

CEGB



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The Rt Hon John MacGregor OBE MP
Chief Secretary
HM Treasury
Parliament Street
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My ref:
Your ref:

22 April 1987

Dear John

NB

CEGB LOW NOx PROGRAMME *at top*

I welcome wholeheartedly the proposals in Peter Walker's letter to you of 9 April, and hope you will be able to accept them on the basis he suggests.

NOx emissions contribute to water acidification, and to the formation of photochemical oxidants which are implicated in the European forest damage. Although our understanding of the latter process is far from complete, much of the latest scientific work tends to the conclusion that NOx derived pollution may be more rather than less important than we had thought previously. A further growing area of concern is the possibility of excess nitrogen input to vegetation. It is important that we tackle these emissions by cost-effective means such as those now available to the CEGB. The pressure for action does not come solely from overseas. The independent Air Pollution Inspectorate - now part of HMIP - has been monitoring the results of the Fiddlers Ferry and Eggborough trials of low NOx burners carefully, and it is their policy to seek the incorporation of low NOx systems on existing plant when opportunity arises. The NOx standards to be applied to future plant are also currently under discussion between HMIP and CEGB.

As Peter Walker indicates, Walter Marshall's proposals represent a substantial and beneficial environmental effort which will have direct benefits for UK industry as well as helping in the achievement of our policy aim of a 30% reduction in NOx emissions from 1980 levels by the year 2000. They will enable us to seize some more high ground in the difficult EC and ECE negotiations. I agree with Peter that we should announce the programme by the next meeting of EC Environment Ministers on 21 May. Ideally, we ought to aim to have a decision by 12 May as that is the date when negotiations recommence in the ECE on a NOx protocol to the Transboundary Air Pollution Convention; it would not however be necessary to announce our decision by then.

In presenting the decision, I would want the authorising role of the newly-formed HMIP to be acknowledged. For this reason, I would be grateful if Peter's officials would liaise with mine at the appropriate time on the terms of the announcement, including any separate announcement by CEGB.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, Willie Whitelaw, Geoffrey Howe, Peter Walker, Paul Channon and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours
Nicolas*

NICHOLAS RIDLEY

Environmental Affairs: Acid Rain PTS.

