



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

9 September, 1982

FILE LPO

Copy to: J. Gow
(7/9)
C+E.

Sarman

Dear Mr Stewart:

Thank you for your further letter of 24 August about the provision of customs facilities at Wick airfield.

I am afraid that it is simply not practicable for Customs to provide these services at the level of demand which you suggest. A very high proportion of the many hundreds of airfields in the United Kingdom could demonstrate a potential for two or three foreign flights a week on the basis of locality services. The resulting diffusion of customs resources would be wasteful and quite at odds with the Government policy of reducing the size of the Civil Service.

It is, furthermore, not merely a question of customs controls. At small ports and airports customs staff also carry out vital immigration duties. On the customs side, quite apart from the certainty of increased revenue evasion, essential social controls such as those imposed for animal and plant health reasons and, most important of all at the present time, to prevent the illegal importation of drugs, would be jeopardised by the open-door approach which you advocate.

/Finally,

SW

Finally, I should perhaps mention that the policy of limiting the number of places approved for customs and immigration purposes is not unique to the United Kingdom and is indeed widely followed throughout the world.

Yours sincerely
Raymond Stelter

The Rt. Hon. Donald Stewart, M.P.



Board Room
H M Customs and Excise
King's Beam House
Mark Lane London EC3R 7HE

MPA 11151

cc PS/CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER

1. PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE ECONOMIC SECRETARY
2. PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE PRIME MINISTER

*This to Admin file
to me
JG 4/19.*

THE RT HON DONALD STEWART MP: CUSTOMS FACILITIES AT WICK AIRFIELD

1. The Prime Minister will recall from previous briefing in connection with Wick that both immigration and customs controls are exercised by customs staff at small ports and airports. Relaxations would therefore have to be agreed by both Customs and the Home Office before any form of selective attendance could be introduced.
2. This matter is currently under discussion between the Departments but it is already clear that by virtue of immigration constraints alone the scope for selective controls is limited to a few categories of outward flights. The Customs' viewpoint is that as their preventive effort is already spread very thinly they would be reluctant to adopt selective attendance as the general basis of control, particularly in view of the increasing social dangers arising from drugs smuggling.
- ... 3. The attached reply is suggested.

Jay James

Mrs J JAMES
Parliamentary Unit

2 September 1982

P1 type for PM
MES 7/9

Thank you for your further letter of 24 August about the provision of customs facilities at Wick airfield.

I am afraid that

It is simply not practicable for Customs to provide these services at the level of demand which you suggest. A very high proportion of the many hundreds of airfields in the United Kingdom could demonstrate a potential for two or three foreign flights a week on the basis of locality services. The resulting diffusion of customs resources would be wasteful and quite at odds with the Government policy of reducing the size of the Civil Service.

Furthermore,

It is not merely a question of customs controls, of course. At small ports and airports customs staff also carry out ^{vital} immigration duties, ~~and we cannot~~ ^{simply} allow ~~uncontrolled entry into the country.~~ On the customs side, quite apart from the certainty of increased revenue evasion, essential social controls such as those imposed for animal and plant health reasons and, most important of all at the present time, to prevent the illegal importation of drugs, would be jeopardised by the open-door approach which you advocate.

Finally, I should perhaps mention that the policy of limiting the number of places approved for customs and immigration purposes is not unique to the United Kingdom and is indeed widely followed throughout the world.



Govt Mach
file no

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

26 August 1982

BF 7-9-82

I enclose a further letter dated 24 August which the Prime Minister has received from The Rt. Hon. Donald Stewart, M.P., about Customs facilities at Wick Airport.

I should be grateful if you could let me have a draft reply for the Prime Minister to send to Mr. Stewart by 7 September.

Chris Harrison, Esq.,
H.M. Treasury.



File 116

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

26 August 1982

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to thank you for your letter of 24 August.

I shall place this before her at once and a reply will be sent to you as soon as possible.

WR

The Rt. Hon. Donald Stewart, Esq., M.P.

R



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

26 August 1982

27 AUG 1982

Dear Chris

I enclose a further letter dated 24 August which the Prime Minister has received from The Rt. Hon. Donald Stewart, M.P., about Customs facilities at Wick Airport.

I should be grateful if you could let me have a draft reply for the Prime Minister to send to Mr. Stewart by 7 September.

Yours ever

Willie Rickett

Chris Harrison, Esq.,
H.M. Treasury.

f/c

11/PS1

EC - MAIN SECRETARY	
REC'D	27 AUG 1982
	PS/CAE -
	PPS CST FST MST(K)
	MST(K)
	MR D L MOORE
	MR FRENCH

1 Received in Customs: 27 AUG 1982
2 Action: ... me coll. info...

f/c

Reply by 3/9/82



24 August 1982

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,
Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON.

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for your letter of 11 August about the outcome of Jock Bruce-Gardyne's meeting with the Highland Regional Council concerning Customs facilities at Wick Airport.

I am greatly disappointed to hear of his conclusion and your support of it that facilities for the proposed service from Wick to the Faeroes would not be justified.

You say it would not be possible to provide facilities at Wick while continuing to refuse them elsewhere. To this I can only say that if other ports can make an equally good case they should have the same facilities. It is a ridiculous situation that flights from the UK are to be restricted to airports where the Customs and Excise are prepared to provide facilities. The answer to that would be to allow traffic without Customs examination.

*Yours sincerely,
Donald Stewart*

Donald Stewart

7 SEP 1989

9
8
7
6
5

From: The Rt. Hon. Donald Stewart, M.P.



24 August 1982

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,
Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON.

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for your letter of 11 August about the outcome of Jock Bruce-Gardyne's meeting with the Highland Regional Council concerning Customs facilities at Wick Airport.

I am greatly disappointed to hear of his conclusion and your support of it that facilities for the proposed service from Wick to the Faeroes would not be justified.

You say it would not be possible to provide facilities at Wick while continuing to refuse them elsewhere. To this I can only say that if other ports can make an equally good case they should have the same facilities. It is a ridiculous situation that flights from the UK are to be restricted to airports where the Customs and Excise are prepared to provide facilities. The answer to that would be to allow traffic without Customs examination.

*Yours sincerely,
Donald Stewart*

Donald Stewart