

*cc Questions  
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FROM THE PRIVATE SECRETARY  
TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR WALES

26 July 1984

*Dear Sir*

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WATER SITUATION IN WALES

The increasing shortage of water in the area of the Welsh Water Authority (WWA) is giving rise to the strong probability of rationing of supplies in parts of Wales from 1 September. Mounting public concern reflected in Opposition pressure and associated with the fact that the WWA has had to seek my Secretary of State's approval to a number of Drought Orders (under the provisions of the Drought Act 1976), make it necessary for my Secretary of State to make a very early statement to the House.

... I enclose a copy of the statement which I propose, on the advice of the Leader of the House, to make this afternoon. The subject is one which has not been the subject of reference to the Cabinet or to any of their Committees since it is specific to Wales.

/ Copies of this letter and the proposed statement go to the Private Secretaries to the Leader of the House, the Lord President of the Council, the Government Chief Whip, the Secretaries of State for Scotland, the Environment, and Trade and Industry, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Sir Robert Armstrong; and also to Mr Bernard Ingham.

*Yours sincerely  
C L Jones*

C L JONES

Tim Flesher Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street





DRAFT STATEMENT ON THE WATER SUPPLY SITUATION IN WALES TO BE MADE BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES ON THURSDAY 26 JULY 1984

With permission, I should like to make a statement about the water situation in Wales.

Since February of this year rainfall in the Principality has been abnormally low, and over the whole of the WWA area has only been 44% of the long-term average. The Authority has been monitoring the water supply situation carefully since Easter and taken measures to conserve stocks of water held in reservoirs by application for Drought Orders to reduce compensation water discharges from reservoirs and to increase abstraction from rivers. The Authority has also sought to reduce consumption by banning the use of hosepipes and garden sprinklers. In spite of these measures reservoir levels have continued to fall and further action will be necessary to conserve the remaining stocks of water until there is sufficient rainfall to replenish them. Nobody can be certain when this will be, but meteorological records point to rain by the third week of October and the WWA have formulated their emergency plans accordingly.

The areas most seriously affected are south East Wales, Preseli, with a population of about 40,000 people, and the Lleyn Peninsula where the influx of summer tourists more than doubles the population to about 66,000. However, the shortage of water in South East Wales gives the greatest cause for concern because some 1 million people are involved. The WWA have therefore set up a Drought Liaison Committee for South East Wales with representatives from the local authorities, the health authorities, my Department, the CBI, NFU, FUU and other bodies. The Committee met last Monday when the WWA presented the facts about the supply situation and outlined their plans for meeting the shortage. In the first instance there will be a ban on the non-essential users of water such as automatic car washing plant and a Drought Order has been signed to put this into effect. If the dry weather continues the WWA will then need to ensure a further reduction in consumption to about 50% of normal from 1 September. They intend to do this by shutting off supplies to domestic consumers for up to 17 hours per day; industrialists and agriculturalists will be relied upon to make their own plans for reducing consumption by a similar amount. The organisations represented on the Drought Liaison Committee now have a month to consider the implications of these measures and to make their own plans





accordingly. Further meetings of the Committee will take place as necessary to resolve any outstanding problems before the WWA begin to shut off supplies.

Problems of varying severity exist in other parts of the WWA area and appropriate measures are being taken to limit consumption and to make the best use of the available stocks of water. The powers available under the Drought Act 1976 are being and will continue to be used to the full and there is close contact between the WWA and my Department in order that I am kept regularly informed of the situation. Finally I should like to pay tribute to the great efforts which are being made by WWA personnel to overcome the problems caused by the exceptionally dry weather of recent months.