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Circular 2899.

Ministry of Health,
Whitehall,
LONDON, S.W.1.
15th December 1943.

The Clerk of the Council,
Uttoxeter Urban District Council,
UTTOXETER.

Sir,

Water Supply - Sewerage and Sewage Disposal - Post-War Works.

1. Arising out of the removal, by arrangement with the Treasury and the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, of the embargo against the purchase of land by local authorities so far as a first year's housing programme is concerned, the Minister has received a number of enquiries from local authorities as to the likelihood of obtaining approval at the present time for the purchase of land for the purpose of urgently needed water supply and sewerage and sewage disposal schemes proposed to be carried out after the war.

2. I am directed to state for the information and guidance of your authority that this matter has also been the subject of inter-departmental discussion and that the Minister is now prepared to entertain applications under the appropriate statutory provisions for loan sanction for the acquisition of land for the above purposes in cases where it can fairly be said by the authority that the schemes are so urgently needed that the works should be begun at the earliest possible date, after the cessation of hostilities in Europe, at which the necessary labour and materials can be made available. Applications for loan sanctions for the acquisition of land should as usual be accompanied by the District Valuer's report. The purchase price should not be in excess of the 1939 value.

3. Whether or not land is required, the Minister will be prepared in the case of works of the nature and high order of urgency indicated above, to assist local authorities as far as practicable by examination of their proposals (where necessary, by local enquiry) to carry their preparations to as advanced a stage as possible short of the actual invitation to tender.

4. For the purpose of submitting such schemes for examination by the Ministry it will be sufficient if the estimates of cost are based on pre-war prices; the basis adopted should be clearly indicated.

5. The preceding paragraphs relate to urgent schemes for these two services which have not yet been submitted to the Ministry for the requisite approval. In addition there are a number of other schemes which have been deferred owing to the war but have been submitted to the Ministry or approved by Parliament. These schemes vary greatly in urgency, and are at varying stages of progress. In some cases they have been approved in detail by the Minister; in others they are at a less

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advanced stage; in yet other cases they have in part been carried out. There may also be some urgent schemes for which approval by Parliament is required but has not yet been obtained. In view of the probability that labour and materials will be in relatively short supply for some time after the cessation of hostilities in Europe, it would be desirable if you would indicate now whether your authority or company have any water or sewerage schemes of the type indicated in this paragraph which comply strictly with the criterion applied to land purchase in paragraph 2 above. It will be appreciated that the Minister will not be able to make any definite promises at present as to priority for either labour or materials; such matters can only be determined at a later date as part of the much broader general picture of post-war requirements. It will, however, be of advantage to the Minister, and ultimately to the authorities or companies, if information on the lines indicated is given. What is needed is an indication that the authority or company regard the works in question as so urgent that they would wish to put them (or some adaptation or instalment of them) in hand at the earliest possible date after the cessation of hostilities in Europe at which labour and materials can be released, together with a brief description of the works and an estimate of cost on a pre-war or other basis which should be stated. In some cases, no doubt, adaptation or modification will be necessary to meet changed conditions.

6. It should be stated in all cases whether the approval of the town and country planning authority has been obtained.

7. I am to add that the Minister fully appreciates the difficulties under which local authorities and water companies are working at present owing to depletion of staffs and general shortage of professional and other skilled personnel whose assistance is needed in the preparation and overhauling of schemes. He feels sure, however, that authorities and companies generally will wish to advance their post-war preparations so far as circumstances permit. He for his part is anxious to co-operate to the utmost of his ability and to this end would be glad to receive the applications and information referred to above at as early a date as possible.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

GEORGE NORTH

Assistant Secretary.