

210

Prime Minister

CONFIDENTIAL

Agree that planning permission for this AC/DC converter station should be announced?



TPL, 26/3

26 March 1981

Prime Minister

I am writing to let you know that I intend to announce very shortly that David Howell and I have given planning permission, on appeal, to the CEGB to build a very large AC/DC converter station at Sellindge near Ashford, Kent. This will be the English end of a cross-Channel electricity link with France for which investment approval was given by the Government on 17 July 1980. When that approval was announced David Howell and I asked the CEGB to explore the feasibility of a cable route into Dungeness to see whether there was a possibility of an alternative site there for the Converter Station.

After the survey was completed we re-opened the public inquiry. In their report, which we shall publish soon with our decision, the Inspectors concluded that a route into Dungeness was not feasible. In the circumstances David Howell and I agreed that the national need for the station outweighs the environmental objections. The decision will, however, be strongly opposed locally.

There is great urgency for a decision as the French have indicated that if the Sellindge site is not approved by 31 March they will be obliged to meet their needs by other power station developments.

I am copying this minute to Peter Carrington, Keith Joseph and David Howell.

*Isnt it Keith Speed's constituency?*

*Oughtn't he to be warned?*

*no*

*Keith*

MH

26 MAR 1957

10 11 12 1  
9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

file

Emy dl

be Mr. Higham

**CONFIDENTIAL**



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

27 March 1981

Your Secretary of State minuted the Prime Minister on 26 March about the CEGB's AC/DC converter station which is to be built at Sellindge near Ashford, Kent. The Prime Minister has read this minute, and agrees that planning permission for the station should be announced. But she has suggested that Mr. Keith Speed MP (who, I believe, is the MP for the place in question) should be warned.

I am sending a copy of this letter to George Walden (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Ian Ellison (Department of Industry) and Julian West (Department of Energy).

**J. P. LANKESTER**

David Edmonds, Esq.,  
Department of the Environment.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

2.



*Energy*

2 MARSHAM STREET  
LONDON SW1P 3EB

*I remonstrated  
with Mr Heseltine's  
office and Mr Shem's  
office about this  
decision, but left it  
to them.*

My ref:

Your ref:

1 April 1981

*Dear Tim*

SELLINDGE

The Secretary of State minuted the Prime Minister on <sup>26</sup> March about the decision which he and the Secretary of State for Energy had reached in respect of the planning application made by the CEGB for the construction of a power converter station at Sellindge.

It is intended that the decision letter will be received by the interested parties tomorrow (Thursday 2 April) to coincide with publication of the Inspectors' report. The two Members most concerned, Keith Speed MP and Sir Albert Costain MP have been informed and Sir Albert specifically requested that no Parliamentary announcement should be made. Mr Speed agreed. The Secretary of State is therefore disposed not to table a written PQ but to make the announcement by issuing a press notice which explains the full background to the inquiry and associated feasibility studies.

*Yours ever*

*Jeffrey Channing*

J P CHANNING  
Private Secretary

Tim Lankester Esq

APR 1981



COMPILED