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To TF

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SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT

Channel Fixed Link (CFL)

1. Thank you for your letter of 18 March about the line you propose to take at your meeting with French Ministers on 20 March. I agree that a closing date for offers of 31 October 1985 would be reasonable; and with the line you propose to take on EC finance.

2. I am glad that you will be discussing with M Quiles what follow-up work might be initiated while the promoters develop their proposals: no doubt you will be making recommendations to colleagues on this in the light of your discussions.

3. I can confirm that officials in my Department, after consulting colleagues in the Ministry of Defence, the Home Office and your own Department, have had preliminary discussions with French officials about the implications of the CFL for national defence and security, blockades and strikes. It will clearly be necessary to bring officials from other Departments into these discussions within the same timetable as that established for other follow-up work.

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4. I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister and other members of E(A), to the Secretary of State for Defence and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style.

GEOFFREY HOWE

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
20 March 1985

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Transp. Channel Tunnel : Pt 2

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The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe QC MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and
Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Downing Street
LONDON SW1

mt Prime Minister; 18 March 1985

Mr Ridley envisages

Dear Geoffrey

- (a) a period till October for proposals to be made and
- (b) a statement in the House before the end of the month *18/3*

CHANNEL FIXED LINK

attached

We discussed the Channel Fixed Link (CFL) in E(A) on 25 February on the basis of my paper E(A)(85)11. On 28 February, British and French officials agreed, subject to final linguistic alignment, their report to myself and my French counterpart consisting of draft guidelines to promoters consistent with the decisions we took in E(A).

On 20 March I will be meeting M Quiles to approve the final texts, to agree when and how they should be issued, how we should deal publicly with issues that are not addressed in the guidelines and to decide whether any immediate follow-up work should be initiated while the promoters develop their proposals.

The main point not dealt with in the draft guidelines is how long we should give promoters to come forward with their proposals.

The proponents of a twin tunnel (the Channel Tunnel Group) would prefer a short period, six months or less. EuroRoute would like a little more, perhaps eight months. We must ensure that EuroRoute is not prejudiced. My preliminary view is that we should go for a closing date of 31 October 1985.

We shall then publish the guidelines. Towards the end of this month, I suggest that, with the Lord Privy Seal's agreement, I make an oral statement in Parliament to announce the publication. I will of course circulate the text in advance.

There are important matters which have been touched on within the Anglo/French group which are only in part matters for the guidelines. These bear on the need to have an adequate understanding with the French on physical and organisational arrangements relating to national defence and security (including NATO commitments) counter-terrorist and police work, the control

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of drug trafficking and the need to minimise the effects of blockades, strikes etc. Officials in your Department and in the French Ministry of External Affairs have, I understand, embarked on discussion of these issues. We must be confident, before we go ahead, that we will have adequate co-operation from the French on these matters.

Finally, I must return once again to the question of EC financial involvement in the CFL. I intend, when I meet M Quiles, to get him to state the French position clearly if he can, to state ours in return and, if possible to get him to agree that we should take the same line in public statements or in negotiations in Brussels on the general question of the role of the Community in relation to transport infrastructure. I will maintain our position that, both Governments having stressed that this project is to be solely commercial and market financed, any form of subvention from the Community would be inappropriate.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister and other members of E(A), to the Secretary of State for Defence and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

Your man
Nicholas

NICHOLAS RIDLEY

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