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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

14 April 1983

THE HASTINGS TO TONBRIDGE RAIL SERVICE

Many thanks for your recent letter about the Hastings to Tonbridge rail service with which you enclosed the Railways Board's submission together with the summary of the Department of Transport's economic evaluation of the options.

I have shown these papers to the Prime Minister. Mrs. Thatcher has commented that, although the Railways Board gives as the cost of its preferred electrification option some £24 million, a fuller definition of the lifetime cost of electrification is costed by the Department of Transport at £67 million. She suspects that the cost of electrification is being understated in the submission, and the cost of keeping the line open by an efficient renewal programme is being overstated.

The Prime Minister's conclusion is that the line must be kept open, but by renewing, and gradually improving, the existing service, and not by electrification.

I am sending a copy of this letter to John Gieve in the Chief Secretary's Office.

M. C. SCHOLAR

Richard Bird, Esq.,
Department of Transport.

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