



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

21 November 1984

file JK
cc D/N
H Alison

Dear Mr. Mackenna,

Thank you for your letter of 7 November about Dounreay.

I understand your interest in the possibility of the United Kingdom making a bid for Dounreay to be the location of the reprocessing plant required to serve the needs of the demonstration fast reactors which are expected to be built under the European collaboration. I know that Peter Walker is currently considering a letter from the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Authority, on behalf of the UK nuclear industry as a whole, about this.

I have copied your letter to him and have asked him to take account of the points you have made.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

Robert Maclennan, Esq., MP.

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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY
THAMES HOUSE SOUTH
MILLBANK LONDON SW1P 4QJ
01 211 6402

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Tim Flesher Esq
Private Secretary to
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

19 November 1984

Dear Tim,

John

Thank you for your letter of 12 November, with which you enclose correspondence the Prime Minister had received from Robert MacLennan MP.

The background to Mr MacLennan's letter is a proposal put to my Secretary of State by the UK nuclear industry that a reprocessing plant to serve the future needs of the recently established European fast reactor collaboration should be constructed at Dounreay. The siting of the plant would however be a matter for decision of the European partners jointly, and we know that the French are strong competitors.

On nuclear policy grounds, my Secretary of State sees considerable advantage in the proposal but, as there is a strong Scottish dimension involved (in particular in relation to the handling of planning matters), he has consulted the Secretary of State for Scotland and is correctly considering his recent response before minuting the Prime Minister and other interested colleagues.

I attach a draft reply which, necessarily, is pretty non-committal.

*Yours
John*

J S NEILSON
Private Secretary



REPLY FOR THE PRIME MINISTER'S SIGNATURE

Robert Maclennan Esq MP
House of Commons
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

Thank you for your letter of 7 November about Dounreay.

I understand your interest in the possibility of the UK making a bid for Dounreay to be the location of the reprocessing plant required to serve the needs of the demonstration fast reactors which are expected to be built under the European collaboration. I know that Peter Walker is currently considering a letter from the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Authority, on behalf of the UK nuclear industry as a whole, about this.

I have copied your letter to him and have asked him to take account of the points you have made.

Robert MACLENNAN MP



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

12 November, 1984

I enclose a copy of a letter the Prime Minister has received from Robert Macleennan, MP.

I should be grateful if you could let me have a draft reply for the Prime Minister's signature by Friday, 23 November.

I am sending a copy of this letter and its enclosure to Colin Budd (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

(Timothy Flesher)

J. Neilson, Esq.,
Department of Energy

Robert Maclennan, M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

UNYD...
cc: MA

7th November 1984.

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Rt. Hon. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,
The Prime Minister,
10 Downing Street,
LONDON, S.W.1.

Dear Prime Minister,

I know that you have had a longstanding interest in the development of the fast breeder reactor in this country and that in September, 1979, you opened the fuel reprocessing plant at Dounreay in my constituency. I am writing to you at this time as an important stage has now been reached in the project following the conclusion of the European Collaborative Agreement on fast breeder reactor development and because the matter is of such importance to this country that it seems to me that it could well be suitable for consideration by heads of government in the European Council or bilaterally.

As I understand the position, the British Government has accepted that we shall not be the first country to build a Commercial Demonstration Fast Reactor under the Collaborative Agreement. Nonetheless, I understand that the nuclear industry and the Generating Boards are at one in believing that this country should bid for the location in Britain at Dounreay of the plant to reprocess all the spent fuel from fast breeders in the participating Member countries. It does seem clear that if we are to obtain a fair share in the work on fast reactors under the Programme this would provide the best opportunity to secure it.

Naturally, I am particularly concerned to ensure that a decision not to build a Commercial Development Fast Reactor in this country for some years does not result in a contraction in both the employment opportunities at Dounreay and in the loss of morale by British scientists and technologists engaged on the fast reactor programme.



I am very conscious that there is no part of the British Isles where planning permission for such an expansion of existing work (and the location of such a European facility at Dounreay would not alter the nature of the reprocessing work already successfully done there, only its scale) would be more easily obtained from the local authority which has strongly backed every nuclear project at Dounreay and is, I understand, keen to see this proposed development go ahead.

I noted that when the French President addressed the Houses of Parliament he spoke of the need for further technological co-operation in Europe. This scheme to locate a European fuel reprocessing plant in my constituency is one which would give effect to the French President's intentions and would seem to complement well the probable decision that the first Commercial Demonstration Fast Reactor should be located in France.

I am therefore writing to ask if you will throw your personal weight behind this project in whatever forum you feel is appropriate to secure it for Britain.

Yours sincerely,

R.W. Haslam