
Downsizing deals - Mr Mallon may invoke FOI Act for Corus

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Gazette Live reported that Mr Ray Mallon mayor of Middlesbrough is threatening to invoke the Freedom of Information Act unless Business Secretary Lord Mandelson provides him with answers to questions over the threat to the Corus steel plant at Redcar.

Mr Mallon wrote to Mr Mandelson on December 16th 2009 and posed a series of key questions regarding the threatened mothballing of the plant. He asked about possible measures including subsidy the Government had examined in a bid to save the 1,700 threatened jobs.

The Mayor wrote again on January 18th 2010 but has yet to receive a reply from Mr Mandelson. Now Mr Mallon has written for a third time and warned the Business Secretary if he continues to ignore the request then the Mayor will use the Freedom of Information Act to get the information.

A spokesman at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills told the Gazette that Mr Mandelson was replying to Mr Mallon and that the government had been fully engaged with Corus on the issues faced by Teesside Cast Products.

Mr Mallon said that "It would appear Lord Mandelson has more pressing issues to attend to than saving the Corus workers 1,700 jobs and the thousands of other trades that rely on the plant. The questions I posed in my letter were those local people had raised with me. We are talking about peoples livelihoods and the end of the industry on which this area was built. I think its appalling a Cabinet member should ignore these concerns."

Mr Mallon said that he could only assume the lack of response was a deliberate strategy intended to run down the clock on the proposed mothballing of the plant without further public scrutiny. He said he felt there was more the Government could be doing.

He added that "People like myself, Mr Steve Gibson, local MPs and trade unionists can continue to call for action but if Mr Mandelson simply refuses to enter into dialogue then its difficult to know whether the efforts are genuine. The public deserve a clear explanation as to how this crisis arose and what the Government has done and is doing to try to save the plant."

The business minister has been clear that government will do all it can to support the business, including prioritizing GBP 60 million of investment for Teesside to support industries in the region, but the overall issue is the collapse of demand for the product made at TCP at a price that is economically viable to Corus.

(Sourced from www.gazettelive.co.uk)

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