

cc BG



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MDM

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DEREGULATION: FIRE SAFETY AND MISC 121

Thank you for your letter of 28 February following your earlier letter of 13 February to Kenneth Clarke.

It is helpful to have more details of how you plan to take your review of the Fire Precautions Act 1971 forward following consultation. You kindly agreed in your letter to Kenneth Clarke that my officials will be sent an early draft of the further consultative document you are preparing which will also take account of Mr Justice Popplewell's findings.

I share the concerns Kenneth Clarke has already raised with you over the important issue of fire precautions. These concerns centre on the costs to and burdens on business imposed by the present Fire Precautions Act and how these may be affected by any new proposals. While it will be valuable to see the early draft of your consultative document, I should be grateful to know whether and how the costs to business have been calculated in the recommendations for legislation which officials are putting forward to you.

Let me emphasise that I have no desire to see any reduction in fire safety standards. Rather, calculation of business costs should help in devising a new regime which most effectively maintains or improves standards in a cost effective way, both for the fire authorities and businesses. As some business organisations have expressed mixed views about the requirements which a new system may impose, I feel that early compliance cost assessment is needed in order to form a balanced judgment about proposals for new legislation.



I should be grateful for your reassurance that business costs and resources are forming part of the evidence on which new legislative proposals will be based.

I am copying this letter to the other members of MISC 121 and to No. 10.

Yours,
David



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