

Not used

Reference

APS/SECRETARY OF STATE

BRIEF FOR PM

I attach the brief on the NCB's planning application to mine coal in the Vale of Belvoir which I understand is required for the PM's meeting with the Countryside Commission tomorrow.

The brief is being copied to Department of Energy, who will not now provide a separate brief.

1
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Dept of Energy

12 November 1980

BELVOIR - BRIEF FOR PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH
THE COUNTRYSIDE COMMISSION - 13 NOVEMBER 1980

The Development

1 The National Coal Board's proposal is to mine 510 million tons of coal under 90 square miles of mainly agricultural land in the Vale of Belvoir in Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. The coal would be brought to the surface at three mines all situated in N.E. Leicestershire. Annual production will be about 7 million tons. Development of the mines would take about 12 years and 3,800 men would eventually be employed.

The Public Local Inquiry

2 Because the proposal raised issues of national and regional importance the Secretary of State for the Environment called in the planning applications for his own decision in January 1979. A wide-ranging public local inquiry into the proposal, lasting 84 working days, was held between 30 October 1979 and 2 May 1980. It was conducted by Mr Michael Mann QC, who was assisted by an environmental assessor (the DOE's Chief Planning Inspector) and a mining assessor. The major issues dealt with included the long and short-term need for the coal and the tipping of waste both on site and at remote locations.

Receipt of Inspector's Report and Decision

3 It is now expected that the Secretary of State for the Environment will receive the Inspector's Report before the end of this month. The decision process is likely to take some time because of the complexity of the issues involved and the consultations within Government (particularly the Department of Energy and the Ministry of Agriculture) which will be required.

4 The PM is strongly advised not to discuss the merits of the proposal with the Countryside Commission. Any such discussion at this stage could be regarded as prejudicing the eventual decision and so invite challenge in the High Court.
