

FILE

JR

cc SO

PM

10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

1 February 1982

Dear Stewart

INVERGORDON

As you know, the Chief Executive of the Highland Regional Council wrote to me on 15 January, asking me to receive a joint deputation (covering also Ross and Cromarty District Council) to discuss the closure.

As I have made clear in the House, I am always ready to meet the constituency Member to discuss a major closure, but where a larger deputation wishes to hold detailed discussions with the Government, it is my invariable rule to ask them to go to the Departmental Minister. You therefore came to see me, together with the Secretary of State for Scotland, on 26 January, and you will know that I am very much aware of the circumstances of the closure and of its very serious implications for the Invergordon area in terms of jobs lost and the effect on the local economy. At our meeting, I told you that I recognised your particular difficulties over this matter because of your position as a Minister. I told you that I would, therefore, be ready - exceptionally - to consider seeing you again with a small deputation from the Councils, but that I should prefer to wait until a time when the way forward might be a little clearer.

/I will therefore

ds

I will therefore be in touch with you again about a meeting.
In the meantime, I have asked that George Younger and you should
keep me fully up to date with developments regarding Invergordon.

I know that you will have been in touch with the Councils
about our meeting on 26 January and I should be grateful if you
could convey my reply to their approach.

Y
L
R

Hamish Gray, Esq., MP.



*Please copy
to Mr. Russell,
Swishon
Office*

10 DOWNING STREET

PRIME MINISTER

I suggest that the best way of handling the request for a meeting on Invergordon is to reply through Hamish Gray. The letter needs to explain why you may be ready to make an exception to your usual practice, and I hope that the attached draft will suffice. You might want to add a personal note to Mr. Gray on a separate sheet, asking him to let you know if he is reluctant to be used as the messenger in this way.

MAD

29 January 1982



SCOTTISH OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AU

Michael Scholar Esq
Private Secretary
No 10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

28 January 1982

Dear Neil,

Reply, through Mr Gray, with PM.

MAR 29/1.

INVERGORDON

Thank you for your letter of 26 January reporting on the outcome of the meeting that day between the Prime Minister, Mr Gray and my Secretary of State.

I now attach a draft reply for your signature to Highland Regional Council's request that a deputation should meet the Prime Minister (your letter of 20 January and Mike Pattison's letter of 22 January refer). I should be grateful for a copy of the reply which you eventually send.

*Yours,
Muir*

A MUIR RUSSELL
Private Secretary

E.R.

bc to BT

Muir Russell

DRAFT FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S PRIVATE SECRETARY

pl arrange a suitable b/f.

R H Stevenson Esq MA LLB
Chief Executive
Highland Regional Council
Regional Buildings
Glenurquhart Road
INVERNESS
IV3 5NX

INVERGORDON - CLOSURE OF BRITISH ALUMINIUM SMELTER

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 15 January in which, on behalf of your Council and Ross and Cromarty District Council, you request a meeting with her to discuss the closure of the British Aluminium Company smelter at Invergordon.

vcm/L

The Prime Minister is very much aware of the circumstances of the closure and of its serious consequences for the Invergordon area in terms of jobs lost and the effect on the local economy. She has been fully briefed by the Secretary of State for Scotland on the action which is being taken to seek an alternative operator for the plant. The Secretary of State has reported to the Prime Minister on his meeting with the Regional and District Councils on 12 January and Mrs Thatcher has also ~~discussed the matter~~ with Mr Hamish Gray MP.

Had a number of discussions about this closure

Recognising the exceptional circumstances of the closure the Prime Minister is willing to meet the deputation from the Councils, but she feels that the meeting could, with advantage, be considered at a later stage when the way forward may be a little clearer. I will be in touch with you again in the near future and in the meantime would like to assure you that the Prime Minister will be kept fully in touch with developments regarding Invergordon by the Secretary of State and Mr Gray.

B/F
for meeting
to be
arranged