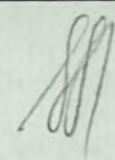


file 

**HARTLEY BOOTH**

The Prime Minister was grateful for your note about unused public sector land and property. She has agreed that you should be given authority to discuss the ideas set out in the minute with the Department of the Environment and the Lord Chancellor's Office. Of the points made in your note she has some doubts about the proposal on third party planning permission. For example, if a member of the public gains planning permission for unused land she believes it would be a little hard on him or her if the owner then makes use of that planning permission to develop it himself or otherwise benefit from it. In effect the member of the public would have done all the work and got nothing of the reward.

The Prime Minister was slightly more keen on the proposal to lift the confidentiality from the list of land owners held by the Lord Chancellor. If there is likely to be a serious problem in ministerial exchanges on the matters proposed you could show these to her. In the interim no doubt you will use your influence to encourage this along.

**TIM FLESHER**

1 April 1986

SL3AOT



Prime Minister:

Hartley's proposal on the  
Land Register seems a little  
premature. The policy needs to be  
established first. Agree to authorize  
to Policy Unit to discuss with  
27 March 1986

PRIME MINISTER

Yes no DOB and  
LCO?

UNUSED PUBLIC SECTOR LAND AND PROPERTY - THE NEXT

ROUND IN THE BATTLE

J

a7/6

Present Position

Point 3 seems the  
most important one to pursue  
immediately. Point 1 needs  
further study

The Register of Unused Land has 100,000 acres on it. We  
estimate, from our research, that this is only a small  
percentage of the true figure. Not only because land and  
property under 1 acre is not included on the Register, but  
also public sector property owners have managed to devise a  
considerable number of ruses to avoid their land or buildings  
being put on the Register.

New Batch of Proposals

1. Third party planning permission Where owners or  
authorities are sitting on unused land in Inner Cities, a  
member of the public should have the right to apply for  
planning permission. If the land is owned by the local  
authority itself, the planning application might go  
straight to the Secretary of State. When permission is  
granted, then the owner might feel it in his best  
interest to sell and acquire the increased value.  
Alternatively, he might wish to develop it himself, or  
if he fails to do either, the third party ought to have a  
power to demand that the land be put up for auction.

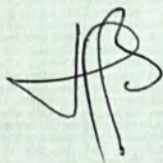
That's a  
bit hard on  
the man who  
got  
permission



2. A new auction proposal At Christmas, you generally approved an idea we put into you that members of the public should have a right to demand that public sector land be used and, failing that, they should have a right to demand that the property be sold at auction.
  
3. The Lord Chancellor's obstacle! The Land Register in England and Wales contains the list of landowners. This is stored with holy secrecy by the Lord Chancellor. By contrast, a similar Register in Scotland is open for public view. Not knowing who is the owner of a parcel of land is an enormous <sup>u</sup>boulder on our path to disposal and deregulation. We must heave it to one side quickly.

### Conclusion

Private citizens should be given a new right, either generally or at least in Inner City areas, to require the auction of unused public sector and probably also private sector property. We urgently ask you to encourage the Lord Chancellor to remove the confidentiality over the land registry.



HARTLEY BOOTH