



the department for Enterprise

The Hon. Francis Maude MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for  
Corporate Affairs

The Rt Hon John Moore MP  
House of Commons  
LONDON  
SW1A 0AA

**Department of  
Trade and Industry**

1-19 Victoria Street  
London SW1H 0ET

Switchboard  
01-215 7877

Telex 8811074/5 DTHQ G  
Fax 01-222 2629

215 4417

Direct line

Our ref

Your ref

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Thank you for your letter of 31 October with the enclosed one from Graham Bostock of [REDACTED] concerning metrication.

The use of metric units has been legal for most purposes in the UK since 1897. Since 1972, when enabling powers were introduced to remove the few remaining legal barriers to metrication in the industrial sector, UK manufacturing industry has become largely committed to metric units. There has also been considerable metrication in the retail sector, particularly for goods pre-packed in fixed weights, although weighed-out foods are still sold almost exclusively in imperial units. In addition, since 1974, the metric system has been taught in schools.

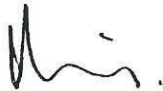
Under the European Community's 1979 Units of Measurement Directive, the Commission is obliged to make proposals to extend the use of metric units.

Against this background the Government is considering UK policy on metrication and I recently issued a consultation paper to some 700 trade, industry, local authority and consumer organisations inviting comments on proposals to phase out by the end of 1994 the use of the remaining imperial units for most trade purposes. However, as Mr Bostock mentions in his letter, in matters which are entirely domestic to the UK we see no reason why we should not continue to use imperial units where they are customary. We are therefore seeking to retain the pint for sales of draught beer and cider and for milk in returnable containers and the mile for distance and speed measurement.

JCHAHE



However, I shall be reviewing the proposals in the light of comments received by the Department and the points which Mr Bostock has made will be fully taken into account.



FRANCIS MAUDE

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