CCBG

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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My ref:

Your ref:

The Rt Hon Malcolm Rifkind MP
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*Prime Minister
This discusses the
timetable for
announcements about the reform of
local authority finance in England
and Wales.*
*JLS
19/9.*

18 September 1986

Dear Malcolm

PAYING FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Thank you for your letter of 2 September about the timetable leading up to the Scottish Bill.

I am grateful for your agreement that references to your Bill before its publication should be in fairly general terms. For my part, I am happy to agree that there should be a fairly substantial statement when your Bill is published. That will need to concentrate on explaining the decision to proceed with the community charge, and how it will operate, while setting that decision in the context of the grant and non-domestic rate proposals, and explaining the interim nature of the changes in these areas that you will be making in your Bill.

The publication of a statement along these lines will to some extent pre-empt the White Paper that we had previously envisaged publishing early in 1987. Given that you are likely, by then, to be in Committee with your Bill, the best course may be to avoid having a formal White Paper at that stage. Announcements about the remaining parts of the package could be made in a series of policy documents during the first half of 1987 as decisions are taken, with or without a full White Paper, perhaps in the Spring or early Summer.

The Bill covering England and Wales will be a substantial one. I envisage having it ready for introduction in November 1987, so that it can receive Royal Assent by the summer of 1988. We may, of course, need to reconsider this timetable if the 1987/88 session is the last before the Election.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Willie Whitelaw, members of E(LF), John Biffen, John Wakeham and Sir Robert Armstrong.

NICHOLAS RIDLEY