress with the exercise and its continuation.

I am sending a copy of this to Private Secretaries of members of Cabinet and to Richard Hatfield.

TIMOTHY FLESHER

Mrs. Helen Ghosh,
Department of the Environment

Y SWYDDFA GYMREIG
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switsfwrdd)
01-233 8545 (Llinell Union)

ODDI WRTH YSGRIFENNYDD
PREIFAT YSGRIFENNYDD
GWLADOL CYMRU

WELSH OFFICE
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switchboard)
01-233 8545 (Direct Line)

FROM THE PRIVATE SECRETARY
TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR WALES

28 June 1983

Dear Tim,

I am writing to report progress in the year 1 May 1982 to 30 April 1983 in the campaign to reduce the number of departmental circulars.

During this period the Welsh Office issued 61 circulars to local authorities. I attach a table showing our progress since May 1979 from which you will see that this represents a significant reduction over previous years and brings us down to 10% of our figure in the base year, 1978/79.

We also issued 236 circulars to Health Authorities. Here again we have achieved a significant reduction.

My Secretary of State will continue to keep a close watch on the number of circulars issued by the Department to ensure that they are restricted to essential matters.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to Members of the Cabinet and to Sir Robert Armstrong,

Yours ever,
Judy Roberts

MISS J H ROBERTS

Tim Flesher Esq
Private Secretary

WELSH OFFICE

Control of Circulars

1. Circulars to Local Authorities

Year	No Issued
1978/79	623
1979/80	101
1980/81	69
1981/82	97*
1982/83	61

*Increase resulted from the introduction of separate Rate Support Grant arrangements in Wales.

2. Circulars to Health Authorities

Year	No Issued
1978/79	782
1979/80	471
1980/81	383
1981/82	451*
1982/83	236

*Increase resulted from work on NHS re-organisation.

June 1983

Govt. Mach : Reduction in Govt. Circulars

5/79

NG

Prime Minister

It seems to me that the real reduction in the number of circulars was made between 1979 and 1980 and that not much has been achieved since. In agreeing to a written statement, would you like me to say that you hope the reduction in the first year of this Parliament will be as large as in the first year of the last?

— CM 28/6

Yes - we are due for another substantial reduction

Prime Minister

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

On 18 June last year Michael Heseltine reported to you, in respect of England, on the third year of the exercise to reduce the number of circulars issued by Government Departments to local authorities.

I now report similarly on the fourth year of the exercise, ended 30 April 1983. The Annex to this minute shows that 338 circulars were issued by "Whitehall" Departments during the period, representing a 58% reduction on the number issued during the last 12 months of the Labour administration. If Scottish Office and Welsh Office figures are added, the result is a total of 553 issues during the period, representing a reduction of 70% on the comparable figure for 1978/79. This is even better than the 67% and 68% reductions achieved in the second and third years of the exercise respectively. I should like to make a statement in answer to a written question in the House, as Michael did in 1980, 1981 and 1982, to indicate that progress with the exercise is being fully maintained.

Figures for DHSS communications to health authorities will, as last year, be forwarded separately to your Private Secretary as soon as they become available. This need not hold up my proposed statement to the House.

I am copying this minute to the other members of the Cabinet, and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

PJ

PJ

27 June 1983

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

	(1) 12 months ended 30/4/79	(2) 12 months ended 30/4/80	(3) 12 months ended 30/4/81	(4) 12 months ended 30/4/82	(5) 12 months ended 30/4/83	(6) Col (5) totals as % of Col (1) totals
"WHITEHALL" DEPARTMENTS						
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food:-						
To Port Health Authorities etc (meat importations)	70	54	71	61	53	
Other Circulars	32	21	20	19	10	
	102	75	91	80	63	62%
Department of Education & Science	127	31	32	43	43	34%
Department of Employment (Careers Service Circulars)	51	28	12	8	9	18%
Department of the Environment:-						
Published circulars	64	24	28	35	31	
Guidance notes, reports, etc*	39	8	7	10	10	
Circular letters*	119	38	36	29	28	
	222	70	71	74	69	31%
Department of Health & Social Security:-						
Local authority social services letters	43	6	8	5	5	
Local authority circulars	21	5	6	13	9	
	64	11	14	18	14	22%
Home Office:-						
To local authorities	118	49	58	57	68	
To police authorities	33	27	22	23	18	
	151	76	80	80	86	57%

*Includes communications to water authorities

	(1) 12 months ended 30/4/79	(2) 12 months ended 30/4/80	(3) 12 months ended 30/4/81	(4) 12 months ended 30/4/82	(5) 12 months ended 30/4/83	(6) Col (5) totals as % of Col (1) totals
Department of Trade:-						
Weights and measures technical guidance notes	26	39	37	27	29	
Other circulars	19	19	23	19	21	
	45	58	60	46	50	111%
Department of Transport:-						
Main circulars	12	2	1	3	1	
Circulars (roads)	29	4	4	3	3	
	41	6	5	6	4	10%
Total for "Whitehall" Departments	803	355	365	355	338	42%
Welsh Office	623	101	69	97	61	10%
Scottish Office	447	215	180	140	154	34%
TOTAL FOR GREAT BRITAIN:	1873	671	614	592	553	29.5% (ie reduction on 1978/79 of 70.5%)

GOV MACH : Reductions in Gov. Circulars

May 79.



PPS pse. ~~E~~ 2

Govt. Mach.

MT

PRIME MINISTER

CIRCULARS

You will recall seeing the figures for the number of circulars issued by Government departments to local authorities during 1981/82 which showed a further decline of 21% on 1980/81 and 48% on 1978/79. We have now received the figures for circulars to health authorities which are set out in the table below.

	1978/9	1979/80	1980/1	1981/2	% change on 80/1	% change on 78/9
DHSS	1235	866	695	654	- 6	- 47
SCOTTISH OFFICE	255	167	142	141	-	- 45
WELSH OFFICE	782	471	383	451	+18	- 42
Total:-	2272	1504	1220	1246	+ 2	- 45

As you will see the figure for 1981/82 is about the same as that for 1980/81 and has maintained a 45% reduction since 1978/79. The best performance is by DHSS which achieved a further reduction of 6% and the worst by the Welsh Office which produced an increase of 18% which is, I understand, the result of the re-organisation of the NHS in Wales and is, therefore, temporary.

MT.

TF

4 August, 1982

VM

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref:

Your ref:

3 August 1982

Dear Tim

CIRCULARS

Further to the Secretary of State's minute of 18 June, to which you referred in your letter of 19 July to David Edmonds, I enclose a schedule giving figures for "circular-type" communications issued by DHSS to health authorities. You will observe that the number of issues in the 12 months ended 30 April 1982 represented an event greater reduction than that achieved in 1980/81.

I am sending a copy of this letter and its enclosure to Private Secretaries to members of the Cabinet, to David Wright (Cabinet Office) and to Clive Priestly (Sir Derek Rayner's Office.)

yours,

Helen Ghosh

MRS H F GHOSH
Private Secretary

Tim Flesher Esq

VM

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref:

Your ref:

3 August 1982

Dear Tim

CIRCULARS

Further to the Secretary of State's minute of 18 June, to which you referred in your letter of 19 July to David Edmonds, I enclose a schedule giving figures for "circular-type" communications issued by DHSS to health authorities. You will observe that the number of issues in the 12 months ended 30 April 1982 represented an event greater reduction than that achieved in 1980/81.

I am sending a copy of this letter and its enclosure to Private Secretaries to members of the Cabinet, to David Wright (Cabinet Office) and to Clive Priestly (Sir Derek Rayner's Office.)

yours,

Helen Ghosh

MRS H F GHOSH
Private Secretary

Tim Flesher Esq

Category	Description	No issued in baseline period (1 May 78- 30 April 79)	No issued in first year of controls (1 May 79- 30 April 80)	No issued in second year of controls (1 May 80- 30 April 81)	No issued in third year of controls (1 May 81- 30 April 82)	% target reduction	% reduction over three years
1. Multi - Disciplinary	Circulars and Notices Used to convey to Health Authorities instructions, guidance or information of an interest to more than one discipline.	176	68	66	62 ø	50%	63%
2. Single - Disciplinary	Material which, in general, is of an ephermeral interest to a single discipline within the NHS, issued in letter form (ad hoc or in a numbered series), bulletins or information sheets.	702	450	322	301	25%	49%
3. Unavoidables	Dealing with personnel, pay and training (issued essentially by the DHSS on behalf of the NHS), hazardous equipment or safety warnings, those calling for statistical returns and those issued to Family Practitioner Committees dealing with fees and conditions for independent contractors	357*	348	307	291	No Target	12%

* baseline period in category is the calendar year 1978.

ø Including 19 Health Circulars

4 AUG 1982

Gov Mach

cc: Cabinet
+CO
Sir D. Rayner SW

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

19 July, 1982

The Prime Minister has now seen your Secretary of State's minute of 18 June about progress in the exercise to reduce the number of circulars issued by Government Departments to local authorities. She has also seen letters from Michael Ewart, Adam Peat and Mike Hopkins reporting on progress from the Scottish Office, Welsh Office and Northern Ireland Office. The Prime Minister agrees that the figures generally are very good and she has accordingly agreed to Mr. Heseltine's proposals to announce continued progress by means of a Written Answer. She very much hopes that the pleasing progress achieved by Departments over the last year will be continued.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Private Secretaries to members of the Cabinet, to David Wright (Cabinet Office) and Clive Priestley(Sir Derek Rayner's Office).

TIMOTHY FLESHER

D. A. Edmonds, Esq.,
Department of the Environment

355

PRIME MINISTER

Agreed. MS 4

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

This is the third year of the exercise to reduce the number of circulars issued by Government Departments to local authorities, and I attach letters from the Northern Ireland Office, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office, together with a minute from Mr. Heseltine reporting on progress. I had delayed before showing these to you in order to obtain the figures for DHSS circulars, but these look like being further delayed.

Flag A, B
Flag C
Flag D

As Mr. Heseltine points out, the figures generally are very good. The table below shows that there was a reduction of 3 per cent in the total number of circulars over the year and hence a 68 per cent reduction on the figure for 1978/9.

	78/9	79/80	80/1	81/2	% Change on 80/1	% Change on 78/9
Whitehall	803	355	362	355	- 2	- 56
Welsh Office	623	101	69	97	+ 40	- 84
Scottish Office	447	215	180	140	- 22	- 69
Total	1873	671	611	592	- 3	- 68
Northern Ireland		427	281	221	- 21	- 48

The best performance has been achieved by the Scottish Office over the last year with a 22 per cent reduction; the worst performance is by the Welsh Office with a 40 per cent increase, although this is accounted for by the fact that they handled their own rate support grant for the first time and as a consequence sent their own circulars on the subject to local authorities in Wales, whereas in previous years the Welsh Office were parties to joint circulars issued by the DOE. In any event, the 40 per cent increase masks an overall 84 per cent decrease in Welsh Office circulars since 1978/9.

/The overall figure

The overall figure remains well below the target of 700 circulars annually in Great Britain at which you wish the Government to aim and Mr. Heseltine wishes to announce continued progress by means of a Written Answer. If you agree, I shall tell Mr. Heseltine that you are content that he should make a statement; do you also agree, however, that the Departments concerned should be asked to maintain their vigilance to ensure that there is no relaxation in their efforts to maintain the reduced number of circulars and, if possible, further to reduce them.

Timothy Flesher

12 July 1982

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
GREAT GEORGE STREET,
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

Tim Flesher Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

28 June 1982

Dear Tim,

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

I am writing to report progress in Northern Ireland in the third year of the exercise to reduce the number of circulars to local authorities.

As you will be aware, the total in 1979/80 was 427, and in 1980/81 it was 281. The 1981/82 figure was 221, a 21% reduction on the preceding year, so that the downward trend continues.

My Secretary of State will continue to monitor progress in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Julie Hopkins

M W HOPKINS

SOO

Sect: D Mach.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

PRIME MINISTER

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

On 13 July last year I reported to you, in respect of England, on the second year of the exercise to reduce the number of circulars issued by Government Departments to local authorities.

I now report similarly on the third year of the exercise, ended 30 April 1982. The Annex to this minute shows that 355 circulars were issued by "Whitehall" Departments during the period, representing a 56% reduction on the number issued during the last 12 months of the previous administration. The tendency in 1980/81, noted in your Private Secretary's letter to mine of 20 July 1981, for such issues to rise has not therefore continued. If Scottish Office and Welsh Office figures are added, the result is a total of 592 issues in Great Britain during the period, representing a reduction of 68% on the comparable figure for 1978/79. This is well below the target of under 700 circulars annually in Great Britain at which you wished the Government to aim, and is even better than last year's very satisfactory result. I should like to make a statement in answer to a written question in the House, as I did at the same time in 1980 and 1981, to indicate that progress with the exercise is being fully maintained.

Figures for DHSS communications to health authorities, which were annexed to my report last year, are not yet to hand but will be forwarded to your Private Secretary as soon as they become

available. This need not hold up my proposed statement in the House, since such statements concentrate on issues to local authorities.

I am copying this minute to the other members of the Cabinet, and to Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Derek Rayner.

MRDH

18 June 1982

	(1) 12 months ended 30/4/79	(2) 12 months ended 30/4/80	(3) 12 months ended 30/4/81	(4) 12 months ended 30/4/82	(5) Col (4) totals as % of Col (1) totals
Department of Trade:-					
Weights and measures technical guidance notes	26	39	37	27	
Other circulars	19 45	19 58	23 60+	19 46	102%
Department of Transport:-					
Main circulars	12	2	1	3	
Circulars (roads)	29 41	4 6	4 5	3 6	15%
Total for "Whitehall" Departments	803	355	365+	355	44% (ie reduction of 56%)
Welsh Office	623	101	69	97	16%
Scottish Office	447	215	180	140	31%
TOTAL FOR GREAT BRITAIN:	1873	671	614+	592	31.6% (ie reduction of 68.4%)

* Includes communications to water authorities
\+ Revised figure

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

ANNEX

	(1) 12 months ended 30/4/79		(2) 12 months ended 30/4/80		(3) 12 months ended 30/4/81		(4) 12 months ended 30/4/82		(5) Col (4) totals as % of Col (1) totals
"WHITEHALL" DEPARTMENTS									
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food:-									
To Port Health Authorities etc (meat importations)	70		54		71		61		
Other circulars	32	102	21	75	20	91	19	80	78%
Department of Education and Science		127		31		32		43	34%
Department of Employment (Career Service Circulars)		51		28		12		8	16%
Department of the Environment:-									
Published circulars	64		24		28		35		
Guidance notes, reports, etc*	39		8		7		10		
Circular letters*	119	222	38	70	36	71	29	74	33%
Department of Health and Social Security:-									
Local authority social services letters	43		6		8		5		
Local authority circulars	21	64	5	11	6	14	13	18	28%
Home Office:-									
To local authorities	118		49		58		57		
To police authorities	33	151	27	76	22	80	23	80	53%

21 JUIN 1982

C

rprs pte

F

16/6

Y SWYDDFA GYMREIG
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switsfwrdd)
01-233 8545 (Llinell Union)

ODDI WRTH YSGRIFENNYDD
PREIFAT YSGRIFENNYDD
GWLADOL CYMRU

WELSH OFFICE
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switchboard)
01-233 8545 (Direct Line)

FROM THE PRIVATE SECRETARY
TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR WALES

15th June 1982

Dear Willie,

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

I am writing to report progress during the third year of the campaign to reduce the number of Departmental circulars.

In the year ended 30 April 1982, the Welsh Office issued 97 circulars to local authorities compared with 69 in the previous year, 101 in the year before that, and 623 in the base year ended 30 April 1979. The increase over the previous year arose because, for the first time, my Department handled its own Rate Support Grant and as a consequence sent its own circulars on the subject to local authorities in Wales. In previous years we were parties to joint circulars issued by DOE.

We also issued 451 circulars to health authorities in the year ended 30 April 1982; comparable figures for 1981, 1980 and 1979 are 383, 471 and 782 respectively. The increase over the previous year is a temporary one flowing from the re-organisation of the NHS in Wales.

My Secretary of State will continue to restrict the issue of circulars to essential matters.

Copies of this letter go to the recipients of your letter of 20 July 1981.

Yours ever

Adam Peat

A E PEAT

W Rickett Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

16 1982

CF / we will be getting similar letters from DoE, DHSS, Welsh Office. PL BF with them when they have all arrived.

NEW ST. ANDREWS HOUSE
ST. JAMES CENTRE
EDINBURGH EH1 3SX

B WM 3/6

Govt Mach

W F S Rickett Esq
Private Secretary
No 10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

2 June 1982

Dear Willie

GOVERNMENT CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

I am writing to fulfil an obligation to provide your office with year-end figures of circulars and similar communications issued to local authorities.

In the year ended 30 April 1982 the Scottish Office issued 140 circulars and 141 letters/circulars to Health Authorities. The total figure of 140 circulars issued by the Scottish Office represents a considerable decrease in numbers when compared with 1980-81 when 180 were issued. A breakdown by Departments within the Scottish Office of the figures over the last four years is attached.

Sincerely

Michael

MICHAEL EWART
Private Secretary

APPENDIX

	1/5/78 to 30/4/79	1/5/79 to 30/4/80	1/5/80 to 30/4/81	1/5/81 to 30/4/82
Local Government Finance	20	17	16	16
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	27	8	9	9
Scottish Development Department	70	30	49	38
Scottish Education Department	45	22	26	18
Scottish Economic Planning Department	66	32	10	0
Scottish Home and Health Department (excluding health circulars)	219	106	70	59
	447	215	180	140

02 JUN 1982

BIO

WW 9/12

Board Room
H M Customs and Excise
King's Beam House
Mark Lane London EC3R 7HE

Mr Whitmore

I see from the Second Carbons that the PM has already seen this, and knows about the prize CCE have won. Is that right?

WR 8/12

W Rickett Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

7 December 1981

Dear Willie

PLAIN ENGLISH CAMPAIGN

This body runs jointly with the National Consumer Council an annual competition - the Plain English Awards - and makes awards in general categories.

I am pleased to tell you that we have won an award, in the category for information leaflets produced by non-charitable bodies, with our entry "Filling in your VAT Return", a copy of which is enclosed.

The award was presented to us today.

Yours ever

J P BONE
PRIVATE SECRETARY

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CCS TSY
CO
Cand I

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

Sarah

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Thank you for your minute A06180 of 2 December 1981.

The Prime Minister was interested to see the guide "Filling in Your VAT Return" which the Customs and Excise have produced. She commented:

"Excellent - but it still looks formidable!".

I am sending copies of this minute to Sir Douglas Wass, Sir Derek Rayner and Sir Douglas Lovelock.

AJW.

7 December 1981

CABINET OFFICE
70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS Telephone 01- 233 8224

4 December 1981

The Rt Hon Geoffrey Howe QC MP

Dear Geoffrey.

I was delighted to hear today from Douglas Lovelock that Customs and Excise have won first prize in the 1981 Plain English Awards with the guide "Filling in your VAT Return". It is a first class piece of work and the officials responsible for it are to be congratulated.

2. I shall be reporting to the Prime Minister very shortly on this year's review of forms. One of the main messages will be that forms really are very important. They take up an enormous amount of time and effort inside and outside Government and forms which people don't understand and fill in wrongly just waste money. It follows that forms are very expensive for Government (and therefore for the tax payer) and can be so too for business and the individual citizen.

3. The contrast between a leaflet as good as the VAT guide and most other government forms shows there is still much to be done but I know from the forms review that both Customs and the Inland Revenue are getting ahead with making good forms the rule, not the exception.

4. I very much hope that this work gets all the publicity it deserves when the results of the review are put on show as well as the Government's determination to make hay with bad forms: DHSS Ministers are shaping up to that very well, I was glad to hear yesterday.

5. I am copying this to the Prime Minister, Janet Young and to Douglas Lovelock.

Yours ever
Derek.

DEREK RAYNER

-5 DEC 1980

010

2. Prime Minister.

Excellent - but still looks formidable!

Ref. A06180

MR. WHITMORE

As you know, Sir Derek Rayner has been leading a drive to reduce the form-filling required by Government and improve the forms that have to be retained.

2. You may like to show the Prime Minister the attached Customs and Excise form "Filling in Your VAT Return", with which the Customs and Excise have won first prize in the Plain English Campaign and National Consumer Council's 1981 Plain English Awards.

3. I am sending copies of this minute to Sir Douglas Wass, Sir Derek Rayner and Sir Douglas Lovelock.

RWA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

2nd December, 1981

FILLING IN YOUR VAT RETURN

PLEASE:

- Don't alter the details already on the form. If, for example, the address is wrong tell your local VAT office in a separate letter.
- Write clearly: sevens as 7 not 7 ; ones as 1 not 1.
- Write one amount in each box or 'None'. If you make a mistake cross the figure out, write in the correct figure and initial it.
- Fill in the whole form, but don't write anything else on it.

H M Customs and Excise

Return of Value Added Tax

For the period 01 01 82 to 31 03 82
These dates must not be altered without the agreement of Customs and Excise

For Official Use

Registration No. 123 4567 89 Period 03 82

A RETAILER LTD
48 NORTH ROAD
LONDON
N12 5NA

The person named here must complete the whole of this form in accordance with the Notes overleaf and return it in the enclosed envelope to the Controller, VAT Central Unit, H.M. Customs and Excise, 21 Victoria Ave., SOUTHEND-ON-SEA X. SS99 1AB

not later than 30 04 82

The tax payable must be paid by the same date by remittance enclosed with this form or by National Girobank or Bank Giro.

WARNING
A return which is incomplete or qualified in any way (e.g. marked "Provisional") does not satisfy the legal requirements. Failure to make a return or to pay the full amount of tax payable by the due date is an offence.

All boxes must be completed (writing "none" where appropriate). If an exact amount of pounds is to be entered, write "00" in the pence column. DO NOT put a dash or leave the column blank.

Fold here

FOR OFFICIAL USE

Account of tax payable or repayable

		£	p
TAX DUE in this period on OUTPUTS (sales, etc.)	1		
Tax due on imported goods, certain goods removed from bonded warehouses and certain services received from abroad	2		
Underdeclarations of tax made on previous returns (except those notified in writing by Customs and Excise)	3		
(Total of boxes 1, 2 and 3) TOTAL TAX DUE	4		
TAX DEDUCTIBLE being the credit claimed in this period for input tax allowable (on purchases, etc.)	5		
Overdeclarations of tax made on previous returns (except those notified in writing by Customs and Excise)	6		
(Total of boxes 5 and 6) TOTAL TAX DEDUCTIBLE	7		
NET TAX PAYABLE OR REPAYABLE (Difference between boxes 4 and 7)	8		

Please tick the following boxes if "YES" is appropriate:

Box 6 includes bad debt relief ☐
Box 9 includes exempt outputs ☐
Box 9 includes exports ☐

Special schemes for Retailers (Notice No. 727)
If you have used any of the schemes in the period covered by this return please tick the appropriate box(es) to show all the scheme(s) used.

A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G ☐ H ☐ J ☐

		£	p
Value of Outputs (sales, etc.) (excluding any Value Added Tax)	9		00
Value of Inputs (purchases, etc.) (excluding any Value Added Tax)	10		00

Please tick ONE only of the following boxes:

If box 4 is greater than box 7: Payment by Giro ☐ Payment enclosed ☐

If box 7 is greater than box 4: Repayment due ☐

Cheques and postal orders should be crossed and made payable to H.M. Customs and Excise. Your VAT registration number should be written on the back.

Declaration by the signatory to be completed by or on behalf of the person named above.

I, ... declare that the
(full name of signatory in BLOCK LETTERS)
information given in this return is true and complete.

Signed ..... Date .....
*(Proprietor, partner, director, secretary, responsible officer, member of club or association, duly authorised person) *Delete as necessary*

FOR OFFICIAL USE ☐

VAT 100 F 3790 (October 1981)

CHECKLIST

- ☑ Is there a figure or 'None' in each of boxes 1-10?
- ☑ Is the arithmetic right?
  Box 1 + Box 2 + Box 3 should equal Box 4
  Box 5 + Box 6 should equal Box 7
  Box 4 – Box 7 should equal Box 8 (if tax is due)
  Box 7 – Box 4 should equal Box 8 (if a repayment is due to you)
- ☑ Have you ticked the correct payment/repayment box on the **right** of the form?
- ☑ Have you checked and ticked any of the boxes which apply to you on the **left** of the form?
- ☑ Have you signed and dated the form?
- ☑ If you are paying by cheque, is it complete and made out to HM Customs and Excise? Have you put your VAT number on the back?

1 Put in Box 1 the VAT on your **sales** and other taxable income. Don't forget to include VAT on:

- goods taken for private use
- sales to staff
- gifts of goods
- sales of assets, e.g. machinery or office equipment.

2 Put in Box 2 the VAT due on **imports**, including certain services, and on goods taken from bond.

3 If you made a mistake in an earlier return which meant that the amount you put in Box 4 was **too little**, or the amount you put in Box 7 was **too much**, put the difference (owed by you) in Box 3.

Don't include underpayments or mistakes which we have told you about in writing.

4 Add up Boxes 1, 2 and 3 and write the total here.

5 Put in Box 5 the VAT on your business **purchases**, including the VAT on imports, certain services from abroad, and goods taken from bond. Don't reclaim VAT on:

- purchases **not** for your business
- the purchase of motor cars
- business entertainment (except for overseas customers).

6 If you made a mistake in an earlier return which meant that the amount you put in Box 4 was **too much**, or the amount you put in Box 7 was **too little**, put the difference (owed to you) in Box 6.

Use Box 6 to claim VAT under the special rules for bad debts. If you do so, tick the box on the left of the form.

Don't include amounts paid on assessment or amounts which we already owe you.

7 Add up Boxes 5 and 6 and write the total here.

8 Put in Box 8 the **difference** between Boxes 4 and 7, after subtracting the smaller figure from the larger.

If the figure in Box 4 is **more** than that in Box 7, pay the amount in Box 8 to Customs and Excise and tick the 'Payment by Giro' or 'Payment enclosed' box.

If the figure in Box 4 is **less** than that in Box 7, tick the 'Repayment' box.

9 Put in Box 9 your **total** sales including exports, exempt income such as rents, and any other business income. Leave out the VAT. Tick the box(es) on the left if exports or exempt items are included.

10 Put in Box 10 your **total** purchases including imports and other business expenses. Leave out the VAT.

There are some income and expense items which must be left out of Boxes 9 and 10. You must choose between Basis 'A' and Basis 'B' and use the same Basis for both boxes. The same Basis must be used for every return.

For Basis 'A' **leave out** of Boxes 9 and 10 **all** the items opposite.

For Basis 'B' **leave out** only the items **above** the line.

Always leave out

- VAT itself
- wages and salaries
- PAYE and National Insurance contributions
- money put into or drawn out of the business
- loans, dividends, grants, gifts of money
- compensation payments and insurance claims
- Stock Exchange dealings.

For Basis 'A' also leave out

- exempt purchases, e.g. rent paid, bank charges, insurance premiums and interest
- MOT fees and vehicle licence duty
- local authority rates
- purchases on which you cannot reclaim VAT, e.g. cars and business entertainment.

This is a brief guide to keeping VAT records and completing the VAT return. It is aimed at helping you whether you are new to VAT or have been registered for some time.

However, it cannot tell you all you need to know. There are Notes on the back of the return form, and there are a number of Customs and Excise notices and leaflets which go into more detail. For some of the titles and details of where to find a complete list, see 'Further information'.

Remember, your local VAT office is always ready to help you.

If you have a problem, don't guess at the answer ASK FOR ADVICE

Keeping your VAT records

What we require is that your books are complete and up to date and that the figures used to fill in your VAT return are easy to find.

There are many forms in which you may keep your business records. The choice is up to you. This guide gives only a few basic guidelines. For full details see the **VAT General guide** (Notice No.700), Section IV (Tax Invoices) and Section VI (Records and Accounts) and **Special schemes for retailers** (Notice No.727 and Supplements).

How you keep your sales records depends on whether you make out an invoice for every sale.

If you sell to customers who, like yourself, are registered for VAT you must give them tax invoices so that they can reclaim VAT due to them. Keep a copy of each full invoice you issue. If you are a retailer, you need not keep copies of less detailed tax invoices which you may issue for sales up to £50 (including VAT).

When you list your invoices keep a separate column for VAT. This VAT is your 'output' tax.

If you use a **retail scheme** you can work out your output tax without recording each sale but you will need to keep a record of your total takings each day. When you count the money in your till, remember to include sales against credit cards etc. and to add any amount taken out during the day.

Whether or not you use a retail scheme, don't forget that VAT is also due on:

- sales to your staff
- gifts of goods costing over £10
- goods taken for private use
- the full value of goods sold where something has been taken in part exchange
- sales of assets such as office equipment
- any other taxable business income, even from a sideline.

Your sales records

You must record every export sale. Exports are zero-rated **only** if you have proof of export, such as certificates of shipment.

For more details about VAT and exports, see Notices No. 703 and No. 704.

Do you export?

You can reclaim VAT on imports in the same way as VAT on your other business purchases, using Box 5 of your return.

You should keep a record of your imports, with a separate column for the VAT. This is normally shown on the Customs documents.

For more details see Notice No.702.

Do you import?

VAT is due on goods which you import or remove from a bonded warehouse. Instead of paying the VAT immediately you can put the amount in Box 2 on your return. You **must** do this if you have not already paid the VAT to Customs and Excise.

VAT is also due on certain services you import from abroad. If you are in doubt about these, ask for help.

If you use a retail scheme you may have to keep special records. If in doubt check the Supplement for your scheme or ask for advice.

Your purchase records

You can record purchases in two ways. You can list the invoices as you receive them, or in your cash book as you pay them. It helps if you number the invoices as you enter them and you must keep a separate column for the VAT. This VAT is your 'input' tax.

Remember that if you are reclaiming VAT:

- you must have a proper invoice; and
- the purchases must be for **your** business.

You cannot reclaim VAT:

- on the purchase of cars; or
- on business entertainment (except for overseas customers).

Be sure to enter any credit notes you receive in your purchase records. The VAT on a credit note **reduces** the amount you can reclaim.

Your VAT account

You must keep a summary of VAT for each tax period covered by your VAT returns. Add up the VAT columns in your books regularly, e.g. weekly, and write the totals on the summary under sub-headings for:

VAT reclaimable	**VAT payable**
Purchases	Sales
Imports	Imports
Errors in earlier returns	Errors in earlier returns
(also include bad debt relief)	

At the end of each period add up the figures under each sub-heading. You now have all you need to fill in Boxes 1-8 on the return form. For Boxes 9 and 10 see the other side of this guide.

Please keep the summary in one of your books. It shows the link between your books and your VAT returns.

What you must keep

You must retain your business records for three years (unless a shorter period has been agreed for any item) and when asked show them to our visiting officer. 'Business records' include:

- purchase and sales books
- cash books and other account books
- purchase invoices and copy sales invoices
- records of daily takings such as till rolls
- annual accounts
- import and export documents
- order notes, delivery notes and relevant business correspondence.

If there is any change in your business

Write immediately to your local VAT office (*not* to the VAT Central Unit at Southend-on-Sea) and give full details of any change, for example in your name or address, or your bank or National Giro account. Remember that we need your new account number (and the bank code). Also be sure to tell us if you sell or transfer all or part of your business or change your business, for example from a sole proprietor to a partnership or a limited company.

WHAT IF...

I've lost my return form?

Ask your local VAT office for a new one. Please don't use an old one or a photocopy.

I've had a reminder saying my return is late?

If you haven't sent in your return do so right away. If you sent it more than a week ago ask your local VAT office to check if it has been received. If you have a special problem and can't send the return in yet, ask your local office for advice.

I've received an assessment?

If you have already sent in your return for that period see above; but if there's any problem, you have to pay the assessment while things are being sorted out.

I'm sending a return after paying an assessment?

When you send in your return, fill it in as usual. Do not adjust any of the figures to offset what you have already paid. If Box 8 of the return is more than the assessment, pay the extra; if it is less, we will pay or credit you with the difference.

I can't pay all the VAT due?

Write at once to your local VAT office explaining the problem. In exceptional circumstances we may be able to allow payment by instalments. Please don't send post-dated cheques – they will not be accepted.

I haven't received my repayment?

You should receive your repayment within a couple of weeks. If at the end of three weeks you have not, ask your local VAT office to look into the delay. Don't put a query on or in with your next return – that could cause delay.

I've received a 'Notice of Assessment' on Form VAT 191, or a 'Notice of Overdeclaration' on Form VAT 189?

Both forms are used to correct mistakes found by our visiting officers. If you receive either of these forms you should not adjust any of the figures on your next VAT return.

Where you owe us VAT (Form VAT 191), send your payment and the remittance advice **in the envelope provided.**

Where we owe you VAT (Form VAT 189), we will pay or credit you with the amount.

I have to be away from my business for a time?

You must arrange for someone else to complete your VAT returns and make payments for you.

Please quote your VAT number whenever you telephone or write to us. Other people may have the same name but never the same number!

PREM 19/2197

Further information

For help and advice you can write to, telephone or call at your local VAT office (or any other VAT office). Addresses are in local telephone directories under 'Customs and Excise'.

You should have copies of our two main notices:

Notice No.	Title	
700	**General guide**	October 1979 edition
701	**Scope and coverage**	

Here are some of the others:

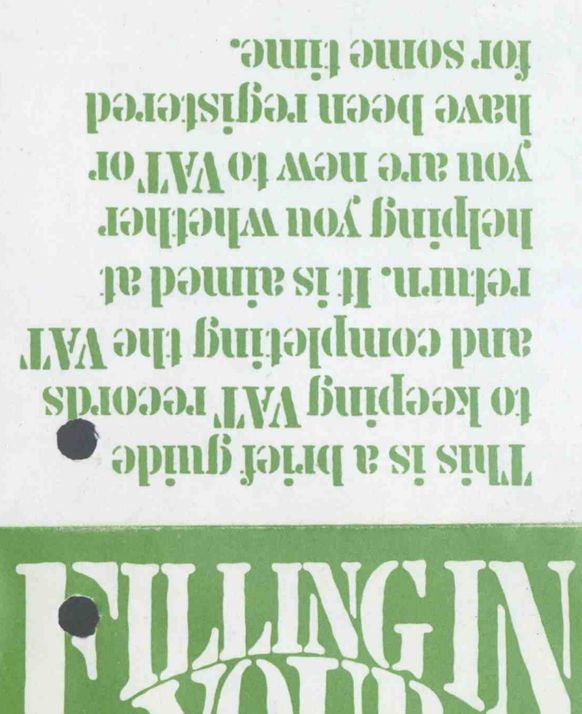
702	**Imports**
703	**Exports**
704	**Retail export schemes**
706	**Partial exemption**
708	**Construction industry**
715	**Alterations and repairs and maintenance**
709	**Hotels, catering and holiday services**
710	**Supplies by or through agents**
711	**Secondhand cars**
712	**Secondhand works of art, antiques etc.**
714	**Young children's clothing and footwear**
727	**Special schemes for retailers**
727 A-J	**Supplements describing each retail scheme**

There is a full list of the VAT notices and leaflets in Notice No. 700. Once or twice a year we will send you **VAT Notes** which tells you about recent changes.

HM Customs and Excise 700/12/81

Prepared by HM Customs and Excise and the Central Office of Information, 1981. Printed in England for Her Majesty's Stationery Office by Brown Knight & Truscott Ltd, London & Tonbridge Dd 8297910 Pro 16409

FILLING IN YOUR VAT RETURN



A brief guide

RG

Cost Mael

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY

Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY

Telephone 01-407 5522

From the Joint Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

William Ricketts
10 Downing Street
Whitehall
London SW1

10 August 1981

Dear Willie WW 10/8

REDUCTION IN CIRCULARS

Following the Secretary of State for the Environment's letter of 13 July giving details of individual departmental scores in the reduction of circulars to local authorities, you may be interested to have some comments on annex B (copy attached) of his letter setting out the number of circulars issued by DHSS to health authorities.

Circulars addressed to health authorities fall into three categories and in each of these DHSS has succeeded in fulfilling its commitment to make substantial reductions. In the 'multi-disciplinary' category 176 circulars issued during the baseline period (1 May 1978 - 30 April 1979), 68 during the first year of controls (1 May 1979 - 30 April 1980) and 66 in the second year (1 May 1980 - 30 April 1981) an overall reduction of 62 per cent compared with a target of 50 per cent.

The best news comes in the 'single-disciplinary' class where there has been a bumper fall from 702 (the baseline period is the calender year 1978) measured against 450 and 322 during the two circular years, a reduction of 45 per cent exceeding the 25 per cent target.

For obvious reasons no target was set for the 'unavoidables' but these too have fallen from 357 in the baseline period to 348 and 307 respectively, an 8 per cent decrease over the two year period.

There is no guarantee, however, that it will be possible to achieve much more by way of reduction. Indeed there will probably be a minor hiccup in numbers as the final stages of NHS restructuring are reached. But because so much progress has been made during the first two years it is envisaged that it will be possible to maintain an overall figure within the original targets over a four year period.

E.R.

Finally, may I say that the Secretary of State for the Environment's proposals for relaxing the clearance procedures for circulars to local authorities are welcomed within DHSS. This will certainly relieve some of the pressure, particularly when deadlines are of great significance.

Yours sincerely

Kathy.

KATHY DORAN
Private Secretary
to Parliamentary
Under Secretary (health)

Category	Description	No. issued in baseline period (1 May 78-30 April 79	No. issued in first year of controls (1 May 79-30 April 80	No. issued in second year of controls (1 May 80-30 April 81	% target reduction	% reduction over two years
1. Multi - Disciplinary	Circulars and notices used to convey to Health Authorities instructions, guidance or information of an interest to more than one discipline.	176	68	66	50%	62%
2. Single Disciplinary	Material which, in general, is of an ephemeral interest to a single discipline within the NHS, issued in letter form (ad hoc or in a numbered series), bulletins or information sheets.	702*	450	322	25%	45%
3. Unavoidables	Dealing with personnel, pay and training (issued essentially by the DHSS on behalf of the NHS), hazardous equipment or safety warnings, those calling for statistical returns and those issued to Family Practitioner Committees on fees and conditions for independent contractors.	357	348	307	No Target	8%

* The baseline period for this category is the calender year 1978.

FILE.

JFH

CF

Grant Mack.

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

20 July 1981

Dear Jeff

Circulars to Local Authorities

The Prime Minister was grateful for your Secretary of State's letter of 13 July reporting on the second year of the exercise to reduce the number of circulars to local authorities from Government Departments. She has also seen the letters of 7 July from the offices of Mr. Younger and Mr. Edwards, and the letter of 9 July from Mr. Atkins' office.

In general, the Prime Minister feels that the results reported in these letters are encouraging. She is pleased that circulars to local authorities in Great Britain are being kept below the target of 700 at which she wished the Government to aim. However, she hopes that the number of circulars to local authorities issued by Whitehall Departments will not continue to rise as it has over the last year.

The Prime Minister has agreed that your Secretary of State should make a statement in the House, as he did last year; and she has also agreed to the revised proposals set out in his letter of 13 July on the procedure for clearing drafts of circulars with his Department.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of the Cabinet and to Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Derek Rayner.

Yours
Willie Rickett

Jeff Channing, Esq.,
Department of the Environment.

RH

PRIME MINISTER

4

Circulars to Local Authorities

In July last year, you asked Ministers to give you annual progress reports on the numbers of circulars sent to local authorities and to health authorities. The letters from Mr Heseltine, and the Offices of Mr Younger, Mr Edwards and Mr Atkins, attached, report on the results achieved in the year ending 30 April, 1981. Briefly the figures for circulars are:-

(a) To Local Authorities

	1978/9	1979/80	1980/81
Whitehall	803	355	362 (2% up on 1980)
Welsh Office	623	101	69 (32% down)
Scottish Office	447	215	180 (15% down)
Total	1873	671	611 (9% down on 1980)
Northern Ireland Office ...		427	281 (35% down on 1980)

(b) To Health Authorities

	1978/79	1979/80	1980/81
DHSS	1235	866	695 (20% down on 1980)
Scottish Office	255	167	142 (15% down on 1980)
Welsh Office	782	471	383 (19% down on 1980)
Total	2272	1504	1220 (19% down on 1980)

In general these results are encouraging, and circulars to local authorities are being kept below the target of 700 at which you wished the Government to aim. However, in agreeing that Mr Heseltine should make a statement to the House on progress, you may wish to express the hope that the number of circulars to local authorities issued by Whitehall departments will not continue to rise as it has over the last year.

Mr Heseltine's letter (at A) also proposes certain relaxations in the procedure for clearing drafts of circulars with his department. These seem sensible. Content?

Yes - excellent

CJ

15 July, 1981

BGG

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref:

Your ref:

13 July 1981

CIRCULAR TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Your Private Secretary's letter of 7 July 1980 to Sir Ian Bancroft's conveyed your wish that I should report, in respect of England, on the second year of the exercise to reduce the number of circulars to local authorities by Government Departments.

The results achieved by "Whitehall" Departments during the 12 months ended 30 April 1981 are summarised at Annex A to this letter. Annex B reports separately on DHSS communications to health authorities. Annex A shows that 362 circulars were issued by "Whitehall" Departments during the period, representing a 55% reduction on the number issued during the last 12 months of the previous administration. If Scottish Office and Welsh Office figures are added, the result is a total of 611 issues in Great Britain during the period, representing a reduction of 67% on the comparable figure for 1978/79. This is even better than the result achieved in the first year of the exercise, and in numerical terms is significantly below the target of under 700 circulars annually in Great Britain at which you wished the Government to aim. I should like to make a statement in the House, as I did at the same time last year, on this satisfactory outcome.

In my minute to you of 14 October, I proposed certain relaxations in the procedure whereby I see drafts of circulars proposed to be issued by other "Whitehall" Departments. I recognise that this clearance system adds to Departmental workloads, and in view of the general success of the second year of this exercise, I would make the following revised proposals:

(i) I should still like to see drafts of all circulars which will involve any significant additions to local authority expenditure or manpower, whether or not those resource implications stem from new legislation. I exclude of course the cases where extra costs arise merely from routine updating of periodic circulars which I saw in draft the last time round (category (i) of my minute of 14 October);

(ii) As for other circulars, I am content to rely on colleagues to ensure that messages to authorities are confined to essentials, with no need for clearance from me in future. I would however ask for quarterly figures of the number of circulars issued by Departments to be provided to my Department after the end of July, October, January and April of each year. It would also be helpful if George Younger and Nicholas Edwards could arrange for similar quarterly figures to be kept. This will ensure that we are alerted to any signs that the exercise is running off course.

Copies of this letter go to the other members of the Cabinet, to Sir Robert Armstrong, Sir Ian Bancroft and Sir Derek Rayner.

MICHAEL HESELTINE

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

	(1) 12 months ended 30/4/79		(2) 12 months ended 30/4/80		(3) 12 months ended 30/4/81		(4) Col (3) totals as % of Col (1) totals
"WHITEHALL" DEPARTMENTS							
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food:-							
To Port Authorities etc (meat importations)*	70		54		71		
Other circulars	32	102	21	75	20	91	89%
Department of Education and Science		127		31		32	25%
Department of Employment (Career Service Circulars*)		51		28		12	24%
Department of the Environment:-							
Published circulars	64		24		28		
Guidance notes, reports, etc ≠	39		8		7		
Circular letters ≠	119	222	38	70	36	71	32%
Department of Health and Social Security:-							
Local authority social services letters	43		6		8		
Local authority circulars	21	64	5	11	6	14	22%

CIRCULARS TO HEALTH AUTHORITIES, ETC

ANNEX B

Category	Description	No. issued in baseline period (1 May 78-30 April 79	No. issued in first year of controls (1 May 79-30 April 80	No. issued in second year of controls (1 May 80-30 April 81	% target reduction	% reduction over two years
1. Multi - Disciplinary	Circulars and notices used to convey to Health Authorities instructions, guidance or information of an interest to more than one discipline.	176	68	66	50%	62%
2. Single Disciplinary	Material which, in general, is of an ephemeral interest to a single discipline within the NHS, issued in letter form (ad hoc or in a numbered series), bulletins or information sheets.	702*	450	322	25%	45%
3. Unavoidables	Dealing with personnel, pay and training (issued essentially by the DHSS on behalf of the NHS), hazardous equipment or safety warnings, those calling for statistical returns and those issued to Family Practitioner Committees on fees and conditions for independent contractors.	357	348	307	No Target	8%

* The baseline period for this category is the calender year 1978.

14 JUL 1981

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
GREAT GEORGE STREET,
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

W Rickett Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

9 July 1981

Dear Wallie

GOVERNMENT CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

In Mike Pattison's letter of 7 July 1980 to Jeremy Colman, he invited the Secretaries of State for Environment, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to make a further report in twelve months on circulars to local authorities.

The responsibility for many services in Northern Ireland rests with the Area Boards which require more specific direction and advice than Local Authorities in Great Britain. It is therefore more difficult to achieve a reduction in the number of Government Circulars issued. Consequently, it was agreed that a reduction of 40% on the 1979/80 figures should be the target for Northern Ireland in future years.

Figures for the year 1 May 1980 to 30 April 1981 are listed below, together with figures for the previous year 1979/80:

	1980/81	1979/80
Circulars to District Councils	52	60
Circulars to Area Boards	229	367
TOTAL	281	427

The 1980/81 figures show a reduction of 34% over the year 1979/80.

It is gratifying to see that Northern Ireland is well on the way to its target and it is hoped that we can attain the further 6% reduction on the 1979/80 figures during this year.

Yours sincerely
Mike Hopkins

M W HOPKINS

lf

B/F

HSD for DOE registry BF 17/7

NEW ST. ANDREWS HOUSE
ST. JAMES CENTRE
EDINBURGH EH1 3SX

Mike Pattison Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1

7 July 1981

Dear Mike,

GOVERNMENT CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

In your letter of 7 July 1980 to Jeremy Colman you said that the Prime Minister would like a further report in 12 months time from the Secretaries of State for Environment, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for their respective interests.

In the year ended 30 April 1981, the Scottish Office issued 180 circulars as against 215 in the preceding 12 months. The detailed make-up of the figures over the last 3 years is attached. Mr Younger has asked me to say that we shall do our best to keep our numbers to the lowest level consistent with reminding and encouraging local authorities to curb their expenditure.

In Annex B to his report of 30 June 1980, Sir Ian Bancroft dealt with circulars to health authorities. In it he explained that the Scottish figures in the base-line year of 1978-79 were 255 and in 1979-80 were 167. The corresponding figure for the year 1 May 1980 to 30 April 1981 is 142.

Copies of this letter go to the Private Secretaries to other members of the Cabinet, to Sir Robert Armstrong and to Sir Derek Rayner.

Yours ever,

GODFREY ROBSON

APPENDIX

	1/5/78 to 30/4/79	1/5/79 to 30/4/80	1/5/80 to 30/4/81
Scottish Economic Planning Department	66	32	10
Local Government Finance	20	17	16
Scottish Home and Health Department (excluding health circulars)	219	106	70
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	27	8	9
Scottish Development Department	70	30	49
Scottish Education Department	45	22	26
	447	215	180

RECEIVED 1988

BF 17/7

Y SWYDDFA GYMREIG
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switsfwrdd)
01-233 8545 (Llinell Union)

ODDI WRTH YSGRIFENNYDD
PREIFAT YSGRIFENNYDD
GWLADOL CYMRU

WELSH OFFICE
GWYDYR HOUSE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2ER
Tel. 01-233 3000 (Switchboard)
01-233 8545 (Direct Line)

FROM THE PRIVATE SECRETARY
TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR WALES

7 July 1981

Dear Willie

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

As requested in Mike Pattison's letter of 7 July 1980 I am writing to report progress with the reduction of Departmental circulars.

In the year ended 30 April 1981 the Welsh Office issued 69 circulars to local authorities compared with 101 in the previous year and 623 in the year before that. We also issued 383 circulars to health authorities; comparable figures for the years ending 30 April 1980 and 1979 are 471 and 782 respectively.

My Secretary of State will continue to restrict the issue of circulars to essential matters.

/ Copies of this letter go to the recipients of Mike Pattison's of 7 July 1980.

Yours ever

J F CRAIG
Private Secretary

W Ricketts Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON

17 JUL 1987

Gore Mach

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY
ALEXANDER FLEMING HOUSE
ELEPHANT AND CASTLE
LONDON S.E.1

TELEPHONE: 01-407 5522

J P Channing Esq
Private Secretary
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1P 3EB

✓MP

18 March 1981

Dear Jeff

CIRCULARS

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 6 March to Mike Pattison.

DHSS figures for the period from 1 May 1980 to 28 February 1981 are -

Local authority social services letters	8
Local authority circulars	5

We shall send over the March (and April) figures when they are available.

Yours ever

MIKE TULLY

18 MAR 19

Sir Mac

HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SWIH 9AT

10:3:81

Dear Mr Pattison, MP.

Lord Belstead has asked me to send you, for the Prime Minister's information, the enclosed copy of a letter he has sent to the Secretary of State for the Environment about Home Office circulars to local authorities.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Boyle

M.D. BOYLE
Private Secretary

M. Pattison Esq.

HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SWiH 9AT

10:3:81

Dear Michael,

HOME OFFICE CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Your Private Secretary's letter and attachment of 9 February addressed to his opposite number at Number 10 caused me to investigate why the number of Home Office circulars sent to local authorities since 1 May 1980 seemed likely in total for the year to exceed by a sizeable margin the comparable figure for the previous year. The answer I find is that there was a miscount in the earlier year, the total for which should have been 76 and not 59 as given to CSD and incorporated in your table; on this basis there should be no significant difference between the performance of the 2 years.

The explanation of the error is that a part total representing the 6 month period from 1 September 1979 to 29 February 1980 was mistaken for the cumulative total from the beginning of the year, ie. for the ten months from 1 May 1979; and that this earlier error was perpetuated when the final total was arrived at by adding the figures for the remaining two months of that first year. I regret that the mistake was not spotted at the time or appreciated sooner. I am arranging to have a copy of this letter sent to Number 10 so that the Prime Minister is aware of the position.

What this means of course is that the Home Office failed to achieve the Government's target of a two-third reduction in the number of circulars it sent to local authorities in the first year. To some extent this was fore-shadowed in the letter of 30 January 1980 which my then Private Secretary, Miss Dews, sent to your Private Secretary when the special position of the Home Office vis a vis Police and Fire Authorities was explained. I and my other Ministerial colleagues here take seriously our task of ensuring that only those circulars which are essential are allowed to issue; we shall do everything we can to ensure that the final total for this year does not exceed the revised total for last year.

Yours sincerely,

(BELSTEAD)

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine M.P.

11 MAR 1981

NBPM, unless there are objections. MAP.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref:

Your ref:

- 6 MAR 81

Dear Mike

CIRCULARS

In July you reported the Prime Minister's wish that the Government should aim to issue no more than 700 circulars annually, and that my Secretary of State should make reports to her on progress.

My letter of 9 February noted that at the end of 1980 Departments appeared to be on course. But my Secretary of State is conscious from experience in this Department that pressure for more circulars may be building up in the remaining months of the "circulars year". He considers that it is desirable that progress should be monitored in these final months and, with the Prime Minister's concurrence, he would like to ask his colleagues, not only in Whitehall Departments but in Scotland and Wales as well, to arrange for their Departments to provide DOE with figures showing their positions at the end of February and again at the end of March.

We will of course need the end of April figures for the year-end report which the Prime Minister has already requested.

Copies of this letter go to the Private Secretaries to other members of the Cabinet, to Sir Robert Armstrong and to Sir Derek Rayner.

Yours ever

Jeff Channing

J P CHANNING
Private Secretary

Mike Pattison Esq

-6 MAR 1981

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

16 February 1981

Thank you for your letter of 9 February, about circulars to local authorities. The Prime Minister was interested to see this interim report. She hopes that it will be possible to meet the target, especially in those Departments where the extrapolation of the trend suggests that their numbers will be up this year.

I am sending copies of this letter to Jim Buckley (Lord President's Office), to Kate Timms (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) and Stephen Boys-Smith (Home Office), as their Departments seem to be running at a high rate, and to David Wright (Cabinet Office) and Clive Priestley in Sir Derek Rayner's Office).

M. A. PATTISON

J. P. Channing, Esq.,
Department of the Environment.

SS

4

Prime Minister

This part of the attack on "government" is on course - just.

MPP 10/2.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref:

Your ref:

9 February 1981

Dear Mike

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

In your letter of 7 July last year to Jeremy Coleman, you conveyed the Prime Minister's wish to have an interim report on the circulars exercise if by January 1981 there was evidence that the target of under 700 circulars annually to local authorities was not being met.

Attached is a list showing that in the 8 months ended 31 December, issues by "Whitehall" Departments amounted to nearly 71% of the 338 messages they sent out during the whole of the 1979/80 "circulars year" (see Annex A of Sir Ian Bancroft's report of 30 June 1980 to the Prime Minister). However, a reduced flow of messages by the Scottish and Welsh Offices means that the grand total of issues in Great Britain during the 8-months period was only 62% of the 1979/80 figure (654).

For the moment, therefore, the exercise is on course; but my Secretary of State is conscious that over the remainder of the 1980/81 "circulars year", there may well be heavier demands on the overall quota than is suggested by extrapolating the trend of earlier months. He is taking steps to ensure that issues by DOE are confined to absolute essentials, and is confident that Ministers of other "Whitehall" Departments will similarly keep the position under careful review.

Copies of this letter go the Private Secretaries to other members of the Cabinet, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Derek Rayner.

Yours ever

Jeff Channing.

J P CHANNING
Private Secretary

Mike Pattison Esq

CIRCULARS ISSUED BY DEPARTMENTS, 1 MAY TO 31 DECEMBER 1980

	(1) 12 months ended 30/4/80	(2) 1/5-31/12/80	(3) Col (2) extrapolated to 12 months (x 3/2)
MAFF	75	52	78
DES	31	22	33
D/EMPLOYMENT	28	6	9
DOE	70	51	77
DHSS	11	11	17
HOME OFFICE	59	54	81
D/TRADE	58	40	60
D/TRANSPORT	6	3	5
Total, "Whitehall" Departments	338	239 (71% of col.(1))	360 (107% of col.(1))
WELSH OFFICE	101	50	75
SCOTTISH OFFICE	215	119	179
GRAND TOTAL	654	408 (62% of col. (1))	614 (94% of col.(1))

10 FEB 1961

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
GREAT GEORGE STREET,
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

Mike Pattison Esq
10 Downing Street
London SW1

15 January 1981

Dear Mike.

GOVERNMENT CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

In your letter of 7 July to Jeremy Colman (CSD), you mentioned the need for interim reports from Departments unlikely to meet their targets. Although we are not in this category, I thought you might like to know how we are progressing.

As you will know, district councils in Northern Ireland have only limited powers. Responsibility for many services rests with the area boards which require more specific direction and advice than local authorities in Great Britain. Consequently the reduction in the number of Government circulars issued in Northern Ireland is more difficult to achieve.

The following figures cover the period since the last report, namely, 1 May 1980 to 31 December 1980. For comparison the figures for the same period in 1979 are also shown:

	1.5.80 to 31.12.80	1.5.79 to 31.12.79
Circulars to District Councils	30	30
Circulars to Area Boards	155	238
TOTAL:	185	268

The 1980 figures therefore show a reduction of almost ⅓ over the corresponding period in 1979, and this means we are well on course to achieve the agreed target of a further reduction of 40% in the number of Government Circulars issued to local authorities and area boards.

Yours sincerely
Mike Hopkins

M W HOPKINS

15 JAN 1981

With Compliments

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

2 Marsham Street
LONDON SW1P 3EB

Direct Line 01-212
Switchboard 01-212-3434

D GRUFFYDD JONES

Gork Mach

Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street London SW1
Telephone 01-212 ~~8434~~ 5087

14 January 1981

P L Taylor Esq
Home Office
Whittington House
19-30 Alfred Place
London
WC1

Dear Taylor,

GOVERNMENT CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

You will recall that Sir Ian Bancroft, in his report of 30 June 1980 to the Prime Minister about the exercise to reduce the number of circulars, suggested that my Secretary of State might be asked to make future reports in respect of 'Whitehall' Departments. He also suggested that an interim report should be made in January 1981, to show whether Departments were on course. The Prime Minister's agreement to the first of those proposals, and to the submission of an interim report if there were evidence that the target was not being met, was conveyed in Pattison's letter to Coleman of 7 July.

We need now to establish how matters generally are progressing. I would accordingly be grateful if you and those to whom I am copying this letter would let me know how many circulars (including circular letters, guidance notes, etc) were issued by your respective Departments from 1 May to 31 December 1980, broken down as in Annex A to Bancroft's report last June. It would be most helpful if replies could reach me by Thursday, 22 January at latest. I do not think that on this occasion we need ask DHSS for updated information on circulars to health authorities (Annex B of Bancroft's report).

Copies to those named in the accompanying list; and for information to J S Robertson (Scottish Office), John King and Margaret Evans (Welsh Office), B D Palmer (Northern Ireland Civil Service), Miss Wilkinson (Northern Ireland Office), Brian Pearce (CSD) and Pattison (at No 10).

Yours sincerely
D. Gruffydd Jones

D GRUFFYDD JONES

LIST OF COPY RECIPIENTS OF MR GRUFFYDD JONES' LETTER DATED JANUARY 1981 TO MR. P L TAYLOR

GOVERNMENT CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Mr G Seymour
MAFF
Victory House
30-34 Kingsway
London WC2B 6TU

Mr D G Libby
Department of Education
and Science
Elizabeth House
York Road
London SE1 7PH

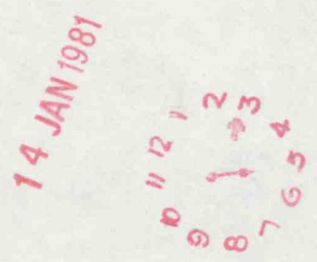
Mr W F Hartman
Department of Employment
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London SW1

Mr S Scott Whyte
Department of Health and
Social Security
Alexander Fleming House
Elephant and Castle
London SE1 6BY

Mr J F Shaw
Department of Health and
Social Security
Euston Tower
286 Euston Road
London NW1 3DN

Mr M O'Connor
Departments of Trade and
Industry - Common Services
Sanctuary Buildings
16-20 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3DB

Mr P Wood, OBE
Department of Transport
2 Marsham Street
London SW1


14 JAN 1981

GOV MACH

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref: H/PSO/18359/80
Your ref:

27 NOV 80

REDUCING CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Thank you for your letter of 4 November. You will now have seen a copy of the letter of 17 November on this subject from the Prime Minister's Private Secretary to mine.

I appreciate that your Department's contribution towards reducing the number of circulars has indeed been good; but in sending my minute of 14 October to the Prime Minister I did feel that this is not the time to make heavier inroads into a clearance system which has proved so effective since we took office. It is, of course, always open to you to raise the matter again. Perhaps an appropriate occasion will arise after next April, when we will have had a further full year's experience of the circulars exercise. Meanwhile, let me again give an assurance that proposed circulars which still need to be sent to my office by your Department and others will be handled with all possible expedition.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

Yours ever

MICHAEL HESELTINE

The Rt Hon Mark Carlisle QC MP

UnB

Gork Mach

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

17 November 1980

Dear David

The Prime Minister saw your Secretary of State's minute of 14 October, about the clearance of circulars.

She has noted the Secretary of State for Education's comments in his letter of 4 November.

She is content that your Secretary of State should now operate the arrangements he has proposed.

I am sending copies of this letter to Private Secretaries to members of Cabinet, including the Minister of Transport, and to David Wright (Cabinet Office), Jeremy Colman (CSD) and Clive Priestley (Sir Derek Rayner's Office).

Yours ever

Mike Pattison

D. A. Edmonds, Esq.,
Department of the Environment.

10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Heseltine wrote to colleagues last month with his proposals for revising the procedure for clearance of circulars issued to local authorities. The only comment so far has come from Mark Carlisle, who had hoped to see a further reduction in the scale of overseeing by DOE. No-one else has objected to Mr. Heseltine's proposals. Agree to approve them now?

Yes MH

14 November 1980

✓ MAP

Govt March

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

ELIZABETH HOUSE, YORK ROAD, LONDON SE1 7PH

TELEPHONE 01-928 9222

FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP
Secretary of State for the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1P 3EB

4 November 1980

Dear Michael,

REDUCING CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

You kindly sent Janet Young a copy of your minute of 14 October to the Prime Minister. I am bound to say that the changes you propose will not do much to reduce the number of our circulars that have to be sent to you for prior clearance (the number may fall by about a quarter).

I am disappointed that you have not been willing to go further, as we proposed in August, in eliminating the delays and extra work involved in your detailed control of the issue of essential communication from DES. Our record for cutting down the number of circulars is a good one and I still consider that control of essential communications could best be left with me. I shall certainly want to review the matter again in future if it is decided that the arrangements you propose must stand for the present.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of your minute.

Yours ever

Mark

MARK CARLISLE

-5 NOV 1980

NBPM yet - await reactions. MAP 15/x

b/f 1 month

Prime Minister

Your Private Secretary's letter of 7 July to Sir Ian Bancroft's office recorded your request that I should consider suggestions from colleagues for amending the present procedure under which I see drafts of circulars to be issued to local authorities.

This procedure has, I believe, played a vital part in our objective to reduce the number of circulars issued. It has certainly proved effective in cutting the previous Government's issue of 1873 circulars in 1978/79 by two-thirds. I take it that it remains our firm view that not only should we keep to a minimum the amount of guidance sent to local authorities but that we should continue to give the closest scrutiny to the expenditure and manpower implications of what we ask of them.

I have now considered the suggestions made by colleagues for changing our procedures and would make the following proposals:

i. I am content that circulars issued on an annual or periodic basis and which I saw in draft on the last round should be copied to my Department after issue;

ii. there will be cases where warnings have to be urgently issued on safety hazards or matters affecting public health. In such cases I am happy for colleagues to exercise their judgement as to whether to let me see the circular in draft, but again I would ask that a copy is sent to my Department after issue;

iii. in all other cases (excepting the series of technical circulars already exempt from the scheme) I would still like to see drafts. I regard it as crucial that guidance on new legislation and other policy changes by Departments responsible for particular services should be consistent with our central policies on local authority expenditure and manpower. This, in my judgement, is certainly not the time to allow further potential pressures on authorities' resources to go unchecked. I attach particular importance to circulars giving effect to new legislation because it is often at the point where general statute is translated into practical advice that the excesses begin.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

I hope that my colleagues will feel able to fall in with these revised arrangements.

I am copying this minute to the other members of the Cabinet, the Minister of Transport, and to Sir Robert Armstrong, Sir Ian Bancroft and Sir Derek Rayner.

MH

14 October 1980

3F

OCT 1980

Grt Yarch.

HOME OFFICE
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE
LONDON SW1H 9AT

19 AUG 1980

Dear David,

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

In Mr Whitelaw's absence, Lord Belstead has seen the copy letter of 5 August from David Brereton at DES and has asked me to say that he fully supports the suggestion that circulars summarising the implications of new legislation affecting Local Government should in future be exempt from DOE vetting. A number of Home Office circulars fall into this category.

I am copying this letter to those who received Mike Pattison's.

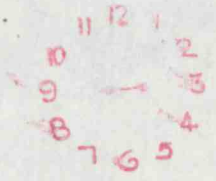
Yours sincerely,

Mike Boyle

M D BOYLE
Private Secretary

David Edmonds Esq

20 AUG 1980



MG

Government Machinery
MAP

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SECURITY

Alexander Fleming House, Elephant & Castle, London SE1 6BY

Telephone 01-407 5522

From the Secretary of State for Social Services

David Edmonds Esq
Private Secretary
Department of Environment
2 Marsham Street
London SW1

5 August 1980

Dear David,

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

I refer to Mike Pattison's letter of 7 July to you, in which he invited suggestions on the scope for extending exemption from DOE vetting to cover further groups of circulars which might now be agreed to be essential.

My Secretary of State would like to suggest exemption for circulars summarising the implications of new legislation affecting local government - whether regulations or Acts of Parliament. The local authority associations made clear last autumn that we could not rely on them to disseminate information of this kind to their members on behalf of central government, and it seems inevitable that we must do so ourselves, for example, in relation to the major changes in prospect with your Secretary of State's housing and other local government legislation that is now going through Parliament, and the legislation on NHS structure and social security in our field. It would reduce the volume of work in both DOE and the originating department and speed up the disposal of business, if essential circulars of this nature could be issued without the need to obtain clearance.

I am sending copies of this letter to those who received Mike Pattison's.

Yours ever

D BRERETON
Private Secretary

- 6 AUG 1980



JR

cc Press Office

MAFF

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref:

Your ref:

22 July 1980

Dear Mike

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

My Secretary of State wrote to the Prime Minister on 16 July saying that he would be putting in hand the arrangements proposed in Sir Ian Bancroft's minute of 30 June.

I am writing to you now to let you know that Mr Heseltine will be making the proposed statement by way of an answer to a written Parliamentary Question, in the following terms:

> "In the 12 months ended 30 April 1980, Government Departments issued 654 circulars and other communications to local authorities in Great Britain. The figure for the previous 12 months was 1873. This is a 65% reduction. Government advice to local authorities will continue to be confined strictly to matters on which information and guidance is really needed by authorities".

Mr Heseltine proposes to give this answer on Monday next (28 July).

I am copying this to the Private Secretaries to members of the Cabinet, Anthony Mayer (Transport), David Wright (Cabinet Office) and Clive Priestley in Sir Derek Rayner's office.

Yours sincerely

Paul Bristow

P N BRISTOW
Private Secretary

Mike Pattison Esq

JT

FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

ELIZABETH HOUSE,
YORK ROAD,
LONDON SE1 7PH
01-928 9222

D Edmonds Esq
Private Secretary
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON SW1

17 July 1980

Dear David

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

I see from Mike Pattison's letter of 7 July to Jeremy Colman at CSD that you are setting in hand the preparation of a statement for your Secretary of State to make in Parliament about progress in the first full year of this exercise. We should like to be kept in touch with this in the drafting stages; our contacts at officer level would be Anthony Chamier at Under Secretary level and Mr Sussex at Principal level.

The only point we would make at this stage is that it would seem sensible, in what is said to Parliament, not to give detailed figures for Departments unless pressed. This line would accord with the way the Prime Minister has expressed the Governments' aim - in terms of the total number of circulars issued annually; and would leave a useful degree of flexibility as between departments. We have particularly in mind the prospect that in the current year, in addition to our routine business, we are likely to have to issue a number of circular letters consequent on legislation.

I am copying this letter to Mike Pattison and Jeremy Colman.

Yours ever

Mary Bowden

MRS M E BOWDEN
Private Secretary

17 JUL 1980

LH

NBPM

MHP

Govt Mach.

Prime Minister

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

I have seen Sir Ian Bancroft's minute to you of 30 June, recording progress made by the Government in reducing the number of circulars to local authorities, and your private secretary's letter of 7 July setting out your views.

I shall be putting in hand the arrangements which Sir Ian has proposed and you have approved.

I am sending copies of this minute to other members of the Cabinet, the Minister of Transport, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Derek Rayner.

MH

16 July 1980

17 JUL 1980

c. HO
LCO
FCO
HMT
DI
MOD
LPO
DEmp
LPSO
MAFF
DEnv.
SO
WO
NIO
DHSS
CDLO
DTde.
DEngy
DES
CS-HMT
PGO

Gov't Tech

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

7 July 1980

2) BF 7-1-81
3) BF 7-7-81.

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Prime Minister was grateful for Sir Ian Bancroft's minute of 30 June, recording progress in reduction of the number of circulars issued to local authorities by Government Departments. She finds the results so far excellent, and is grateful for the efforts which Ministers put into this exercise.

As Sir Ian proposed, she would like the Secretary of State for the Environment to make a further statement in Parliament about progress in the first full year. I would be grateful if David Edmonds (Department of the Environment) could set this in hand.

The Prime Minister would like the Government to aim to keep the total number of circulars issued annually in Great Britain under 700, on the basis of the calculations in Annex A to Sir Ian's minute. She would like the Secretary of State for the Environment to consider suggestions from his colleagues on the scope for extending exemption from DOE vetting to cover further groups of circulars which can now be agreed to be essential.

She would also like the Secretary of State for the Environment to make a further report on the progress of this exercise in respect of England in 12 months time, and she would like similar reports in respect of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland from the Secretaries of State at the same time. If by January 1981 there is evidence that the target is not being met, she would be grateful for an interim report.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to Members of the Cabinet, including the Minister for Transport David Wright (Cabinet Office) and Clive Priestley in Sir Derek Rayner's Office.

M. A. PATTISON

Jeremy Colman, Esq.,
Civil Service Department.

Prime Minister

Progress report on reduction in circulars.

Agree proposals in paragraphs 6, 7, 8, and 9?

MP 4/VII

PRIME MINISTER

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

I reported to you on 25 October 1979 about the progress towards reducing by two-thirds the number of circulars issued to local authorities by Government Departments. You will also have seen the interim assessment which I sent to the Secretary of State for the Environment and copied to your Private Secretary on 18 March 1980. I promised a further report when the figures for the first full year were available. These are summarised in Annex A and Annex B reports separately on circulars to health authorities.

2. Annex A shows that in Great Britain the Government's objective has virtually been achieved. 654 circulars were issued during the year ended 30 April 1980 compared with 1,873 in the previous year (taking account of a correction to the Scottish figures). This is a reduction of 65%. Taking "Whitehall departments" alone (ie excluding the Scottish and Welsh Offices and Northern Ireland Department) the figures are 338 and 803, a reduction of 58%.

3. There can be no doubt that this significant achievement is largely attributable to the close personal interest which Ministers have taken in the exercise and to adherence to an ambitious numerical target. Apart from certain categories of essential circulars which it has been agreed should continue, the Secretary of State for the Environment has checked all circulars issued to the English authorities. Similar arrangements for appropriate Ministerial vetting have been made by the Scottish and Welsh Secretaries.

4. The reduction has been achieved largely without using local authority associations as an alternative channel of communication. After giving a cautious assent at the outset to the use of their services, the Associations later changed their attitude, mainly as a result of pressure from member authorities. They have insisted that communication from central government to local authorities should go direct.

5. Special considerations apply in Northern Ireland where district councils have only limited powers. Responsibility for many services is with area boards which are fully funded by Government and require more specific direction and advice than local authorities in Great Britain. However, scope for a further 40% reduction has now been identified and will be realised in future years.

6. I suggest that you may wish to invite the Secretary of State for the Environment, who announced in Parliament on 17 May 1979 the start of this exercise, to make a further statement on this satisfactory outcome for the first full year.

7. While an overall reduction of two-thirds has been achieved in Great Britain, the contribution from individual departments has varied according to their responsibilities and the number of inessential communications they made in the previous year. The fact that the overall rate of issue has throughout the year been consistent with the level now achieved suggests that the Government's

overall target was about right. It seems unlikely that further reductions would be possible without impeding the efficient conduct of business. In the next 12 months there will be some pressures for increases in the number of circulars, particularly to promulgate legislation now before Parliament. The position will vary between departments. For this reason, I do not think it reasonable to apply rigid quotas to each department although each should continue to take the two-thirds reduction against the base year of 1978/79 as a measuring rod. Rather, I recommend that the Government should aim to keep the total number of circulars issued annually in Great Britain at a level of ~~about~~ 700, calculated as in Annex A. To achieve this total, while some individual departments may need to issue more or fewer circulars than in the past year, they should continue to apply the same degree of scrutiny to proposed circulars.

8. The Secretary of State for the Environment's personal contribution to this exercise has been a major factor in its success. You will, however, wish to consider whether the significant additional administrative costs and Ministerial as well as official time arising from the need for Ministerial correspondence on most circulars justify the savings to local authorities which have undoubtedly resulted. It is the case that departments have by now set up their own monitoring arrangements which will themselves be sufficient to maintain the present level; but I incline to the view that the discipline imposed by Ministerial involvement continues to be an important factor. However, I suggest that the Secretary of State might consider suggestions from his colleagues on the scope for extending the exemption from DOE vetting to cover further groups of circulars which can now be agreed to be essential while he continues to monitor the issue of the remainder.

9. Now that this exercise is well established, I suggest that you might ask the Secretary of State to make future reports to you on the position in England on behalf of his colleagues. You might ask the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for similar reports on circulars to their local authorities. The next full report could be made this time next year when a further year's figures will be available, with an interim report in January 1981 to show whether Departments were on course.

10. I am sending copies of this report to members of the Cabinet, the Minister of Transport, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Derek Rayner.

IAN BANCROFT
30 June 1980

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

ANNEX A

	No of circulars issued in "base-line year" from 1 May 1978 to 30 April 1979		No issued from 1 May 1979 to 30 April 1980		Comments
"WHITEHALL" DEPARTMENTS					
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food					
to Port Health Authorities and others concerned with changes in the list of over-seas establishments approved to export meat & meat products to the UK.	70		54		Monitoring of these circulars by DOE has been waived.
Other circulars	32		21		
		102		75	
Dept of Education & Science		127		31	
Dept of Employment					
careers service circulars (new circulars)	(29)	51	(13)	28	Monitoring by DOE waived after Ministerial correspondence.
Dept of the Environment					
Published circulars	64		24		The figures also include circulars sent to water authorities.
Guidance notes, reports etc	39		8		
Circular letters	119		38		
		222		70	
Dept of Health & Social Security					
Local authority social services letters	43		6		
Local authority circulars	21		5		
		64		11	

	No of circulars issued in "base-line year" from 1 May 1978 to 30 April 1979		No issued from 1 May 1979 to 30 April 1980		Comments
Home Office					
To local authorities	118		42		
To police authorities	33		17		
		151		59	
Dept of Trade					
Weights & Measures technical guidance notes	26		39		Weights & Measures technical guidance notes have been exempted from DOE vetting procedure. The increase in numbers is due to an upsurge in the flow of information essential to authorities.
Other circulars	19		19		
		45		58	
Dept of Transport					
Main circulars	12		2		The forthcoming Transport Act is likely to result in some explanatory material being sent to local authorities in the coming months. There is no central record of circular letters issued, but the number involved is very small.
Circulars (Roads)	29		4		
		41		6	
Total for "Whitehall" Depts:		803		338	
WELSH OFFICE		623		101	All circulars issued by the Welsh Office are given clearance by a Welsh Office minister. Individual divisions have been given target quotas for the year. Nearly all circulars duplicate those issued in England by Whitehall departments This year's figure excludes joint circulars, about 50 of which were included in the baseline figure.

	No of circulars issued in "base-line year" from 1 May 1978 to 30 April 1979		No issued from 1 May 1979 to 30 April 1980		Comments
SCOTTISH OFFICE					
Scottish Economic Planning Dept	66		32		The number of circulars issued the Scottish Office in 1978 was one third down on previous levels. The scope for further reductions is therefore limited. Between 35% and 40% of Scottish Office circulars duplicate those issued by Whitehall departments.
Local Government Finance	20		17		
Scottish Home & Health Dept (Home Functions only)	219		106		
Dept of Agriculture & Fisheries	27		8		
Scottish Development Dept	70		30		
Scottish Education Dept	45*		22		
/*adjusted to exclude correspondence previously included in error/		447		215	
Total for Gt Britain:		1,873		654	
NORTHERN IRELAND DEPARTMENTS					
District Councils	90		39		In Northern Ireland, more services are the direct responsibility of Government departments. Area Boards are 100% Government funded and need full advice from departments on their operations.
Area Boards	397		367		
		487		406	

ANNEX B

CIRCULARS TO HEALTH AUTHORITIES

1. The Secretary of State for Social Services is directly accountable to Parliament for the NHS in England and its expenditure, and a two-thirds reduction in the number of communications is not practicable. Nevertheless substantial reductions are essential. The targets for reduction and the machinery for achieving them are described below.

2. Broadly speaking, DHSS communicates with the NHS in two ways:

   i. by means of formal Health Circulars, Health Notices, Personnel Memoranda and Statistical Memoranda in numbered series containing material of interest to a number of disciplines within the NHS (known for convenience as 'multi-disciplinary communications');

   ii. communications containing material which is, in general, of ephemeral interest to a single discipline within the NHS, issued in letter form (ad hoc or in a numbered series), bulletins, or information sheets ('single-discipline communications').

The targets set by Ministers for reduction in the first of these categories was 50% over the next two years and for the second 25%.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY COMMUNICATIONS: CONTROL

3. A forward programme of circulars is drawn up quarterly covering the year ahead and this is examined by the Circular Scrutiny Committee (SCS), consisting of Deputy Secretaries, Chief Professional Officers or their nominated deputies. CSC's approval is needed before any circular may issue; major circulars require Ministerial approval. Where, exceptionally, a circular not in the forward programme needs to be issued before the next update of the programme a Deputy Secretary's clearance is necessary. Four categories of essentially 'demand led' circulars are excluded from these formal controls

(though reductions in these too have been achieved through closer scrutiny and aggregation):

i. those dealing with hazardous equipment and safety warnings;

ii. those dealing with personnel, pay and training matters which are issued by the DHSS essentially on behalf of the NHS;

iii. those calling for statistical returns, and

iv. those in the Family Practitioner series dealing with fees and conditions for independent contractors.

SINGLE-DISCIPLINE COMMUNICATIONS: CONTROLS

4. Chief Professional Officers and Deputy Secretaries have been charged with making arrangements to reduce the issue of single discipline communications within their control. Returns are made quarterly and these are continuously reviewed.

GENERAL METHODS OF REDUCTION

5. The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State reviews quarterly progress towards the target reductions. The major method of reducing numbers is by not issuing advice at all but savings may also be made by streamlining procedures. Some of the measures taken include the introduction of new series of single discipline letters to Treasurers and Administrators of NHS Authorities to ensure rigorous scrutiny of letters previously issued ad hoc; the aggregation of communications on similar topics; the introduction of a quarterly bulletin of publications, replacing the practice of issuing documents 'for information' to health and local authorities under the cover of a separate circular; the circulation of documents, such as "Patients First", without a covering circular; the combining of guidance on subjects concerning both hospital and family practitioner services into joint HN/HN(FP)s which previously issued separately.

PROGRESS

6. i. Multi-disciplinary communications

During the baseline period from 1 May 1978 to 30 April 1979 a total of 517 circular type communications were issued and 411 between 1 May 1979 and 30 April 1980, representing an overall reduction of 20%.

However, these figures include as their largest proportion circulars which are 'unavoidable' (as described in paragraph 3 above) and are not subject to reductions (although through aggregation some savings have been achieved). Therefore, more realistically, subtracting these 'unavoidable' categories, the figures are 176 and 92 respectively, a reduction of 47%.

The forward programme of circulars envisages that 88 circulars (excluding those described in paragraph 3 above) will issue during the next full year. We are therefore on target for a 50% reduction but rigorous controls will need to continue to ensure that guidance on NHS reorganisation does not result in a significant upward turn. It is at this stage difficult to envisage precisely what effects this will have on numbers.

ii. Single discipline communications

During the last full year of the previous administration, 736 single discipline communications were issued. In the year up to 30 March 1980 the figure was 473 - a reduction of around 36%. There may well be considerable fluctuations in this category and we are continuing to keep a watchful eye on them.

WELSH HEALTH AUTHORITIES

7. The Secretary of State for Wales is directly accountable for the National Health Service in Wales. Welsh Office communications normally parallel those from DHSS where there is a long-established

scrutiny system. Significant reductions in the numbers of circulars issued to Welsh health authorities have been achieved in the period 1 May 1979 to 30 April 1980. A total of 471 circulars were issued in that period compared with the base-line figure of 782 in the previous 12 months, a reduction of 40%. Of the 471, 190 were issued in formal numbered series and the remaining 281 comprised circular letters, often sent only to the disciplines directly involved.

SCOTTISH HEALTH AUTHORITIES

8. The Secretary of State for Scotland is responsible for the administration of the National Health Service in Scotland, where communications are similar to those in England and Wales. The same scrutiny and control exercised over the issue of circulars to Scottish local authorities has been applied to the issue of health circulars. From 1 May 1979 to 30 April 1980 167 circulars were issued compared with 255 in the base-line year, representing a 35% reduction.

1 = JUL 19x0



LH

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref: H/PSO/12538/80

Your ref:

10 April 1980

12.4.74

Dear Sir Ian

Thank you for your letter of 18 March and enclosure giving detailed figures of the circulars issued to local authorities in the last ten months. Although these are, as you say, a marked reduction on the previous year it is disappointing that for "Whitehall" departments our target has been breached. I note that you have circulated these figures to other departments concerned; my colleagues will thus see how things stand.

I agree with your suggestion that you should report to the Prime Minister on the outcome of the first full year when Ministers will be able to take a view on our approach for the future.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Prime Minister, members of the Cabinet, the Minister of Transport, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Derek Rayner.

Yours sincerely

Paul Bristol

(Private Secretary)

MICHAEL HESELTINE
(agreed by the Secretary of State and signed in his absence)

Sir Ian Bancroft GCB

10 APR 1980

Gort. Mach.
2

PRIME MINISTER

Encouraging news

MS

CIVIL SERVICE DEPARTMENT
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2AZ
Telephone 01 273 5400

Sir Ian Bancroft G.C.B.
Head of the Home Civil Service

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP
Secretary of State for the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON SW1P 3EB

18 March 1980

Dear Secretary of State,

GOVERNMENT CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

In your letter of 27 February to the Home Secretary, you expressed concern about the progress which might be being made with the exercise to reduce the number of Government circulars to local authorities through direct scrutiny of these by Departmental Ministers. I can now present you with a full assessment of the position.

The detailed figures in the Annex to this letter show that the Government is very nearly on target for Great Britain taken as a whole, although the global figure embraces wide variations. For "Whitehall" departments alone, where 280 circulars have already been issued with Ministers' approval the threshold has in fact been breached. As you know, Ministers decided earlier that some series of essential circulars had to continue to issue at much the same rate as in the past; and in addition there has been a growing reluctance on the part of the local authority associations to act as channels for communication with their members.

However, if present trends continue the Government will still have issued from "Whitehall" in its first year of office nearly 60% fewer circulars than were issued by the previous Administration in their last year. I believe that this will be widely regarded as a significant achievement.

If you agree, I propose to report to the Prime Minister in June as planned, when I shall be able to let her know the outcome for the first full year. Ministers may then wish to consider how to ensure that the reduced level can be held for the future. Meanwhile, as you suggest, it is important for Ministers to continue to consider rigorously whether each circular issued by their Department is truly essential and there would be advantages in delaying where possible the issue of circulars until after the end of April to keep the figure for this year as low as we can.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Prime Minister, members of the Cabinet and the Minister of Transport, and to Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Derek Rayner.

Yours sincerely,

Ian Bancroft

IAN BANCROFT

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

ANNEX A

"WHITEHALL" DEPARTMENTS	No of circulars issued in "base-line year" from 1 May 1978 to 30 April 1979		No issued from 1 May 1979 to 29 February 1980		Comments
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food					
to Port Health Authorities and others concerned with public health requirements for imported meat.	70		40		Monitoring by DOE of circulars to Port Health Authorities waived after Ministerial correspondence.
	32		19		
		102		59	
Department of Education and Science		127		23	
Department of Employment		51		21	Monitoring by DOE waived after Ministerial correspondence.
Department of the Environment					
Published circulars	64		20		The number of published circulars issued in the baseline year was itself a significant reduction on previous years.
Guidance notes, reports etc	39		8		
Circular letters	119		36		
		222		64	
Department of Health and Social Security					
Local authority social services letters	43		5		
Local authority circulars	21		5		
		64		10	
Home Office					
To local authorities	118		30		
To police authorities	33		13		
		151		43	

	No of circulars issued in "base-line year" from 1 May 1978 to 30 April 1979		No issued from 1 May 1979 to 29 February 1980		Comments
SCOTTISH OFFICE					
Scottish Economic Planning Department	66		26		The number of circulars issued by the Scottish Office in 1978 was one third down on previous levels. The scope for further reductions is therefore limited. Between 35% and 40% of Scottish Office circulars duplicate those issued by Whitehall departments.
Local Government Finance	20		15		
Scottish Home & Health Dept (Home functions only)	219		79		
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries	27		8		
Scottish Development Dept	70		28		
Scottish Education Dept	107		50		
		509		206	
NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE					
District Councils	90		29		In Northern Ireland, more services are the direct responsibility of Government departments.
Area Boards	497		317		
		587		346	

	No of circulars issued in "base-line year" from 1 May 1978 to 30 April 1979		No issued from 1 May 1979 to 29 February 1980		Comments
Department of Trade					
Weights & Measures technical guidance notes	26		39		Weights & Measures technical guidance notes have been exempted from DOE vetting procedure. The increase in numbers is due to an up-surge in the flow of information useful to authorities.
Other circulars	19		17		
		45		56	
Department of Transport					
Main circulars	12		1		
Circulars (roads)	29		3		
		41		4	
Total for "Whitehall" Depts:		803		280	
WELSH OFFICE		623		75	All circulars issued by the Welsh Office are given clearance by a Welsh Office minister. Individual divisions have been given target quotas for the year. Nearly all circulars duplicate those issued in England by Whitehall departments This year's figure excludes joint circulars, about 50 of which were included in the baseline figure.

19 MAR 1980

cc DOE ds

C.F. to note
Original in G/R

Govt mach.

10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

17 March 1980

Dear Mr Mitchell

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 27 February to Michael Heseltine about Government circulars and circular letters.

I have now seen Michael Heseltine's reply to you of 12 March, and can only underline his assurance that there is no question of denying essential information to members of the public. Our aim is to reduce the flood of advice and information - often of an interfering or unnecessary kind - which has been reaching local authorities from Departments. This is being achieved in the main by confining circulars and circular letters to matters on which advice to authorities is essential.

In a comparatively small number of cases the local authority Associations have been asked to pass on information to their members in lieu of direct communication with authorities by Departments. It is precisely because the information concerned did not warrant publication by circular, or even the issue of non-published circular letters to authorities, that this procedure has been used.

Yours sincerely

MT

R.C. Mitchell, Esq., M.P.

jfh

Cat Mach 4

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

PRIME MINISTER

Some progress on circulars.

MF 27/2.

My ref:

Your ref:

27 FEB 1980

Dear Leader

You will know, from recent letters which have passed between our Private Secretaries, that I have been concerned about the way the exercise in reducing circulars to local authorities is progressing.

Under the arrangements we put in hand, colleagues have been letting me see the circulars they have proposed to send to English local authorities. My officials have been watching developments and have warned me that, although on the information they have we are likely to achieve substantial savings in the number of circulars issued, it is possible that we may fall short of the two-thirds cut we set for ourselves.

Our information is of course incomplete; I do not see Scottish or Welsh circulars nor do I have details of the circulars issued within approved series. The figures I have been given on English circulars are as follows:-

Target for year ending 30 April 1980	268
Circulars already issued or cleared	189
Leeway	79

Whether or not 79 is a comfortable margin for the last three months of the exercise depends on how many circulars are going out in the approved series. If the guess of 60 which has been made here is not wildly out, the remaining margin could well be a slender one.

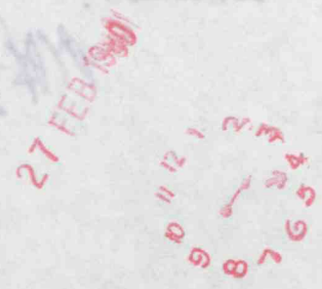
I have asked my officials to approach the Civil Service Department about making a full check, but in the meantime might I urge colleagues to take a really rigorous view over the next months as to the necessity for new circulars?

I am copying this to the Prime Minister, to members of the Cabinet, the Minister of Transport, Sir Ian Bancroft, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Derek Rayner.

Yours ever

MICHAEL HESELTINE

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw MP



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✓ MAP

Parliament

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref: H/PSO/10929/80

Your ref:

18 February 1980

Dear Mike

CIRCULARS

Vivienne Dews wrote to me on 30 January about the thinking of Home Office Ministers on that Department's circulars. You will request if necessary. may wish to see my reply of 13 February, which sets out my Secretary of State's views on the extent to which the issue of circulars can be reduced and on the possibility (and otherwise) of using the local authority associations as a channel of communication.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to the private secretaries to other members of the Cabinet, the Minister of Transport, Sir Ian Bancroft, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Derek Rayner.

Yours sincerely

Paul Bristow

P N BRISTOW
Private Secretary

Mike Pattison Esq

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref: H/PSO/10929/80

Your ref:

13 February 1980

Dear Vivienne

Thank you for your letter of 30 January about Home Office circulars.

My Secretary of State is grateful to Lord Belstead for looking into the position on your Department's circulars and has noted Mr Whitelaw's view that if the two-thirds reduction in circulars turns out to mean that essential information cannot be promulgated, the Cabinet should think again.

You will recall that the Cabinet agreed that Ministers should set themselves a target for a reduction. We do not have full details but what we do know suggests that taking Departments as a whole the overall two-thirds reduction may not be achieved. Mr Heseltine has therefore asked the Department to invite the Civil Service Department to make a full check on how things stand so that the Cabinet can, if they wish, consider this question further.

You also asked for our guidance on utilising the local authority associations to circulate messages in lieu of Departmental circulars. We are conscious that the Associations are increasingly resisting proposals of this nature from Departments. The Association of District Councils in particular has asked that Departments should communicate views to authorities by circular rather than through the Associations. My Secretary of State accepts that in the absence of co-operation from the Associations Departments will have to have recourse to their own channels of communication.

Yours sincerely

Paul Bristow

P N BRISTOW
Private Secretary

Ms Vivienne Dews

19 FEB 1980



AB

√ MAP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT

Caxton House Tothill Street London SW1H 9NA

Telephone Direct Line 01-213 6400

Switchboard 01-213 3000

Tom King Esq MP
Minister for Local Government and
Environment Services
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON SW1P 3EB

Your Ref: H/PSO/15156/79

19 November 1979

Dear Tom

Thank you for your letter of 1 October about circulars which are issued by the Health and Safety Commission.

I feel sure you need have no worry about the number of guidance circulars being issued by the Health and Safety Commission. They are already very few and unlikely to cause problems to the local authorities.

You suggested that the advisory and information circulars might be issued by the local authority associations rather than by the Commission. I understand that this question has already been considered with the local authority associations in the Standing Liaison Committee to which I referred in my letter of 5 September to Michael Heseltine. The local authorities feel that the existing agreed arrangements should be continued. This approach is quite understandable since the kind of information and advice contained in these circulars deals with such matters as the interpretation of regulations governing woodworking machinery, the protection of eyes, and highly flammable liquids. The local authority associations simply do not have the staff qualified either to prepare such documents or to deal with any enquiries arising out of their issue.

I am copying this letter to recipients of yours.

Yours

Tom

19 NOV 1979

LH

✓MAP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref: H/PSO/16092/79

Your ref:

5th Nov. 1979.

Dear Norman

Thank you for your letter of 15 October about circulars.

I entirely agree that there is no real benefit if, in using the local authority Associations as channels of information instead of sending circulars direct to authorities, the net volume of paper reaching authorities is not reduced. But I do see a presentational merit in reducing the number of circulars further than might otherwise be possible by asking the Associations, in appropriate cases, to pass on to their members messages and information which do not merit publication by Departments. Although I understand that in some cases the Associations have made a special distribution of particular messages, that is not the only means they have of informing members. It was never in my mind that they should be used simply as our post offices and indeed I would accept a point they have put to us, that we ought not to ask them to circulate information on highly technical matters where they have no resources to deal with enquiries and the request simply results in more work than they can cope with.

You outline in your letter the series of main circulars - such as those giving advice on legislation and the establishment of national guidelines - which you propose to continue. It makes sense for departments to keep broadly in step in their approach and so I take it that you will be letting me see the drafts as they arise as do other Ministers with local government responsibilities. I distinguish circulars of this kind of course from the series of communications - the guidance notes - where Ministers agree the continuing basis of publication rather than authorise each item as it issues. Thank you for letting me know how you will be dealing with those of your circulars (roads) series which fall into that category.

You will know that, at official level, a general review has now been completed of the working of our new regime for circulars. Where we have had a chance to consider this it will enable us to take any decisions that are necessary about the use of circulars (including letters) and the method of distribution.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, other members of the Cabinet, Sir Ian Bancroft, Sir R Armstrong and Sir Derek Rayner.

Yours ever

MICHAEL HESELTINE

The Rt Hon Norman Fowler MP

- 5 NOV 1979

Cabinet Govt Machinery HS
PGO NIO MOD
CS (HMT) WO DI
DES SO HMT
DEng. DEnv. FCO
DTde. MAFF LCO
CDL LPS HO
DHSS DEm. D/Trans.
LPO

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

29 October 1979

BF 2/6/80.

Dear David

The Prime Minister has seen Sir Ian Bancroft's minute of 25 October, in which he reports further on arrangements to reduce the number of circulars from Government Departments to local authorities.

She is pleased to note the encouraging progress made so far, and would like Sir Ian to keep up the pressure - especially in view of his comment that some of the apparent success to date may be due to special circumstances. She agrees that Ministers and senior officials should continue to be involved in the arrangements for monitoring circulars.

The Prime Minister agrees with Sir Ian's recommendation that all circulars which create additional work or costs for the authorities should continue to acknowledge this fact, and should give reasonable estimates of these where possible; that circulars with no such implications should continue to say so; and that the Treasury should continue to vet all circulars with resource implications.

She also agrees that Sir Ian's next report should be made in June 1980 unless there are particular points which should be brought to her attention before then.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the members of Cabinet, including the Minister of Transport, and to Sir Derek Rayner and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely

Mike Pattison

David Laughrin, Esq.,
Civil Service Department.

TMP

PRIME MINISTER 1.
Some progress here.
Would you like to respond:
1. Encouraged by progress; please keep up pressure;
2. Agree "x";
3. Agree full report next June.

Yes - very pleased

Yes

Yes

MF 26/x

PRIME MINISTER

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

My minute of 6 June described the arrangements being made to reduce by two-thirds the number of circulars from Government departments to local authorities. I promised a further report in October when the monitoring had been in operation for a few months. Annex A summarises the progress made by each department. Annex B gives some further comments on the handling of this exercise. And Annex C is about the circulars issued to Health Authorities, which raise separate issues.

Annex A shows that about 1900 circulars were issued in Great Britain in the year ending 30 April 1979. If the trend since 1 May 1979 continues then about 700 will be issued in 1979/80: equivalent to a reduction of 63%.

I suspect that this apparent success may be greater than can be sustained. Some of it has probably been due to printing difficulties at HMSO; and some to the need for Ministerial clearance of circulars which is now agreed to be essential.

The Secretary of State for the Environment is for the present checking on all circulars which it is proposed to issue to English authorities; and the Scottish and Welsh Secretaries are doing the same in their countries. In addition other departmental Ministers have become personally involved in the arrangements for monitoring circulars. I am sure that, for the present, Ministers and senior officials should continue to be involved in this way.

Wherever possible circulars with resource implications for local authorities have said how much more money and manpower will be needed; and these estimates have had to be cleared by the Treasury. Quantification has invariably proved difficult; particularly where a circular makes extra work for local authorities' staff but involves no obvious need for new recruitment or capital expenditure.

However I recommend: that all circulars which create additional work or costs for the authorities should continue to acknowledge this fact, and should give reasonable estimates of these where possible; that circulars with no such implications should continue to say so; and that the Treasury should continue to vet all circulars with resource implications.

Yes

This report shows that arrangements for Ministerial control of circulars to local authorities are now well established and that significant progress has been made towards meeting the Ministerial objective. But, as I have said, it is difficult to be confident at this stage. Sustained pressure will be needed if the objective is to be reached and then maintained.

I recommend that my next report should be made next June when figures will be available for the first full year. If any particular difficulties arise that ought to be brought to your attention I will report before then.

I am sending copies of this report to members of the Cabinet, the Minister of Transport, Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Derek Rayner.

IRB

IAN BANCROFT
25 October 1979

conqueror

25 OCT 1979

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

ANNEX A

"WHITEHALL" DEPARTMENTS		No of circulars issued in "baseline year" from 1 May 1978 to 30 April 1979		No issued from 1 May to 31 August 1979		Comments
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food		102		16		The low number issued recently reflects the suspension of circulars detailing public health requirements for imported meat pending consultations with local authorities. Following strong representation from them Ministers have agreed that these circulars should be resumed and that monitoring by DOE should be waived - see paragraph 3 of Annex B to the report.
Department of Education and Science		127		16		-
Department of Employment		51		10		Monitoring by DOE waived after Ministerial correspondence - see paragraph 3 of Annex B to the report.
Department of the Environment						
Published circulars	64			7		The number of published circulars issued in the baseline year was itself a significant reduction on previous years.
Guidance notes, reports etc	39			3		
Circular letters	119			8		
		222			18	
Department of Health and Social Security						The exceptionally low figures are misleading because many circulars were delayed pending clearance or because the Department's role in relation to local authority services was under review.
Local authority social services letters	43			3		
Local authority circulars	21			2		
		64			5	

	No of circulars issued in "baseline year" from 1 May 1978 to 30 April 1979		No issued from 1 May to 31 August 1979		Comments
Home Office					
To local authorities	118		16		
To police authorities	33		7		
		151		23	
Department of Trade					
Weights & Measures technical guidance notes	26		17		Weights & Measures technical guidance notes have been exempted from DOE vetting procedure. See paragraph 3 of Annex B to the report.
Other circulars	19		1		
		45		18	
Department of Transport					
Main circulars	12		1		Operating instructions to the Department's agent authorities on trunk roads will be separated from the general circulars (roads) series.
Circulars (roads)	29		2		
		41		3	
Total for "Whitehall" Departments:		803		109	
WELSH OFFICE		623		29	All circulars issued by the Welsh Office are given clearance by a Welsh Office minister. Individual divisions have been given target quotas for the year. Nearly all circulars duplicate those issued in England by Whitehall departments.

	No of circulars issued in "baseline year" from 1 May 1978 to 30 April 1979		No issued from 1 May to 31 August 1979		Comments
SCOTTISH OFFICE					The number of circulars issued by the Scottish Office in 1978 was one third down on previous levels. The scope for further reductions is therefore limited. The Scottish Office estimates that between 35 and 402 of their circulars duplicate those issued by Whitehall Depts.
Scottish Economic Planning Department	3		0		
Local Government Finance	20		3		
Scottish Home & Health Department (Home functions only)	219		54		
Department of Agriculture & Fisheries	27		4		
Scottish Development Department	70		11		
Scottish Education Department	107		21		
		446		93	
Total for Great Britain		1872		231	These figure include some 800 and 70 respectively which are duplicated in Scotland and Wales.
NORTHERN IRELAND					In Northern Ireland, more services are the direct responsibility of Government departments.
District Councils	90		24		
Area Boards	497		141		
		587		165	

ANNEX B

COMMENTS ON THE OCTOBER REPORT

The report is primarily concerned with circulars issued by Government Departments to elected local authorities exercising statutory functions and solely with circulars sent to all local authorities (or all those concerned with a particular service) in one or more countries of the United Kingdom. It does not cover day-to-day correspondence between Government Departments and one or more local authorities, which must also be kept to the minimum. The figures do not cover statistical returns, which are the subject of a separate review announced in paragraph 9 of the White Paper on Government Controls, and which are monitored by the National and Local Government Statistics Liaison Committees and their Standing Advisory Panels. Nor does it cover circulars issued to local authorities by "quangos". It is however the responsibility of departments to ensure that the "quangos" which they sponsor are made aware of the Government's lead in this area and that appropriate arrangements are made for monitoring their issue of circulars.

2. One way in which the number of circulars issued direct to local authorities in England and Wales has been reduced is by the use of communications to the local authority associations. Some information and guidance which is not directly in fulfilment of statutory obligations has been given to the associations to pass on as part of their regular process of informing their members about matters of interest. So far this has worked well although there have been objections from some authorities. In Scotland, the Scottish Office feel that, if an issue is so important that authorities have to be told about it, then it is the responsibility of the Scottish Office to communicate direct. Indeed over particularly controversial issues it has been found out that individual authorities will only heed a policy if it is set out in a circular sent to them direct. Furthermore it is doubtful whether the very small secretariat of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities could handle the extra work.

3. As experience of the arrangements has developed, Ministers have agreed special arrangements for certain categories of circular which local authorities clearly need and welcome. They have decided that these circulars should not be subject to scrutiny by DOE. So far, arrangements of this kind have been agreed for technical guidance notes issued by the Department of Trade about enforcing weights and measures legislation, for circulars issued formally by MAFF and the Welsh Office to port health and other authorities detailing public health requirements for imported meat, and for circulars from the Department of Employment to local authority careers offices. In addition the Minister of Transport considers that as communications on road construction standards and operating instructions for those authorities who act as his agents in respect of trunk roads are not "circulars" they should not be subject to clearance by DOE. In all these cases Ministers or senior officials are keeping an especially close watch to ensure that the number of circulars is kept to the minimum.

4. The position in Northern Ireland is different from that in Great Britain since more services are the direct responsibility of Government departments or of area boards under their control. Northern Ireland departments are continuing to review their procedures so as to reduce the number of circulars, without detriment to public policy. It will be some time before it will be possible to judge the effect of these reviews but preliminary indications are that there is unlikely to be scope for much reduction. In addition to the departmental reviews, the NI Department of the Environment is discussing economies in this field with the Association of Local Authorities.

CIRCULARS TO HEALTH AUTHORITIES

1. Because of the special nature of the relationship between the DHSS and the National Health Service, DHSS Ministers have decided that a two-thirds reduction in the number of communications is not practicable. Nevertheless, they accept that substantial reductions are essential. The targets for reduction and the machinery for achieving them are described below.

2. Broadly speaking, DHSS communicates with the NHS in two ways:-

i. by means of formal Health Circulars and Health Notices in numbered series containing material of interest to a number of disciplines within the NHS (known for convenience as 'multi-disciplinary communications');

ii. communications containing material which in general is only of interest to a single discipline within the NHS, usually issued in the form of ad hoc letters, bulletins or information sheets ('single-discipline communications').

The targets agreed by Ministers for reduction of the first of these categories is 50% over the next two years and for single-discipline communications a reduction of 25%.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY COMMUNICATIONS: CONTROL

3. A forward programme of circulars covering the coming year has been drawn up. This programme (updated quarterly) is examined

by a Circular Scrutiny Committee (CSC) consisting of Deputy Secretaries, Chief Professional Officers or their nominated deputies. Only with CSC's approval will any circular be issued; major circulars will also need Ministerial approval. Exceptionally, where a circular needs to be issued before the next update of the forward programme, a Deputy Secretary's approval will be needed. Four categories of essentially 'demand-led' circulars are excluded from this formal system of control (though reductions are to be achieved wherever possible):-

i. those dealing with hazardous equipment and safety warnings;

ii. those dealing with personnel, pay and training matters which are largely issued by DHSS on behalf of the NHS

iii. those dealing with statistical requests; and

iv. those in the Family Practitioner series dealing with fees and conditions for independent contractors.

SINGLE-DISCIPLINE COMMUNICATIONS: CONTROL

4. Chief Professional Officers and Deputy Secretaries have been charged with making arrangements to reduce the issue of single-discipline communications within their control.

GENERAL METHODS OF REDUCTION

5. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will review progress towards target reductions quarterly.

6. Other measures taken include encouraging amalgamation of communications on similar topics, the (quarterly) issue of a bulletin giving brief descriptions of available publications, thus replacing the practice of sending documents "for information only" to NHS Authorities, and encouraging professional journals to assist in keeping their readers up to date with recent reports and new developments.

PROGRESS REPORT

7. i. Multi-disciplinary communications: from May 1978 to April 1979, 229 circulars were issued (excluding those described at paragraph 3(ii) above). The forward programme of circulars envisages 129 issues from May 1979 to April 1980. The actual number issued from 1 May 1979 to 31 August 1979 was 38 (again excluding those described at paragraph 3(ii)). On an annual basis, this represents a rate of issue of 117 circulars a year, nearly 50 per cent down on issues for last year.

ii. Single-discipline communications: full figures are not yet available, but preliminary indications are that reductions in this category have so far been modest.

WELSH HEALTH AUTHORITIES

8. Like his colleagues in England, the Secretary of State for Wales is directly accountable for the National Health Service in Wales. Welsh Office communications normally parallel those from DHSS where there is a long-established scrutiny system. From 1 May to 31 August 1979 the Welsh Office issued 204 circulars, as compared with 782 for the baseline year. While no major reduction has been achieved so far, the Welsh Office Health Groups share with DHSS the objective of reducing numbers of multi-disciplinary communications by 50 per cent over the next two years.

SCOTTISH HEALTH AUTHORITIES

9. The Secretary of State for Scotland is responsible for the administration of the National Health Service in Scotland. Communications in Scotland are similar to those in England and Wales. Since 1 May circulars have been issuing at 80 per cent of the level of the previous 12 months - 68 in the period 1 May to 31 August 1979 against 255 in the baseline year. With the agreement of the Secretary of State, SHHD in common with the other Health Departments will continue to follow a policy of issuing essential circulars only.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
2 MARSHAM STREET
SW1P 3EB

NBPM

MAP 67



With the Compliments of the

Minister of Transport

Govt Machinery

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP
Secretary of State for the Environment
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1

15 October 1979

Dear Michael

I have now, with Kenneth Clarke, reviewed all documents produced by my Department and sent to local authorities. You asked me, like other Ministers, to report my conclusions and to let you know, in particular, which series I have decided to continue issuing.

I have no doubt of my Department's ability to achieve substantial reductions in the material previously sent out. But, like the Secretary of State for Scotland, I think that there is no real benefit if we reduce the number of our circulars but increase the number we cause the local authority assoications to send out. I shall, of course, use the associations where this would make good sense. My primary objective, however, will be to reduce the scope and number of documents my Department sends out and discontinue the sort of unnecesssary advice that has too frequently been issued to all local authorities.

I have noted, also, your view that some circulars - for example those which contain statutory guidance or specifications - are essential and must continue. In addition, where I originate legislation and see the need to set national guidelines (as distinct from telling authorities how they should organise their business), I am convinced that such information also needs to be conveyed direct to authorities.

I propose to continue the series of main circulars which offer information and - as necessary - advice on legislation and policy. As for the informatory circulars on RSG and local government expenditure which have in the past been published jointly with your and other departments, I am content to follow the lead you set. I have decided to restrict the Departmental series, called "Circulars (roads)" to those containing advice on legislation and the establishment of national guidelines - necessary for, e.g. a safe road network. As to circular letters, we send out very few.

I am content that the procedures you propose for "circulars" should apply to all the documents I have so far mentioned. None of these will go forward without the authority of a Minister here.

Previously the "Circulars (roads)" series contained communications which are in fact operating instructions and set construction standards which my Department has to give to those authorities who act as my agents in respect of my executive responsibility for trunk roads. These are not circulars, as defined for this exercise, being concerned with contract procedures and technical information needed for the

construction and maintenance of roads and bridges. I have asked Kenneth Clarke to look at examples of these as well as of other occasional Departmental publications, whatever their content, before they are sent out: but these do not need to be the subject of further clearance.

In addition to cutting out unnecessary advice, I shall make sure that information and any related guidance (beyond that springing from legislation) is not sent - as a matter of course - to all authorities. They all need to know what is available, but more of the onus of saying what they want should be put on them. I am introducing procedures to this end. Material of this kind that authorities ask - and pay - for is, by definition, likely to be read and the information used.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, other Members of the Cabinet, Sir Ian Bancroft, Sir John Hunt and Sir Derek Rayner.

NORMAN FOWLER

3F

Govt Machinery

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP
Secretary of State for the Environment
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1

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I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, other Members of the Cabinet, Sir Ian Bancroft, Sir John Hunt and Sir Derek Rayner.

NORMAN FOWLER

16 OCT 1979

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-212 3434

MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

MAP

My Ref: H/PSO/15156/79

1 OCT 1979

Dear Jim

Thank you for your letter of 5 September to Michael Heseltine about circulars which are issued by the Health and Safety Commission.

As you will have seen from Michael's letters of 25 June and 6 August to Willie Whitelaw, it is our view that we should instruct or persuade those quangos sponsored by our Departments to follow the Government's lead in substantially reducing the number of circulars issued to local authorities, and that wherever possible information should be communicated to authorities through the local authority Associations.

In the circumstances you describe, the Health and Safety Commission would appear to be well placed to exercise control over its own circulars. Provided the Commission is aware of the efforts being made to reduce circulars and has been encouraged to follow our lead in this matter, I agree that there is no need to intervene in the handling of the Commission's circulars. I see from your letter that besides circulars that are binding on local authorities the Commission also issues some which are purely advisory or informative. Is there scope for the Commission to arrange for messages of this type to be passed on by the Associations?

I am copying this letter as before.

Yours

TOM KING

The Rt Hon James Prior MP

- 2 OCT 1979



LK

MAP

Local Govt

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT

~~ST JAMES'S SQUARE LONDON SW1Y 4JP~~

~~Telephone Direct Line~~

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Caxton House
Tothill Street
LONDON SW1H 9NA

Telephone: 01 213 6400

Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP
Secretary of State
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON SW1

5 September 1979

Dear Secretary of State

You wrote to Willie Whitelaw, with copies to colleagues, on 25 June asking that you be sent personally draft circulars proposed to be issued to local authorities.

See: Local Govt, May 79, Relations with Central Govt.

The area of discussion in relation to my department was dealt with in letters we exchanged on a possible relaxation of controls over local authorities (my reply dated 15 June to your letter dated 24 May) supplemented by separate correspondence that Grey Gowrie had with Lord Belwyn about the careers service circulars. Of the topic within my remit, I think that the only circulars that remain to be considered in the context of your letter are those dealing with health and safety.

To set them in perspective, I think I should first mention that these circulars are a direct consequence of the Health and Safety Commission's statutory control of the performance of health and safety enforcement functions by local authorities. In my letter of 15 June about controls, I explained why I saw no case for any relaxation of the Commission's statutory controls in this field. Now that I have studied the care and thoroughness with which the Commission ensures that such circulars are both necessary and apt to their purpose, I see no need for further intervention.

Briefly, these circulars are one of the main means by which the Commission seeks to achieve the overall effectiveness and consistency of enforcement practice of the many separate enforcing authorities. They do not place burdens upon local authorities, but are designed to enable them to perform their existing enforcement functions in accordance with the requirement of the legislation. The Health and Safety Commission has been at pains to ensure that the drafts of all proposed circulars are subject to an exhaustive system of consultation with the local authority associations before they are finalised, and the full Commission itself (of which two members are nominees of the local

authority associations) sees and approves the text of all circulars that are binding (ie as distinct from simply advisory or informative). The local authority associations are, of course, also consulted on the content and relevance of simple advisory or informative circulars before they are issued; and there is also a standing liaison Committee with representation from the associations.

Against that background, and bearing in mind that the statutory responsibility for giving such guidance rests not upon me but squarely upon the Health and Safety Commission under section 18(4) of the HSW Act, I hope that you too will agree that there is no need for us to intervene in this field.

I am copying this letter to recipients of yours of 25 June.

Yours sincerely,

(Approved by the
Secretary of State and
signed in his absence)

JC

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

✓ MAP Govt. Machinery

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref: H/PSO/14093/79

Your ref:

6 August 1979

Dear Willie

Thank you for your letter of 22 July about circulars to local authorities. I note the arrangements you are proposing and am content. I assume that I will continue to be able to see letters to the Chief Executives of local authorities.

As regards the local authority Associations, they have agreed to co-operate with us in this initiative. It is my firm view that a good proportion of the messages which need to be passed to authorities can be given by way of the Associations who are frequently corresponding with their members. Although using their good offices will mean some extra work for them, I would not expect it to be unduly burdensome since after all, it was always the intention that we should drastically cut down the volume of paper from central Government.

Copies of this letter go to the receipients of yours.

Yours ever

MICHAEL HESELTINE

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw CH MC MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Govt. Machinery

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

My ref: H/PSO/13855/79

Your ref:

30 July 1979

Dear Priestley

Thank you for your letter of 16 July to David Edmonds about circulars. Sir Derek Rayner may now have seen a copy of the Secretary of State's letter of 23 July to the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The key issue here is the Government's decision (recorded in the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting on 10 May) to set itself a target of reducing the issue of Government Circulars to local authorities by two-thirds.

It is the Secretary of State's view that wherever possible communication with local government should be effected through the local authority Associations rather than by circular. Circulars are only letters communicating information or guidance to authorities and where this can satisfactorily be passed on by the Associations as part of their regular process of informing their members, Mr Heseltine considers that they are quite an appropriate channel to employ. However, it is not his intention that all direct communication with local authorities should cease; the Secretary of State recognises that some circulars, for example, those which contain statutory guidance or specifications, are essential and must continue. As the attached Annex indicates, five numbered circulars have to date been issued by DOE. A small number of unpublished circular letters have also been sent directly to local authorities.

Copies go to the Private Secretaries concerned.

Yours sincerely

Jeff Jacobs

J JACOBS
Private Secretary

C Priestley Esq
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
SW1

C Priestley Esq

ANNEX

Circular No	Title	Issued
16/79	The Housing Act 1974, Housing Association Grants Administration Allowances	7 June
19/79	Thermal Insulation (Industrial Buildings) Act 1957	19 June
18/79	Local Government Superannuation (Amendment) (No 2) Regulations 1979	18 June
21/79	Local Authority Expenditure 1979/80	9 July
22/79	Compulsory Acquisition of Land, Rate of Interest after Entry	10 July

30 JUL 1979



CR can't find

I'm not surprised, it's CF work.

Telephone
01-212 8001

DEPARTMENT OF THE
ENVIRONMENT
2 MARSHAM STREET
SW1P 3EB

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

With the Compliments of the

Private Secretary to the Secretary of

State for the Environment

(8)

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

cc PS/Mr. King
PS/Lord Bellwin
PS/Perm. Sec.
PS/Sir G. Wardale
Mr. Ennals
Mr. Chipperfield
Mr. Burr

My ref: H/PSO/13720/79

Your ref:

23 July 1979

Mr Hallett

Dear George

Thank you for your letter of 10 July about circulars.

Obviously you will know best the extent to which you will need to use the Convention of Scottish Authorities as a channel to communicate information to local authorities in Scotland. My own view is that there will be a number of messages for local authorities where a circular from central Government is not essential but which can quite reasonably be passed on by the Associations to their members as part of their normal information processes. It is, I understand, quite usual for them to send out letters to authorities very quickly after particular events of interest, and to add to these communications the matters we are bringing to their attention would not involve a particular burden for them. So far they have not complained.

yours ever

Michael

MICHAEL HESELTINE

The Rt Hon George Younger MP Sofs SCOTLAND.

MAP

HOME SECRETARY

QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SWiH 9AT

19 July 1979

Dear Michael

Thank you for your letter of 25 June about government circulars.

I am arranging for my Private Secretary to send to yours the drafts of circulars which the Home Office intends sending to local authorities. I am not extending this arrangement to those circular letters which are addressed to chief officers (for example, chief constables) and copied to local authorities.

I note what you say about proceeding as much as possible through the local authority associations. I assume that you have reached an understanding with them and that they are willing to take on the considerable amount of extra work that will be involved. The minutes of the meeting to which you refer do not make clear whether the local authority associations have accepted this responsibility.

I am also making arrangements for the various fringe bodies for which the Home Office is responsible to be advised of our wish that they should follow our lead in reducing the number of circulars issued.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, other members of the Cabinet, the Minister of Transport, Sir Ian Bancroft, Sir John Hunt and Sir Derek Rayner.

William

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP

With Mr C Priestley's compliments

Govt. Mach

MAP

CABINET OFFICE

70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS Telephone 01-~~[illegible]~~ 233 8224

16 July 1979

D A Edmonds Esq
Private Secretary to
The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP
Secretary of State for the Environment
2 Marsham Street SW1

Dear Edmonds.

CIRCULARS

Sir Derek Rayner has seen Mr Younger's letter of 10 July, This is not a field in which he has any special knowledge, but he wonders whether there may be a reason, complementary to Mr Younger's first, for sending circulars direct to authorities. He understands that the responsibilities to which circulars relate are laid on local councils, which are statutory bodies, and not upon their associations which, Rayner believes, have no authority other than that vested in them by their members. If this is so, it seems to him that the channel of communication should generally lie between one statutory body (a Government Department) and another (a local authority), rather than be diverted through a third party which is an agent of the second.

Copies go to the Private Secretaries concerned.

Yours sincerely,

Clive Priestley

C PRIESTLEY



Govt Machinery

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND

SCOTTISH OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AU

The Rt Hon Michael Heseltine MP
Secretary of State for the Environment
Department of the Environment
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1 3EB

10 July 1979

Thank you for copying to me your letter of 25 June to Willie Whitelaw about your procedure for clearing circulars to local authorities.

I note from your third paragraph that you believe that we should communicate through the local authority associations, rather than directly, and that the associations should be asked to pass on information or guidance without the promise of a further departmental circular. I cannot reasonably see my way to do this in Scotland and I think there are some general arguments, as well as local ones, against what you suggest.

First, there are times when individual authorities will only heed a policy if it is stated in a circular sent direct to them. A good example is the most recent finance circular from Scottish Office about cutbacks in public expenditure. This circular was issued at the request of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, because some local authorities positively refused to take any action until they had received the information in the form of a government circular.

Second, in planning to reduce the size of my Department I have assured the unions that we will not make savings by cosmetic transfers of responsibilities. Third, if the Government consider an issue of such importance that local authorities ought to be informed about it, it is surely our responsibility to tell them each directly rather than rely on the vagaries of an association's administration. There is no real benefit to anyone if we reduce the number of our circulars but increase the number of association ones, and I think that our best line is indeed to continue to issue circulars directly to the local authorities, but paring them to the minimum in scope and number.

Apart from these general arguments, in Scotland such a change of approach would impose an unreasonable burden on the very small secretariat of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities if we

were to ask them to issue guidance, etc on our behalf. I would not want to add this burden at the present time.

I am copying this letter to those who received yours.

Approved by the Secretary of State and signed in his absence

J S WILSON
Private Secretary

10 JUL 1979

BDC

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

Govt Machinery

My ref:

Your ref:

25.6.79

Dear Colin

I wrote to you on 11 May, with copies to colleagues, to set in motion the procedure for clearing circulars to local authorities with my Department to implement our decision to cut the number of circulars by two thirds. Sir John Garlick's letter of 16 June to other Permanent Secretaries made provisional arrangements for the procedure to operate.

I would like to suggest one or two changes to these arrangements. I intend for the time being to see personally all circulars to be sent to local authorities and I would therefore ask that in future, whenever a Minister has decided that he wishes a circular to be issued, he should write to me (with a copy to the Chancellor of the Exchequer) enclosing a copy of the draft. This would not of course preclude earlier consultations at official level or with the local authority associations; such consultations may in any case be necessary to establish the agreed estimates of cost and manpower implications. Where Ministers approve the basis on which a series of communications, such as guidance notes, should be published I should also be grateful if they would let me know what they have decided.

In Sir Ian Bancroft's report of 6 June to the Prime Minister on the way circulars are being reduced I note, in paragraph 4, a reference to an initial increase in circulars as a result of changes in Government policy. I see no need for such an increase to occur. As I explained at the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on 4 June, I believe that we should wherever possible communicate through the local authority associations, rather than directly by circular. There may have to be a few exceptions to this procedure, but I think that in general the associations should be asked to pass information or guidance to their members and Departments should make it clear to them on each occasion (so that they can make it clear to their members) that there will not be a subsequent circular.

I also see that Sir Ian's paper refers only to Government Departments' circulars. At the recent meeting of the CCLGF, we were a little embarrassed on the Government side to have quoted at us the issue of a circular by the Office of Fair Trading. I very much share the view

expressed to me about this circular by Reggie Eyre that we should also instruct or persuade those quangos sponsored by our Departments who have dealings with local authorities to follow the Government's lead in this matter.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, other members of the Cabinet, the Minister of Transport, Sir Ian Bancroft, Sir John Hunt and Sir Derek Rayner.

yours ever

MICHAEL HESELTINE

26 JUN 1979

DM

Govt Machinery
MAP 19/vi.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

ELIZABETH HOUSE, YORK ROAD, LONDON SE1 7PH

TELEPHONE 01-928 9222

FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Mike Pattison Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1A OAA

18 June 1979

Dear Mike

GOVERNMENT CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

1. My Secretary of State has seen Sir Ian Bancroft's minute and report of 6 June to the Prime Minister on this subject and has asked me to report that he will himself be directly supervising implementation of the Cabinet's decision in DES, at least for the next few months while the detailed application and implications are being worked through.

2. I am copying this letter to Private Secretaries of Cabinet Ministers, of the Minister of Transport, and of Sir Ian Bancroft, Sir John Hunt and Sir Derek Rayner.

Yours
Philip Hunter

P J HUNTER
Private Secretary



MAP 18/6.

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY
ASHDOWN HOUSE
123 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1E 6RB
TELEPHONE DIRECT LINE 01-212 3301
SWITCHBOARD 01-212 7676

Secretary of State for Industry

Mike Pattison Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1

15 June 1979

Dear mike,

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

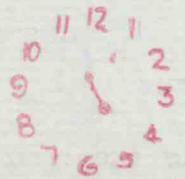
Your letter of 12 June to David Laughrin suggested that the Minister to be nominated for day-to-day involvement in this subject should be the same Minister as will be handling the Rayner project. In the case of the Department of Industry however you may like to note that we do not issue any circulars to local authorities and that therefore we had a nil return in the exercise covered by Sir Ian Bancroft's minute of 6 June to the Prime Minister. In the circumstances we will naturally not need a nominated Minister on this subject.

Yours sincerely,

Pete.

PETER STREDDER
Private Secretary

18 JUN 1979



Govt. Machinery

JS
cc CSD
CO (2)

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

15 June 1979

Thank you for your letter of 14 June, explaining the arrangements which your Secretary of State has made for Ministerial responsibility for the Rayner exercise and for other waste and efficiency exercises. These are entirely satisfactory.

I am sending copies of this letter to David Laughrin (CSD), Martin Vile (Cabinet Office) and Clive Priestley (Sir Derek Rayner's Office).

M. A. PATTISON

T.G. Harris, Esq.,
Department of Trade.

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE 1 VICTORIA STREET LONDON SW1H 0ET Telephone 01-215 7877

From the Secretary of State

Mike Pattison Esq
10 Downing Street
London SW1

14 June 1979

Dear Mike,

We spoke on the telephone about your letter to David Laughrin about the Prime Minister's response to Sir Ian Bancroft's minute about circulars to local authorities. In that letter you reported that the Prime Minister had suggested that Ministers in charge of Departments should nominate the same junior Ministerial colleague to handle both the exercise on circulars and the separate Rayner project.

I explained that my Secretary of State had already anticipated Sir Ian's suggestion and had put Mr Reginald Eyre, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in this Department, in charge of all the current waste and efficiency exercises, including that on local circulars. In the case of our proposed Rayner project, however, the Prime Minister's letter of 4 June suggested that this should be dealt with by a Minister of State. As the subject the Secretary of State wishes to have examined as our part of the Rayner exercise is export promotion, the Secretary of State has asked the Minister for Trade, Mr Parkinson, to take the lead. This would fit in with his Ministerial responsibilities. The Secretary of State therefore proposes to maintain these arrangements which he believes will still meet the Prime Minister's objective of achieving suitable co-ordination within each Department on the various current efficiency exercises.

contd/...

I am sending copies of this letter to David Laughrin (CSD), Martin Vile (Cabinet Office) and to Clive Priestley (Sir Derek Rayner's Office).

Yours sincerely,

Tan Harris

T G HARRIS
Private Secretary

c.c. Mr Priestley, Sir D. Rayner's Office
No action
Govt Mach
re MAP 13/VI.

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY
THAMES HOUSE SOUTH
MILLBANK LONDON SW1P 4QJ

01-211 6402

13 June 1979.

K. Stowe Esq.,
Principal Private Secretary
to the Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
London SW1.

Dear Ken,

REDUCTION IN GOVERNMENT CIRCULARS

I am replying on behalf of the Department of Energy to your letter to Private Secretaries of 8 May about action towards reducing the number of Government circulars by up to two-thirds.

I attach a note of the forms covered by your letter of 8 May; as you will see, they amount to only a handful and are of a kind which provide no real scope for reduction of withdrawal, though we shall keep them under close review.

I am copying this letter to Private Secretaries to Sir Ian Bancroft and Sir John Hunt.

Yours Sincerely,

Bill

W.J. Burroughs,
Private Secretary.

Encl.



1 DIVING CIRCULARS

These give guidance on safety in connection with diving procedures etc. They are regarded as of great importance to the diving and offshore industries and generally welcomed by those concerned. No real possibility of reducing their number and it is considered undesirable to do so. About 10 to 12 notices a year with a circulation of around 300.

2 CONTINENTAL SHELF OPERATIONS NOTICES AND SAFETY LETTERS

These are also concerned with operational and safety matters pertaining to the offshore industry. None of the Notices or letters is issued as a matter of routine, but only in response to incidents which have been drawn to the Department's attention. There is no automatic expense on the industry solely as a result of these letters or notices: any expense is due to the reaction which the industry itself feels is necessary.

In 1978, 8 Notices were issued with a circulation of about 1500 each. 450 of these were issued to the Petroleum Industry Training Board for use as a training aid and of the other 1000 or so approximately half were issued at the request of the recipients. A small number of safety letters has been issued, each of which has a standard circulation of around 100, with a further 75 issued by additional request.

3 There are two groups of leaflets issued by the Department to provide information about various forms of assistance. These are not circulars in the generally understood sense but are included here for completeness of coverage.

(a) ENERGY CONSERVATION

The Department issues a number of leaflets in connection with various energy conservation schemes. These, together with very approximate monthly circulation figures, comprise:

ESS/5 One day survey	- 2000
ESS/F1 Extended survey	- 100
Lists of consultants in the Energy Survey Scheme	- 1500
Demonstration project scheme	- 50
Energy Quick Advice Service	- 200
Circular Letter on Tax Allowance for Insulation of Industrial Buildings	- 50

These items are an integral part of the Department's activities in implementing agreed energy conservation measures. It is necessary to ensure that industry and commerce are provided with the necessary information to enable them to take full advantage of the Government schemes.

(b) COMMUNITY PROJECTS IN THE HYDROCARBONS SECTOR

This comprises a booklet designed to help UK industry take advantage of an EEC scheme for interest-free loans for technological development projects in the fields of

exploration, production, transport and storage of oil and gas. We believe that the information and advice contained in the brochure has contributed to the recent success of British firms in getting more than 30 per cent of the funds available - twice the Government contribution to the EEC budget of 16 per cent. This year 1100 copies were printed and so far 900 have been issued.

CONFIDENTIAL

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

12 June 1979

Dear David

The Prime Minister has seen Sir Ian Bancroft's minute of 6 June about circulars to local authorities.

She was grateful for this initial report, and looks forward to receiving details of progress later in the year.

Sir Ian suggested that Ministers in Charge of Departments might nominate a junior Ministerial colleague for day-to-day involvement in the exercise. Ministers have already been asked to make such a nomination for work on the Rayner project, and the Prime Minister considers that the same nominees should handle the exercise on circulars to local authorities. She would like Sir Derek Rayner to take a continuing interest in this exercise, which is relevant to other work he is undertaking on her behalf.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of the Cabinet, including the Minister for Transport, to Martin Vile (Cabinet Office) and to Clive Priestley (Sir Derek Rayner's Office).

Yours ever

Mike Pattison

David Laughrin, Esq.,
Civil Service Department.

CONFIDENTIAL

(1)

cc PS/Mr King
PS/Mr Stanley
PS/Perm Secretary
PS/Mr Wardle
PS/Sir K Cox
Mr Barnett
Mr Burns
Mr Shearer
Mr Ellis Rees
Mr Chipperfield
Mr Burr
Mr Ennals
Mr Rumble
Mr T.L. Jones
Mr Atterton
Mr Broadley

CONFIDENTIAL

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB

TSF (2)

My ref:

Your ref:

11 May 1979

Dear Willie

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

We agreed at Cabinet yesterday that circulars affecting local government should be cleared in advance with my Department. I am accordingly instructing my officials to get in touch with yours, and those of other Departments concerned with circulars to local government, to establish a procedure to give effect to our decision. I have made it clear to them that the procedure must be such as to avoid any delay to such circulars as are issued.

I am sending copies of this to the Prime Minister, other members of Cabinet and to Sir John Hunt.

Yours ever

Michael

MICHAEL HESELTINE

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw CH MC MP

27 JUN 1979



TO BE
REPLACED.



Please excuse the poor typing - it is a case of self-help today!

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr PATTISON

cc Sir Derek Rayner
Mr Allen

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

You as ked for advice on Sir Ian Bancroft's minute and report of 6 June. The following includes Mr Allen's thoughts and mine. TPM

The minute

2 It is indeed too early to report specific progress towards the Cabinet's target of reducing the flow of circulars by two-thirds (para 2), but the pressure will need keeping up.

3 There is indeed a close link with the review of centrall controls over local authorities (para 3) and it would be desirable to consult LA associations in due course (para 14 of the report).

4 It is indeed necessary to impose and maintain stringent standards (para 5), but guidance on what is meant by "stringent" will almost certainly be necessay to get the reform off on the right footing and consistently as between departments. Equally, it may be necessary to define what is meant by a "two-thirds" reduction (para 12 of the report).

5 It might also be helpful to the Cabinet to specify what the report promised for October should cover. I suggest that it should provide a factual analysis of the nature, numbers and cost of the circulars issued and a commentary on their intended purposes and effects and of the effects of dropping them, eg:

- how many circulars instruct, advise, impart information, seek information?

- how many of each kind are required under statute and how many are gratuitous?

- in how many cases is the central bureaucracy simply conversing with the local bureaucracy (see for example the reference on page 3 of the Annex to the despatch of something like 450 communications by DHSS Chief Professional Officers to specific groups of officers in the NHS)?

- what difference would it make if the circulars were not sent at all?

6 The minute ends on a slightly odd note (para 6; see also report para 13). Although the suggestion that a junior Minister shouldhave delegated authority to supervise work on the reduction of circulars is a good one, it might raise eyebrows, coming from an official, even one of Sir Ian Bancroft's eminence.

7 Wth these points in mind, I have drafted the attached Minute to Ministers in charge of Departments, which - if it is the sort of thing that is required - might be shown to Sir Ian Bancroft before despatch.

The report

8 My comments on the report are as follows.

9 Paras 1 - 5 are introductory and definitional.

10 The analysis begins in para 6. Not unnaturally, it contains no reference in detail to the cost of circularisation (eg preparation, despatch and action at the local end), but this should be covered later so that an all-round view of purposes, logistics and resource costs can be provided.

11 I suspect that the analysis of the purposes of circulars in para 6 may not be quite comprehensive. Some circulars (eg DES's 14/1977 on school examianations and curriculum) call on local authorities and others to provide data and/or analyses to central Government. Moreover, the definition in para 6 does not seem to include "forms" requesting factual information.

12 Paras 8 - 10 rightly raise the question of the degree of detail and the depth with which circulars should be prepared whether under statutory authority or otherwise. The data given in the annex throw these questions into sharp relief. It is noticeable that precise numbers are not given in the case of DOE, the local government department for England but that they are (or seem) high in the case of some other departments. This point is pciked up in para 4 of the attached draft Minute.

13 Another point, which does not appear in the report but which is picked up in the draft Minute (para 5), is the total weight of circulars falling on a local authority and their irregularity. I was told by a Chief Education Officer during the recent Management Review of DES, for example, that central departments tend to pile one exercise on top of another as if

local authorities had nothing else to do. This suggests that, so far as possible, departments should plan their working relationship with local authorities and reduce activity (sometimes frenetic) to a more deliberate pace, so that the activity which remains is more productive.

14 Analysis ceases in para 10 and the report turns to tactics in paras 11 - 17. The reference to "stringent standards" in para 11 is welcome but a little vague. Without going into excessive detail, I have tried to fill it out in the attached draft.

15 The reference to costs to local authorities is also welcome (para 15), although the qualification "wherever possible" (line 3) may need further definition because it is relevant to the more deliberate planning and management of working relationships with local authroities referred to above.

16 Para 18 refers interestingly to the NHS. Although Ministers are accountable to the House of Commons for its operations, it is not actually under a degree of control consonant with that accountability. This is one of the "barriers or conventions" Sir Derek Rayner may want or be invited to consider at some stage. For the moment, it is worth noting that a service not under control attracts such a high level of circularisation - paper substituting for reins?

17 If a different kind of draft from the attached is required, I shall be glad to provide it.

CP

C Priestley
11 June 1979

DRAFT OF 11 JUNE 1979

MINUTE TO MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF DEPARTMENTS

CIRCULAR TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Ministers will have seen Sir Ian Bancroft's minute of 6 June and the accompanying report. I am grateful for the work which went into it.

2 I agree that there is a close link between reducing the flow of circulars to local authorities and the review of central government controls over them. I also agree that it will be desirable to consult the local authority associations when the Government has come to a provisional view on its controls.

3 I have therefore asked that Sir Ian Bancroft's next report should be designed to assist us in deciding what should be said to the local authority associations about the use of circulars and our intention to reduce the flow by two thirds. I have asked that the report should provide more precise data than in the interim report about the nature, numbers and cost of the circulars issued in the "base" period and analyse their intended effect by reference to their nature and purpose, for example, whether the circular was required under statute or gave or sought gratuitous information, and analyse also the likely effect of dropping two thirds of them.

4 The report refers in para 12 to the need to reduce both the number of circulars and the amount of paper they consume. I agree that it is no use cutting numbers if as much, possibly more paper is used, but this is not the main point as I see it. This is that central Government should do no

more than it really necessary under the duties laid on it by Parliament and that it should do so economically. Needless activity by central Government is not only costly in itself, it makes for needless response and therefore needless expence at the local level. The level of central activity revealed by the report seems in some cases astonishingly high and at first sight I find it hard to believe that those below can be fully justified by reference to extra benefits reaped by the taxpayer and ratepayer:-

Scottish Office Northern Ireland Office	500 each	- nearly 10 a week each
Home Office	280	- 5 a week
Department of Employment	50 to the Careers Service	- 1 a week
Ministry of Agriculture	113	- over 2 a week, ~~some~~ most duplicating notices in the London Gazette
Department of Health & Social Security	c 900	- 17 a week

5 A message which comes across to me at this early stage is that Government must have an eye not only to the cost of circular activity to itself but also to the questions how much local authorities can cope with from the centre, especially if circulars arrive often, some imposing work on top of tasks already imposed. We should not only avoid force feeding, spoon feeding and choking local authorities, we should also recognise that excessive bureaucratic activity by the central and the local authority will not produce better services. If we cut out activity which is not necessary to good service, we shall ease the burden on ourselves, local authorities and the electorate and incidentally make our working relationship with local government that much more manageable.

6 In seeking out ways of reducing the quantity and content of circulars, the central question should be, "What is the value added by this activity?" Departments will wish to consider critically whether they should be in the business of general information. Of those circulars which contain information regarded as necessary, serious consideration should be given to whether there is an alternative method of communicating the information or advice. In instances where the circulars are issued at the behest of local authorities, we should be particularly critical since those demanding the service are not paying for it.

7 [Ministers in charge of Departments will nodoubt themselves want to pursue the Cabinet decision of 10 May, but they may find it helpful to ask the Minister of State supervising the "Rayner" project to take day-to-day charge on their behalf. I should be grateful if they would inform me of the arrangements made.]

8 I am copying this to Sir Ian Bancroft, Sir John Hunt and Sir Derek Rayner.

11 JUN 1979

spoke: awaiting Sir D R comments on Monday. MAP

MR. STOWE

You wrote to Cabinet Ministers et al on 8 May, following the informal Cabinet, about reduction in Government circulars. In your letter you asked, "the Head of the Civil Service to co-ordinate this so that the Prime Minister can have a complete picture of how the task is being tackled, the progress made and the prospects of meeting the target by a foreseeable date. It would be helpful if the Prime Minister could have an initial assessment in four weeks time."

Sir Ian Bancroft's submission 6.6.79 below covers a CSD paper explaining why Departments issue circulars, and in particular why specific Departments issue specific circulars. Sir Ian's covering minute says little more than that a preliminary assessment will be available in mid-October but relative success cannot be measured over less than a year. He also points out that some increase in circulars may be necessary to notify policy changes adopted by the new Government. Should we invite a reaction from Sir Derek Rayner before we show this "progress" report to the Prime Minister?

MAP

8 June 1979

Govt
March

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

7 June 1979

From THE PAYMASTER GENERAL

M. Clifton

K R Stowe Esq CB
10 Downing Street
London
SW1

Dear Ken

REDUCTION IN GOVERNMENT CIRCULARS

Your letter of 8 May to John Chilcot referred to the Cabinet's decision that they should set themselves a target of reducing Government circulars by two-thirds.

The Paymaster General's Office does not issue circulars to Local Authorities. The only type of circular issued - once a year - is one explaining the current year's pensions increase. Very occasionally a letter is sent out to all Accounting Officers explaining action needed in connection with Banking, and APEX (Analysis of Public Expenditure) arrangements. There is obviously little scope for reduction in these areas.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to Members of the Cabinet and the Minister of Transport, and to Sir Ian Bancroft, Sir John Hunt and Sir Derek Rayner.

Yours ever
Richard

R E S PRESCOTT
Private Secretary

PRIME MINISTER 1.

An initial report. Would you like Sir D. Rayner to take an active interest in this - his office have ideas to help ensure that the October report will show a consistent and effective approach.

MAP 11/vi

Yes - we don't need to appt another Minister in each dept. for this - that is already an appt'd Minister for - Mr Rayner exercises this

PRIME MINISTER

CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Following the Cabinet meeting on 10 May, you asked me to monitor progress towards the target of reducing the flow of circulars to local authorities from Government Departments by two-thirds and to provide an interim report in a month's time. This is it.

2. Since it is the first report on this exercise, it describes briefly the nature of circulars to local authorities and present departmental practice and the arrangements which are being made for implementing the Cabinet's decision. It is too early to report on specific progress towards achieving the Cabinet's target. I propose to submit a further report in mid-October. This will provide a preliminary assessment of progress; although it will, of course, be easier to measure the degree of success over a full year. For comparative purposes, I propose that we should take as our "base-line" the number of circulars issued in the period 1 May 1978 to 30 April 1979.

3. At this first stage, departments are getting guidance from their Ministers on the changes which should be made to their present practices in order to achieve the required reduction in the number of circulars which they issue. The scope for reductions will vary from department to department according to the type of circular which they issue and the extent to which these are required to meet the statutory obligations which at present rest on their Ministers. There is therefore a close link with the concurrent review of controls over local authorities.

4. Immediately - and ironically - some increase in certain categories of circulars may be needed to notify local authorities of changes in policies and practices being introduced by the Government in its first few months.

5. To seek to ensure that the Cabinet's target is achieved, Ministers and senior staff in each Department must impose and maintain the application of stringent standards to the issue of circulars.

07 JUN 1979

6. While it is the responsibility of the Minister in charge of each department concerned to supervise implementation of the Cabinet's decision, they may in some cases wish to nominate a junior Ministerial colleague for day-to-day involvement in the exercise; and to let you and others concerned (including Sir John Hunt, Sir Derek Rayner and myself) know soon of their arrangements.

7. I am sending copies of this minute and the report to members of the Cabinet, the Minister of Transport, Sir John Hunt and Sir Derek Rayner.

IRB

IAN BANCROFT
6 June 1979

PROGRESS REPORT ON REDUCTION IN CIRCULARS TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES FROM GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

At Cabinet on 10 May, the Cabinet agreed on a target of reducing the issue of circulars by Government Departments to local authorities (both local government and health authorities) by two-thirds. It was agreed that circulars should contain an estimate of the cost to local authorities in manpower and in money; that circulars affecting local government in England should be cleared in advance with the Department of the Environment and that estimates of costs should be cleared with the Treasury. Similarly, any circulars affecting local authorities in Scotland or Wales should be cleared with the Scottish or Welsh Office as appropriate.

2. The Secretary of State for the Environment outlined the Government's intentions in the House of Commons on 17 May in the course of the debate on the Queen's Speech.

3. In accordance with the Cabinet decision, arrangements are being made for those departments issuing circulars to local authorities to clear them with DOE, the Welsh Office or the Scottish Office and the Treasury as appropriate.

4. For the purpose of the present exercise, the term 'local authorities' has been taken to cover all elected local authorities exercising statutory functions and in addition health and water authorities.

5. There is a large volume of day-to-day correspondence between Government Departments and one or more local authorities in the normal course of business. It is important that departments ensure that this also is kept to a minimum. But for the purpose of the present exercise, a "circular" is being taken to mean any communication which is sent to all local authorities (or all those concerned with the service in question) in one or more countries of the United Kingdom, whether or not it is issued in a numbered series of circulars or is formally identified as being a circular.

6. The broad purposes of circulars to local authorities or their Chief Officers are:-

a. to convey the views of Ministers on policies and priorities;

b. to convey directions and consents under statutory powers;

c. to publicise and to explain new legislation and regulations affecting local authorities;

d. to explain and to operate existing procedures and systems (eg for grant applications and statistical returns) and where necessary to amend them;

e. to convey other information and advice often of a technical or operational kind.

... 7. The annex to this report sets out the current practice of those departments which send circulars to local authorities.

8. There is a relationship between this review and that of central government controls over local authorities. Where circulars are required to discharge Ministers' statutory obligations, they will need to continue to be issued until changes are made in the legal framework governing central/local government relationships. But in many cases this relationship is set in only broad terms and there is room for judgement about how much guidance should be offered to local authorities in order to discharge these statutory obligations. There is also a direct relationship between the flow of fresh legislation affecting local authority services and the need for circulars on this.

9. In the past Ministers have also wished to influence local authorities in areas of policy where no formal statutory powers exist; if Ministers' intervention of this kind is in future to be more limited then the flow of guidance for this purpose can be correspondingly reduced.

10. The range of departmental advice and guidance to local authorities is wide. The Local Authority Associations in England and Wales have criticised the flow of material of this kind as being in many cases "unnecessarily grandmotherly." This is clearly one sort of advice which departments should concentrate on eliminating. However, guidance may be designed to meet the expressed wish of local authorities (often at technical or professional level) for the supply of centrally disseminated information. They assert that it would be collectively more expensive for them to have to acquire it individually. But departments must establish that such information is really needed.

11. Stringent standards will be needed to achieve and maintain the target which the Cabinet have set themselves. In some areas there have already been major reductions in the number of circulars over the last year or so: in these cases the scope for further economy is likely to be more limited.

12. Departments should recognise that the decision to reduce the number of circulars requires a reduction in the volume of circulars in terms not simply of the number of circulars issued separately, but the amount of paper which they represent. And those circulars which are issued should be clear and straightforward.

13. Circulars are an instrument of Government policy and Departmental Ministers will wish to involve themselves directly in monitoring the flow of them from their departments. In some cases, they may wish to nominate a junior Ministerial colleague for day to day involvement in the exercise. In other cases Ministers may conclude that a certain category of circular has to be maintained. For example, the Secretary of State for Trade has confirmed that his Department should continue to issue in pursuance of his statutory obligations circulars to local authorities dealing with weights and measures and related matters.

14. To ensure that the wishes of local authorities themselves are taken into account, it will be desirable for the Local Authority Associations to be consulted in adjusting departmental practice. It will also be desirable to make it clear to the Associations when a circular to local authorities is not being issued and they are expected themselves to convey information to their members.

15. It is already the general practice for circulars to local authorities with significant financial implications to be cleared by the Treasury. In future all circulars will wherever possible need to contain estimates of the total cost to local authorities of implementation in manpower and money terms. These should cover, as appropriate, the extra costs imposed by (or savings accruing from) new legislation, policy advice or guidance and new requirements imposed by central government (eg for the provision of new statistical information). Departments should normally discuss their estimates with the Local Authority Associations and will be expected to seek Treasury approval wherever it seems possible that additional costs will be involved. The Treasury will scrutinise closely any circulars which may impose additional burdens on local authorities but which departments cannot quantify.

16. In some cases circulars do not have resource implications, for example, because they are purely informative or alter existing procedures without placing any additional burden on local authorities. In these cases, Treasury clearance will not be needed.

17. Exceptionally Ministers may wish to issue guidance urgently, for example following major changes in policy (as in the case of the recent circulars dealing with the sale of council houses). In such cases it may not be possible to offer more than an unquantified assessment of the likely resource implications.

18. Special considerations are involved in the case of <u>health authorities</u> since the Secretaries of State concerned are directly accountable to Parliament for the operation of the National Health Service. Communications to the Regional and Area Health Authorities therefore constitute guidance to authorities which are in all cases discharging on behalf of Ministers their statutory functions. The DHSS already have scrutiny arrangements which have served to reduce circulars in recent years. The Secretary of State for Social Services has asked Sir George Young (Parliamentary Secretary, Health and Personal Social Services) to supervise the Department's further progress in reducing the flow of paperwork to health authorities.

19. In the case of <u>water authorities</u> most communications are now issued by the National Water Council and Departments' letters are few in number, usually on technical issues, but will be reviewed.

20. The position in <u>Northern Ireland</u> is different from that in Great Britain since more services are the direct responsibility of Government Departments in Northern Ireland or of Area Boards under their control. Northern Ireland Departments are, however, examining their present arrangements and the scope for reducing the number of circulars which they issue. The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland will in future monitor all circulars to district councils and estimates of cost included in them will be subject to agreement with the Northern Ireland Department of Finance.

ANNEX

CURRENT DEPARTMENTAL PRACTICE

Department of the Environment

The Department issues circulars in various forms, including a regular published series of numbered circulars which is on sale to the general public. Other circular letters are not numbered or published. There is a wide range of other communications largely taking the form of guidance notes or advisory material on eg housing; environmental pollution. Information is not regularly available on the number of unpublished circular letters sent to local authorities, although a check in 1977 showed that 85 were circulated that year. About 80% of the regular series of circulars are issued jointly by DOE and the Welsh Office; 146 were issued in 1976; 151 in 1977 and 98 in 1978. So far, 20 have been issued in 1979.

Welsh Office

The number of circulars, circular letters and advice notes issued to the local authorities in Wales is directly related to the number issued by Whitehall departments to comparable authorities in England. Much of the material is prepared by Whitehall departments in consultation with the Welsh Office as necessary and is issued jointly either with the originating department or as a Welsh Office circular because changes are needed to meet particular Welsh conditions. The Welsh Office only rarely originates a circular to local authorities.

Scottish Office

The Scottish Office has functional responsibilities which span in relation to Scottish local authorities those of a number of different Whitehall departments who deal with local authorities in England on the same subjects. Including circulars to both Local Authorities and Health Boards (but excluding communications to Child Professional Officers), the Scottish Office issued about 600 circulars in 1976, about 500 in 1977 and 1978. Of the 500 issued in 1978, 150 went to Health Boards and 350 to Local Authorities. Of the 350 issued to Local Authorities in 1978 84 were issued by the Scottish Development Dept, 92 by the Scottish Education Department, 98 by the Scottish Home and Health Departments, 24 by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and 33 covered Local Authority financial matters.

Northern Ireland

During 1978, 90 circulars were sent by Northern Ireland Government Departments to District Councils and 401 to Area Boards. The approval of Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office is obtained for the issue of circulars where there are important policy considerations.

Department of Education & Science

The main forms of general communications from the Department to local authorities are Circulars and Administrative Memoranda. Circulars are commonly reserved for matters relating to statutory responsibilities and expressions of government policy; Administrative Memoranda tend to be narrower in scope and more technical in content. In 1976 the Department issued 16 circulars and 12 Administrative Memoranda; in 1977, 15 circulars and 15 Administrative Memoranda; and in 1978, 18 circulars and 15 Administrative Memoranda. Circular letters are also issued to local authorities at officer level by some branches dealing with specialised matters.

Home Office

The Home Office issues circulars in connection with the Home Secretary's responsibilities for the police service, the fire service, the courts, the probation service and other aspects of law and order and statutory regulation. About 280 numbered Home Office and fire service circulars are issued a year and a similar number of less formal circular letters. The normal purpose of the circulars is not to give directions to local authorities (since the Home Secretary does not stand in that relationship to the law and order services with which his Departments deals) but to convey information and advice where appropriate to those services. Most of the circulars are sent primarily to court officers or professional heads of services (such as chief constables) or to officers of authorities other than county or district councils (such as police authorities). The measures of economy which it is intended to adopt for these circulars will need to differ from the regime adopted for the circulars that the Home Office issues to local authorities themselves.

Department of Transport

The Department issues a regular series of numbered circulars, which are on sale to the general public. Since the Department was set up in September 1976, it has issued 33 such circulars, of which 19 were joint with one Department or more (six in 1976, nine in 1977, eleven in 1978 and seven (so far) in 1979). The great majority are explanatory of new legislation or regulations, or concerned with the administration of grant systems: most have a policy content. Each year the Department issues, on average, some 30 circulars (Roads), dealing with detailed administrative matters: and 20 technical memoranda on highways and on bridges, all highly technical and directed primarily to professional officers in local government. Once or twice a year, the department sends a circular letter to local authorities and issues advice notes.

Department of Employment

The Department issues a series of Careers Service circulars to Careers Officers of local authorities. These constitute information and guidance on the implementation of statutory provisions and Government funded programmes, including the handling of certain types of cases in order to promote uniformity. They also establish procedures for statistical returns by local authorities. In the year ending May 1979, the Department sent about 50 circulars. In addition to 45 Careers Service circulars (of which 22 related to the Youth Opportunities Programme), six circulars were sent to Chief Education Officers.

Department of Trade

The Department sends circulars to local authorities in connection with weights and measures and other consumer protection legislation. About 70 circulars are issued a year. All but a few are in pursuance of statutory obligations laid on the Secretary of State.

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

The Ministry issued 139 circulars in 1976; 115 in 1977; 113 in 1978 and 32 in 1979 (so far) mainly for information. Most were in a regular series issued to Port Health Authorities and certain other local authorities drawing attention to publications in the London Gazette mainly about changes in the list of overseas establishments approved to export meat and meat products to the United Kingdom.

Department of Health and Social Security

i. NHS

The Department issued approximately 465 formal numbered circulars to the NHS in 1978 including 59 Health Circulars, 304 Health Notices (including 49 Hazard Notices about immediate dangers to life and health); 40 Family Practitioner Notices and 62 Advance letters notifying health authorities of Whitley Council agreements. They have already cut the flow by nearly 50% since 1974 (the year of the NHS reorganisation). In addition, a similar amount of less formal communications were sent by Chief Professional Officers to specific groups of officers, usually in the form of letters, manuals or information sheets.

ii. Local Authorities

61 numbered circulars were sent to local authorities by DHSS in 1978. These comprised 23 local authority circulars covering policy matters and long term guidance and 38 Local Authority Social Services Letters. These figures include 21 communications which copied to local authorities material addressed to health authorities. There were also a range of unnumbered communications mainly on matters of technical interest to professional officers in the field.

Govt Machinery

Extract from CC(79) 1st Concs 10 May 79 at 10.30 am

d. Reduction in Government circulars. The Cabinet set itself a target of reducing the issue of Government circulars to local authorities (both local government and health authorities) by two-thirds. All such circulars should contain an estimate of the cost in manpower and in money. Circulars affecting local government should be cleared in advance with the Department of the Environment and the estimates of cost should be agreed with the Treasury. Any circulars affecting Scotland or Wales should also be cleared with the Scottish and Welsh Offices as appropriate. She had arranged for the Head of the Civil Service to monitor progress and to let her have an initial report in four weeks' time.

CONFIDENTIAL

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

8 May 1979

Dear John.

Reduction in Government Circulars

At their informal meeting this afternoon, the Prime Minister and her colleagues agreed that they should set themselves a target of reducing Government circulars by two-thirds, and Departmental Ministers have been asked to act promptly in their Departments to this end. It was also suggested that as a preliminary all Departments should adopt, in so far as is practicable, the current practice with regard to Bills of setting out in the circular the cost in manpower and money of acting upon it. The Prime Minister would be grateful if the Home Secretary and other Cabinet colleagues would give urgent consideration to action along these lines. The Prime Minister would like to have a progress report in due course and I am asking the Head of the Civil Service to co-ordinate this so that the Prime Minister can have a complete picture of how the task is being tackled, the progress made and the prospects of meeting the target by a foreseeable date. It would be helpful if the Prime Minister could have an initial assessment in four weeks time.

I am sending a copy of this to the Private Secretaries to the members of Cabinet, Sir Ian Bancroft and Sir John Hunt.

Yours ever

Ken Stowe.

John Chilcot, Esq.,
Home Office.

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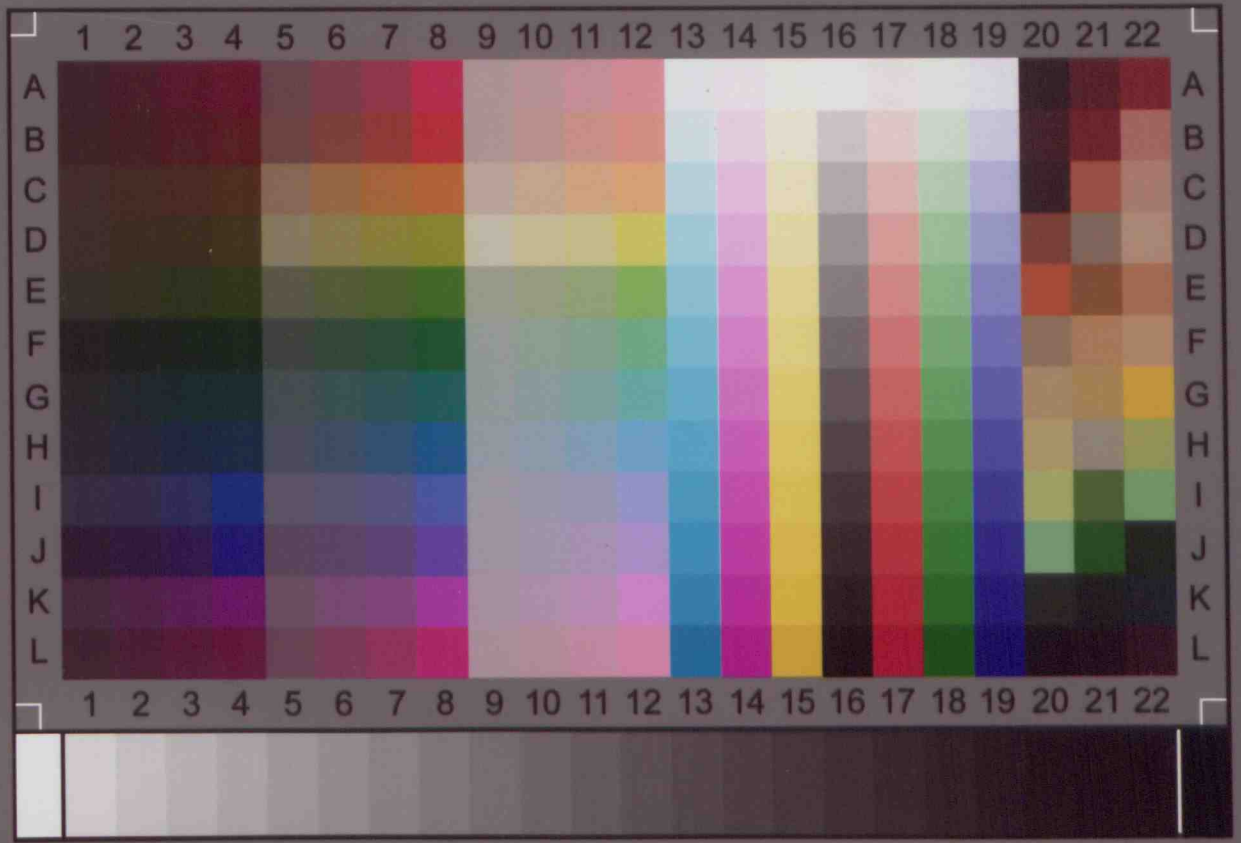
Cont Machinery

Extract from Informal Cabinet Meeting Record at 2.30pm 8 May 1979

d. Reduction in Government Circulars - Ministers agreed that they should set themselves a target of reducing Government circulars by two-thirds and you asked all of them to act promptly in their Departments to secure this objective. It was also suggested that Departments should adopt for circulars the existing practice with regard to Bills of setting out the cost in manpower and money. After the Cabinet meeting, you asked the Head of the Civil Service to monitor progress on this and to let you have a first report in four weeks time.

Top Copy - Police Pay - May 79



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