

MR BEARPARK

cc MR INGHAM

27 October 1986

AIDS

Aids is probably the most important public health issue this century. During a personal discussion with Mr Newton last week he emphasised that it was the most important single issue on his desk.

The media are getting increasingly interested - we have had two major television programmes in the past week, with more to come. There is a perception that the Government in general, and the Prime Minister in particular, is reluctant to treat the issue with the seriousness it deserves.

The DHSS are currently evaluating how best to carry forward their campaign of public education. We do not wish to stampede them into early decisions which would give an appearance of panic and complicate the PESC negotiations. However, I think it would be worthwhile when they have formulated their proposals, for the Prime Minister to hold a review meeting with interested Ministers. This could both bring her up to date on the latest facts regarding the epidemic and give her an opportunity to consider the DHSS proposals for public education. It should be made known to the media that such a meeting was taking place.

If you think this is a good idea, perhaps we could discuss the best way to carry it forward.

*David Willetts*

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27 October 1985

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