



From the Minister

The Rt Hon Tom King MP  
Secretary of State for the Environment  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD  
WHITEHALL PLACE, LONDON SW1A 2HH

Confidential GWSY/KC/JV

Prime Minister (2)

Now overtaken

by events

MUS 7/3

4 March 1983

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ASFORDBY

When you telephoned me over the weekend about the planning application for a new mine at Asfordby, I agreed to look urgently into the implications of the interim report which has very recently been produced by the North East Leicestershire Coalfield Remote Disposal Working Party.

I have now had an opportunity to look at the report in greater detail and I must say I am impressed by its thorough and realistic approach. The Working Party considered a large number of potential sites in some 14 different areas, taking into particular account their accessibility, availability, capacity, competing uses, environmental impact and acceptability to the local planning authority as sites for receiving colliery spoil. The Working Party were able to dismiss many of these sites as being unacceptable for a number of reasons. They did, however, identify 5 sites as being worthy of further investigation (plus a sixth site - in the Trent Valley - which may not be a realistic prospect). Each of the 5 sites seems to me to offer a prospect of providing a viable site for the remote disposal of a significant quantity of the spoil likely to be produced from Asfordby.

If the Government's policy in this area is to remain credible, it is important that the Working Party should be allowed to proceed, as a matter of urgency, with its more detailed assessment of these five sites. Furthermore, there are strong arguments for delaying a decision on the application for this mine until this further work has been carried out, unless strong assurances could be attached to your decision which would ensure that the Working Party's conclusions could not be ignored.

One of the most important points to be covered in this further investigation will be an assessment of the likely costs of utilising each of these sites. This question of cost will, I accept, be a significant factor in your eventual decision but this must be balanced with the cost of losing good agricultural

ENERGY: Vale ch Belvoir: July 79.

land.

The decision is of course for you alone, and I must recognise the powerful arguments contained in Nigel Lawson's letter to you of 1 March. But it is important that we should not give grounds for any criticism that the final outcome of the Working Party's efforts has been ignored.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Geoffrey Howe and to Nigel Lawson.

PETER WALKER

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7 MAR 1983

ENERGY

LEC JV

Prime Minister ①

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY  
SUNNING HILL HOUSE SOUTH  
MILBANK LONDON SW1P 4QJ

01 211 6402

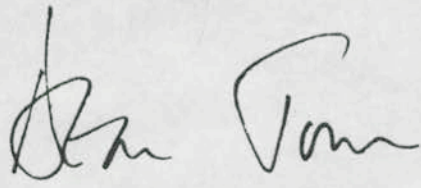
Important. Do you wish  
to discuss?  
Mus 1/3

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

The Rt Hon Tom King MP  
Secretary of State for the Environment  
2 Marsham Street  
LONDON SW1

Yes - but  
why the delay?  
We know what  
Asfordby has to  
go ahead  
not

1st March 1983



ASFORDBY

I am becoming increasingly concerned at the delay in deciding whether or not the NCB's planning application for a new mine at Asfordby should be called in.

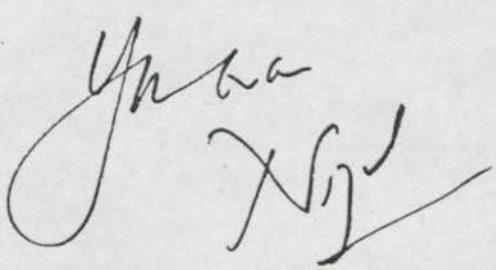
I had understood that you were awaiting the interim report of the working party on remote disposal of waste from the North East Leicestershire coalfield before making a decision. The report was published officially some 10 days ago, and was available in final draft form to your officials for some time before that.

The NCB face a difficult industrial relations situation over their proposal to close a heavily loss-making pit in South Wales. The South Wales coalfield is already on strike; it is reported that the Yorkshire miners will join the strike next week; and other NUM areas may do so also. If the NCB are to persuade the mineworkers, particularly in the moderate central coalfields, that closures are essential, then they must also be able to offer hope that investment to secure the long-term future of the industry will continue. As Norman Siddall has repeatedly pointed out to me, continued delay in telling Leicestershire County Council of your decision is increasingly being represented as an attempt by Government to delay the project indefinitely, and as evidence of a generally negative attitude towards the industry. This is most unhelpful in present circumstances.

While I fully recognise that the decision is yours alone, it would be most useful if we could discuss the matter with the Prime Minister in the next day or two.

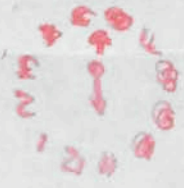
I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Geoffrey Howe and Peter Walker.

NIGEL LAWSON



Nat Incl: Coou: Pt 7

*[Faint, illegible handwritten notes]*



11 - MAR 1983