

CONFIDENTIAL



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The Rt Hon Viscount Whitelaw CH MC  
Lord President of the Council  
Privy Council Office  
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My ref:

Your ref:

28 September 1987

*Prime Minister 2*  
*Mr Ridley may raise*  
*this with you tomorrow. But*  
*this is much better left to me*

Dear Lord President,

*Lord President,*

*DRS*  
*28/9.*

*ms*

RATE REFORM BILL

My officials have been reviewing progress on this Bill with Parliamentary Counsel and I thought I should write to you at once as there are implications for our joint objective of introducing this legislation by mid-November and getting into Committee before Christmas.

As we have all known, the Bill is a large undertaking involving as it does the abolition of domestic rates, the introduction of the community charge, the recasting of the non-domestic rating and grant arrangements and the complex transitional arrangements we agreed in July, as well as a number of lesser but not insignificant elements such as community charge capping. Counsel produced last month a first draft of clauses covering perhaps almost half the whole Bill - necessarily there is still a good deal of work to be done on them - and has since been working on the remainder (primarily rating and the transition). At this stage, he cannot predict when the whole Bill will be ready for Introduction, but it seems most unlikely that it will be in November.

I and my officials are very ready to help by simplifying second-order policy decisions wherever we can (but there is in fact limited scope for this) and by taking regulation-making rather than substantive powers wherever appropriate, though it is vital in my view that all new duties should appear on the face of the Bill. But in view of the overall assessment I fear that we will not approach our target for Introduction unless First Parliamentary Counsel is able to deploy more resources onto the Bill. Clearly any action of this kind would only be useful if it was undertaken as a matter of urgency.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, the Lord Privy Seal, to Sir Robert Armstrong and to First Parliamentary Counsel.

Yours sincerely,

*Ridley*

NICHOLAS RIDLEY

*(Approved in draft by the Secretary of State)*

