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CC

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

PRIME MINISTER

ENVIRONMENT POLICY

I have seen Chris Patten's minute to you of 27th September in which he recommends publishing a White Paper on the Environment in the early autumn of next year. I would strongly support this, it seems to me to be well timed and I think he will need several months in order to get this into good shape.

It is important to pull together all the various initiatives that we have taken in such a complicated area so that the public are much more aware of what we have achieved in the last ten years. In addition to this, there will be measures that we will take in the forthcoming Bill, and no doubt other proposals for further developments in the future. The White Paper should also cover the extensive research into environmental matters by the various Research Councils.

I hope that the White Paper will be presented in a really attractive way, so that it can get a very wide coverage.

I am a little less enthusiastic about a periodic 'State of the Environment' report. We must ensure that this does not become a rod to be laid heavily on our backs. I have in mind the annual report of the HMI on the state of Education. Certainly the White Paper could itself be a 'State of the Environment' report, but I think we should be very wary of announcing any regular series of publications. This may well enflame expectations, some of which we might have some difficulty in meeting.

I am copying this minute to Cabinet colleagues and Sir Robin Butler.

MS
KB

3rd October 1989