

SUBJECT  
cc MASTER

File SLH



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Principal Private Secretary

21 March 1986

Dear Robin,

THE DISPOSAL OF NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. Douglas Hogg, Member of Parliament for Grantham, came to see the Prime Minister this afternoon to explain to her his concern about the choice of Fulbeck, in his constituency, for investigation by NIREX as a possible site for nuclear waste disposal.

Mr. Hogg said that opposition to the NIREX approach was evident in all four constituencies concerned as well as in the 20 - 30 adjoining constituencies. Opposition was increasing and could not be controlled however hard the local Member worked. His constituents were demanding that he opposed the Special Development Order which would authorise NIREX's exploratory tests. Local opposition was made worse because many in his constituency were aware that sites in Scotland and at Billingham had been excluded because of political pressure. Already there was evidence that property values were being affected. A further complication in his view was that NIREX could easily report that all four sites were suitable on geological grounds.

The Prime Minister asked at this point whether his constituents were aware that much of the waste concerned had relatively low levels of radioactivity, consisting in part of materials such as X-ray cladding. Mr. Hogg confirmed that this was well known, but local reaction was emotional and impervious to logical argument. It was harder to counteract local opposition because there was no urgent need for the new storage sites. Sites at Drigg could be extended or the low and intermediate level waste concerned could be disposed of at the site which would be needed in due course for long life intermediate waste, as was happening in West Germany and Sweden.

Mr. Hogg then asked that the debate on the Special Development Orders should not take place until the recent report of the Select Committee on the Environment had been debated and he saw no need for any early debate of that report. Privately Ministers should intimate to the backbenchers primarily concerned that there was a good chance the SDOs would not in the end need to be moved. This was, in Mr. Hogg's view, the only way of restraining the

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backbenchers concerned, whatever their better judgement, from mounting an extremely embarrassing campaign of resistance against the SDOs. He hoped for an early response to his representations.

I am copying this letter to Joan MacNaughton (Lord President's Office), Geoff Dart (Department of Energy), David Morris (Lord Privy Seal's Office) and Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office) and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Yours sincerely*  
*Nigel Wicks*

N L WICKS

Robin Young, Esq.,  
Department of the Environment

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