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PRIME MINISTER

DISPOSAL OF SURPLUS LAND IN PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

E(A) Committee discussed on 15 May further action that can be taken to bring surplus public land back into use. I would like to tell you of my proposals to extend the use of land registers.

To date about 8,000 hectares (20,000 acres) of land have been removed from the registers and either sold or brought into use. Four directions to sell have been made, three of which have resulted in sale of the land and we are negotiating on the fourth. We are now stepping up the pace and will be initiating a further batch of up to 50 directions shortly. We are also computerising the Land Registers and will be making these facilities available to the public.

I think the time is now ripe to encourage potential purchasers and developers to take the initiative. I propose to invite them to identify publicly-owned sites which they regard as unused or underused and to propose to me that I place them on the register and decide whether or not to issue directions for their disposal. I will make it clear that I am prepared to consider any such sites for inclusion on the register whether or not they are smaller than the one acre limit that applies at present.

By inviting potential purchasers and developers to take the initiative in this way, we are likely to attract greater interest in the registers and to bring forward more sites for disposal. The private developer is much better equipped to search out such sites than the staff in my Regional Offices who have so far had to do all the leg work on the registers. I anticipate that this will lead to a significant acceleration of disposals.

The registers include land owned by Government Departments and nationalised industries, and the invitation to identify further sites will apply to those land holdings as well as to those

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of local authorities. I cannot, however, make directions on Crown-owned land.

I will be announcing this invitation in a speech I am making to the Royal Town Planning Institute on 7 June. Although I can use the existing powers in the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 for these purposes, there would in my view be value in making express provision for the procedure whereby individuals can initiate statutory action in the ways I have described. It may well be a suitable candidate for a Private Members Bill.

I am copying this letter to Cabinet colleagues.

Ati Jami
for
P J

20 May 1985

Approved by the SAS and
signed in his absence



CONDIMOTOR

20 MAY 1965

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