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to Press

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Prime Minister

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY
THAMES HOUSE SOUTH
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MD
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MS

Mike Pattison Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

1 February 1982

Dear Mike,

You should know that the CEGB are announcing at 10.30 am tomorrow, that they are not proceeding for geological reasons, with two potential power station sites in Cornwall. These sites (Gwithian near Hayle and Nancekuke near Portreath) are among five the Board announced they were investigating in February 1980. The purpose of a new station in the South West would be to safeguard supplies to the area (much of which are presently imported via the grid) and minimise the need for new transmission lines.

I attach a copy of the Board's statement. The three sites on which investigations are continuing include that at Luxulyan near St Austell. This was recently the subject of legal proceedings following actions by objectors to block CEGB access to the site.

Should the statement be raised during Prime Minister's questions tomorrow the line to take would be that investigation of possible power station sites is the responsibility of the CEGB but that the Board cannot construct a power station on any site without first obtaining the consent of the Secretary of State for Energy. He may order a Public Inquiry where appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

Janet

JANET CHADWICK
Private Secretary

PR 744
2 February 1982

South West Power Station Studies

Progress Report - Two Sites Ruled Out

In February 1980, the Central Electricity Generating Board announced its intention to investigate five locations in Cornwall and Dorset to assess their suitability as sites for a nuclear power station. It gave an undertaking that if any site was found to be unsuitable during the course of the investigations an announcement would be made.

From the work carried out so far it is clear that because of unsatisfactory geological conditions the Cornish sites at Gwithian, near Hayle, and Nancekuke, near Portreath, cannot be considered for future power stations. The Board therefore has no further interest in these two sites.

The assessment of the other three sites at Luxulyan, near St. Austell in Cornwall, Herbury, near Weymouth, and Winfrith in Dorset is continuing and no decision on their suitability for development has been reached. In addition to these assessments, the Board is examining the potential of its Hinkley Point site in North Somerset for further development. Currently, two nuclear stations are in operation on this site.

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The Board is also continuing to re-assess its site at Inswork Point near Plymouth, for a coal-fired power station, and the redevelopment potential of existing power stations at East Yelland, near Barnstaple, Plymouth and Poole. The further work to be completed covers siting arrangements, costs and economics, environmental considerations and detailed studies of the electricity supply system, and the outcome of all the remaining assessments will be announced as soon as possible.

As a result of the investigations it is hoped to select a site for a nuclear or coal-fired power station which would safeguard electricity supplies in the South West peninsula while keeping to a minimum the need for new transmission lines.

- End -

CENTRAL ELECTRICITY GENERATING BOARD

South-West Investigations for Future Power Station Sites

Background Note

1. In February 1980 the Board announced the start of an investigation of five locations in Cornwall and Dorset to assess their suitability as sites for a nuclear power station. The locations are:

In Cornwall: Gwithian, near Hayle
Nancekuke, near Portreath
Luxulyan, north of St. Austell

In Dorset: Herbury, near Weymouth
Winfrith Heath

2. A re-assessment is also being made of the site at Inswick Point near Plymouth, originally acquired for an oil fired station, as a site for a coal fired plant.

3. From these studies it is hoped to select a site for a nuclear or coal fired power station which would safeguard electricity supplies in the South West whilst keeping to a minimum the need for new transmission lines.

4. In addition consideration is being given to the future potential of the sites of the existing small and ageing power stations at East Yelland near Barnstable, Plymouth and Poole.

5. Work at the various locations has been completed and the results are being analysed. The stage has now been reached where it is possible to reject two of the sites in Cornwall, at Gwithian and Nancekuke, on geological grounds. Geological conditions at the other sites are acceptable and further work is continuing on siting arrangements, environmental assessments, costs and economics and studies of the electricity supply system.

6. A separate investigation has shown there is the capability for additional nuclear generating capacity at Hinkley Point adjoining the Board's existing power station. However, because of its location on the north Devon coast additional generation at Hinkley Point would not be the best arrangement to secure electricity supplies in the South-West in the future.

7. It must be emphasised that all the remaining sites referred to above are in contention. A further announcement on the outcome of the work will be made as soon as possible, (in 1982).

8. It is useful to note that the recent blackouts in the South-West caused by exceptional weather conditions have to some extent shown the risk of relying entirely on the transmission system. Some of the recent area shutdowns may have been avoided or the effects reduced if there had been additional major generation operating in the area which the Board's current work is seeking to provide. However many factors were involved in the system failures and this point must not be overstated. The very long periods of shutdown were due to extensive storm damage to Area Board distribution lines and this situation would not have been overcome should additional generation have been available.

February 1982.