

CUBS



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD  
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NBPM

From the Minister

The Rt Hon Peter Walker MBE MP  
Secretary of State for Energy  
Thames House South  
Millbank  
London  
SW1P 4QJ

5 September 1986

at nap.

Thank you for your letter of 31 July. I fully agree that we should give energy saving a high priority but I think we must be wary of expecting all departments to produce dramatic results in the short term. In my own case I have, as you know, some 350 buildings widely scattered throughout the country. These include office, storage and specialised accommodation of varying ages and sizes and in various states of repair. The total energy bill is around £3.5 million. Clearly there is scope for savings here but it will take time to achieve them and the task of doing so is rather more complex than for those departments which occupy only a few buildings of a broadly similar kind.

An energy manager has been appointed for my department and we are now collecting the necessary data about energy usage to establish where we could expect to achieve the greatest savings, set targets, and decide on a base line against which to judge future progress. This preliminary, but essential, work is likely to continue for the remainder of the year. The Central Veterinary Laboratory at Weybridge is the largest single energy user in the department and we are currently examining with the PSA the possibility of installing an automated building management system there. An initial appraisal suggests that it could produce very worthwhile savings but there could be problems in finding the money to pay for it.

We are, of course, taking steps to increase staff awareness about the costs of energy in the department and the way in which individuals can make savings in their day-to-day work. This is probably the area where results can show up most quickly, if not so dramatically. As I explained in my letter of 10 May, there is very little professional expertise on this subject in

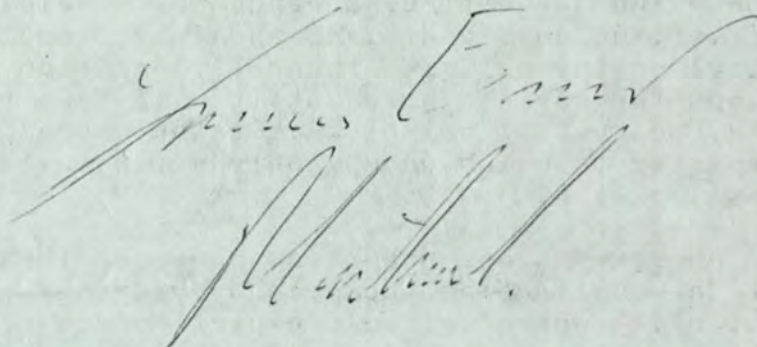
/ my department and ...



my department and this has hindered progress. We must therefore look to you and the PSA for guidance. The recently issued handbook will be helpful but further information on the subject would be welcome. In the longer term I see shortage of funds as a major obstacle to energy savings and I think that if Government is to underline its commitment in this field financial resources must be made available specifically for this work.

You mention the point made by the Head of the PSA about the funds available to departments for certain minor works and the increase of permissible spending levels per job to £5,000 from 1 April 1987. These funds are for building maintenance generally and, in view of the overall underfunding of civil estate maintenance, any diversion of them for energy saving must be at the expense of essential maintenance work. I do not believe that it is realistic or reasonable to expect departments to try to cut energy bills by running-up long term maintenance problems. The PSA's funds for energy saving measures seem to be insufficient to make any real impact across the board and, as the recent correspondence between Sir George Young and the Chief Secretary indicates, their overall funding position is such that they are forced to divert money away from work which departments have paid for under the PRS. Nevertheless, for the longer term we are consulting with the PSA to ensure that all new building projects take into account the need for energy conservation at the planning stage but here too we are constrained by the shortage of funds.

I am copying my letter to the recipients of yours.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Michael Jopling', written in a cursive style.

MICHAEL JOPLING