



Prime Minister

① CCPH
Do you agree to what
Mr Patten proposes at
overleaf? ⊗

LAG

24/11

PRIME MINISTER

EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY - PROPOSAL FOR SITING IN UK

At the last meeting of the Environment Council in September all member countries accepted in principle that a European Environment Agency should be established. It would be a small body coordinating environmental information from national sources. The aim is to raise the standard of available environmental information in terms of its comparability and reliability. Discussions are well advanced on the draft Regulation that would establish the body.

Although the Agency is intended to comprise only about 20 professionals with support staff, it is likely to be a prestigious body and practically all Community countries have made some sort of bid for it to be located within their boundaries. In September I made a bid for it to be located in the UK without specifying a particular location. In preparation for the next Environment Council in November my officials have been preparing a 16-page booklet illustrating the range of locations available in the UK but not singling out one in particular.

We are now ready to circulate this booklet but we have had advice from the Foreign Office that tabling a document that does not specify a particular site is likely to weaken our case. I am not convinced that this is necessarily right; while I accept that it will be necessary at the real negotiation stage to narrow the choice down, it seems to me that at this stage the booklet would usefully illustrate options and show that we are serious.

I need to clear a line on this for the 28 November Environment Council and for the European Council on 8 December.



As far as the Environment Council is concerned I am reluctant simply to reiterate a generalised offer to host the Agency without further details. I could simply circulate our booklet as evidence of attractive UK locations on offer and trail an intention to select front runners in due course. If on the other hand narrowing down locations at an early stage is seen as essential by colleagues it will be necessary to choose one (with perhaps two reserves) from the attached list. In that case my own preference would be to go for London; other countries have mainly nominated capital cities (Germany has nominated Berlin). Cambridge and Edinburgh, both well known centres for environmental studies, might be seen as reserves. You may however prefer to postpone singling out a preferred location until the European Council, at which this issue may arise.

It seems to me that there are therefore three options:

- (i) Continue to press a general case (without details) for the UK hosting the Agency.
- (ii) Continue to press the general case for the UK hosting the Agency on the basis of a number of illustrative locations/sites.
- (iii) Select one location (with reserves).

The preferred location could be put forward at either the Environment Council or the European Council.

I would be glad to know which of these options you and colleagues prefer. I am inclined to favour (ii) for the Environment Council, moving to (iii) for the European Council. I should therefore be grateful for agreement that London should be our first runner, with Cambridge and Edinburgh as reserves.

But Berlin is an interesting city under the power admin.

London & Cambridge

(X)



A copy of this minute goes to the Foreign Secretary, the Secretaries of State for Industry, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and Sir Robin Butler.

RB Butler

CP

23 November 1989

*(approved by the Secretary of State
and signed in his absence)*

Possible UK Sites for the European Environment Agency

London

Suitable office accommodation is available within one of the campuses of London University. The proposed site would be on the same campus as the University's Monitoring and Assessment Research Centre (MARC) which is well known in the international environmental field. It provides the focal point for the UK's contribution of scientific information to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and has strong links with the World Health Organisation.

NB
Professor Pearce
is at UCL
and there
is also
Imperial
College's
IRC in
Population
Biology.
MB

London University has a most extensive range of present activities in the environmental field. For example the University's Centre for Remote Sensing brings together experts from many disciplines. A further example, particularly relevant to the functions of the proposed Agency, is the major involvement of Birkbeck College in the construction of the database for the CORINE project. In addition the University participates in international programmes such as the United Nations Environmental Programme's GRID and GEMS and is involved in the planning of the new International Geosphere and Biosphere Programme.

Cambridge

The Cambridge site is within the Cambridge Inter-disciplinary Environment Centre which is a joint initiative of Cambridge University, the British Antarctic Survey, the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology at Monks Wood, the World Conservation Monitoring Centre and the International Council for Bird Preservation. The EC/EFTA coordination centre for stratospheric ozone research is already located in Cambridge University. Space is available for up to 100 staff and the accommodation will be backed by a full IBM data base and super computer.

An additional site, just outside Cambridge, is also available, within the boundaries of the Natural Environment Research Council at Monks Wood. Computer facilities at this site are excellent with a new computer network only recently installed.

Edinburgh

Edinburgh is a city with a strong history and foundation in the field of environmental science dating back to the 18th century. Edinburgh University's own reputation in this field is reinforced by the close proximity of a large number of centres of excellence. Many of these organisations are actively involved in monitoring and collecting information through field research and there is a wide knowledge base and strong potential for collaboration that could be drawn on by a new and developing European Environment Agency. Edinburgh has a wealth of high quality sites which could be made available to house the Agency.

Aberdeen

The Grampian Region of Scotland contains one of the most important concentrations of Life and Resource Scientists in Western Europe and offers considerable expertise in the environment field. In addition there is proven experience in inter-disciplinary co-operation and management and a history of public and private sector initiatives in this area of work. Aberdeen is able to offer a wide variety of accommodation.

Antrim

Space is offered in the Antrim Technology Park. Situated 15 miles from Belfast this location would provide excellent accommodation, with all the necessary facilities. Latest telecommunications systems provide the most modern worldwide telephone, telex and data transmission links.

Oxford

Oxford University have considerable expertise in the environment field. The University has particularly strong schools of geography and forestry and, in the Department of Zoology, an outstanding centre of ecological research. These academic groups are all participating in the development of an Environmental Change Unit. Furthermore there is the Hook Institute, which works in climatic and meteorological areas.

Huddersfield

Accommodation is offered in a planned Business Park situated just outside Huddersfield in West Yorkshire. Development of the site, which is within a good quality residential area and close to open countryside, is due to begin in Spring 1990.

