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The Rt Hon the Viscount Whitelaw CH MC  
Lord President of the Council  
68 Whitehall  
LONDON SW1

19 March 1986

*Dear Lord President,*

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN DIRECTIVE ON ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

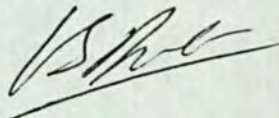
I have seen Kenneth Baker's letter of 10 March responding to my and colleagues' concerns about his proposals on this topic. I note his intention to publish his draft consultation document largely unchanged as soon as possible, although I understand his original timetable of 17 March has slipped a little.

I fully appreciate Kenneth's wish to avoid the possibility of unnecessary conflict with Brussels in the run-up to the UK Presidency. However, as he acknowledges, the extent of our obligation to implement the Directive in respect to Annex II projects remains a grey area. He also acknowledges that, under existing planning arrangements, the coal and oil industries already produce entirely adequate environmental assessments where these are necessary. Formalisation of these arrangements in the way implied in the draft consultation document would do nothing to improve the quality of these assessments. But it would provide scope to objectors to manipulate the planning process, with significant risk of additional delays to important developments and increased costs to developers.

I would still, therefore, prefer to see our options on Annex II projects kept open in the consultation document, perhaps soliciting consultees' views on this aspect. If however this approach is not acceptable to colleagues, it may be necessary to return to this aspect of the Directive in the light of industrialists' responses to the document.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Members of H Committee, Kenneth Clarke, Michael Jopling, Paul Channon, Michael Havers, Geoffrey Howe and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours sincerely,*



*P*

PETER WALKER  
(Approved by the Secretary of  
State but signed in his absence)

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