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CONFIDENTIAL

*Prime Minister
to note.*

From The Secretary of State for Wales

Our ref: CT/6106/85

*Ohw
7/10.
4th October 1985*

Dear Secretary of State

RATING REFORM: A GREEN PAPER FOR WALES

I mentioned at E(LF) yesterday that I thought it would be best if we produced a separate consultative document for Wales.

I am satisfied that the new arrangements based on the proposals in your latest report, modified to reflect Welsh circumstances, can be made to work in Wales. While the shortcomings of the present rating system apply in all three countries local government in Wales has responded well to our call for expenditure restraint, and I am not faced with some of the extreme problems which now confront George Younger and yourself. Relationships between central and local government in Wales are generally good. Some of the reasons which make the proposed reform in England and Scotland so imperative do not exist to quite the same extent in Wales. This being so I will need to handle the presentation of the case for change rather differently. It will also cause less confusion if the Welsh figures and tables are presented separately from those in England.

The Welsh Green Paper would necessarily have a similar structure to that for the other countries but, for the reasons I have explained above, the factors underlying the case for reform would need to be given a different emphasis. In particular it would need to acknowledge the better performance of Welsh local authorities and emphasise the opportunities the new system offers for an even more effective relationship between central government, local government and the electorate.

I have asked my officials to work towards the preparation of my Green Paper on the same timescale as for England and Scotland. To ensure a broad consistency of approach I hope you will agree that our officials should work closely together in preparing our respective Green Papers.

/ I am sending a copy of this letter to other Members of E(LF) and Sir Robert Armstrong.

W. J. Fraser

(Dictated by the Secretary of State and signed in his absence)

The Rt Hon Kenneth Baker MP
Secretary of State for the Environment
2 Marsham Street
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