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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY

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The Rt Hon Patrick Jenkin MP
Secretary of State for the Environment
2 Marsham Street
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19 October 1984

Thank you for your letter of 1 October.

You are of course aware that the National Coal Board have now reached agreement with the local authority that coal may be removed from the Springhill site by road. Approximately 25,000 tonnes of coal are currently leaving the site each week.

The other case with the Board is pursuing is that of the mid-Cannock disposal point which serves the Kingswood opencast site. Here officials of the Opencast Executive together with County Council elected members and officials and a Mines Inspector from the Health and Safety Executive have inspected the site and found evidence of overheating. The local authority is now awaiting a view from the Mines Inspector on the possible effects of that overheating and the consequent need to move coal from the site by road.

In both these cases I feel it would be wise to maintain a low profile for the time being.

Turning to the other sites affected by the lack of rail transport, these have proved less of a problem than originally feared. In all cases either a means of removing coal in a manner acceptable to the planning authority has been devised or the problem is one of picketing rather than planning conditions.

In these circumstances and in the context of Michael Havers' advice in his letter to you of 3 October I see little point at present in preparing for possible action under Section 49(4) of the Opencast Coal Act.

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I understand that our officials have discussed with the Board all the sites in question, and have agreed to maintain close liaison with the Board to ensure that any needful actions can be initiated in good time and with the minimum of delay.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister and Michael Havers.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'P' followed by a large 'W' and a small flourish.

PETER WALKER

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NAT IND. Coal P713

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