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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

3 January 1986

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PRIME MINISTER'S
PERSONAL MESSAGE
SERIAL No. T 1/86

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you for your letter of 5 December. I, too, enjoyed our frank and friendly exchanges on 27 November.

I am grateful to you for your elaboration of the Norwegian Government's views on acid rain. As you know, scientists from our two countries and from Sweden are working closely on these matters and I am sure that this co-operation is as welcome to you as it is to me. There are still uncertainties to resolve but I do not contest many of the points you make. I would however draw a rather wider distinction than you between the role of deposited acidity, from distant as well as near sources, in causing lake acidification and the role of air pollution in damaging forests. The processes, pollutants involved, and their relationship with other factors may well be different in the two situations. I also think that the corrosion of stonework and other materials to which you refer is more likely to be due to high concentrations of pollutants from local rather than distant sources, and that a considerable amount of the damage even of recent years derives from the delayed effects of much earlier local pollution.

As I mentioned to you when we met, I expect sulphur dioxide emissions from the UK to continue to decline. We are already down 42% from our 1970 peak. In future, we expect to expand our nuclear generating capacity; to introduce new cost-effective technologies for cleaner coal combustion as

they become available; and to secure further improvements in the efficiency with which energy is used. These reductions will make a substantial contribution to the objective we share with other countries of reducing overall European pollution. I am, however, not certain that the overall downward trend will continue at the precise rate necessary to achieve the "30 per cent club protocol" target date. I am afraid that I remain unconvinced that the heavy additional costs which we would have to bear to guarantee that precise rate can be justified against the background of the substantial reduction made by the UK before the arbitrary date of 1980 chosen as the baseline for that protocol and against our expectation of further reductions on a possibly slightly longer time scale.

I agree that our two Governments should keep in touch on this matter. I am pleased that Mrs. Surlien is due to visit the United Kingdom in the spring and we welcome the opportunity this will provide for further discussion then with Mr. Waldegrave and others.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

His Excellency Mr Kare Willoch