

*Original - LSK.*



cc D/N  
DOE

*Energy*

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

8 April 1980

*Dear Michael,*

Thank you so much for your letter of 18 March about energy saving and recycling.

My own commitment to efficient use of resources and elimination of waste is already well known, and it applies no less to energy than to any other resource. David Howell takes a direct and continuing interest in issues of energy conservation, and he and his colleagues at the Department of Energy lose no opportunity of presenting energy conservation as a positive policy for the efficient and economical use of energy.

In spite of your comments about Junior Ministers I am enclosing an excellent speech by John Moore which sets out our views on conservation. I think he puts the point very well.

I sympathise with your views about recycling programmes, which are being considered by Ministers at the moment. Keith Joseph and Michael Heseltine are discussing the future of the Waste Management Advisory Council, and the environmental aspects of recycling are also being considered within the Department of the Environment. The outcome of these deliberations will enable us to decide on the future of the interdepartmental National Anti-Waste Programme.

I take it that you are principally concerned with the reclamation of materials from domestic and commercial waste (industrial waste is taken care of, on the whole, by an efficient reclamation industry) and we are aware that any significant increase in reclamation would probably have to come from this sector.

/ I agree that

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I agree that there is sympathy amongst the public; the great problem is making recovery of materials from this source economically viable. With the exception of waste paper, where an efficient collecting operation can just about break even, any scheme involving the separate collection of materials sorted out by householders founders on the high cost of transport and labour compared with the cost of new raw materials.

There are obvious problems in any arrangement which would interfere with the normal working of the market, and this suggests two avenues of approach. The first relies on voluntary endeavour, such as the 'Bottle Bank' scheme, which is proving to be very successful. The second lies in the development of mechanical sorting plants for the handling of waste which sort out various materials and produce fuel pellets from the remainder. These look promising, particularly for conurbations, but development work is still proceeding.

Y  
Louson

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