



DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

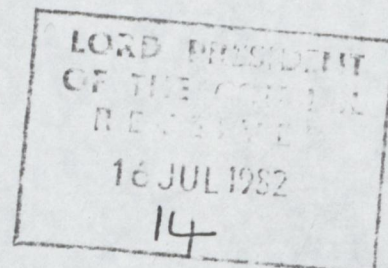
2 MARSHAM STREET

LONDON SW1P 3EB

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MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

16 July 1982



Dear Nick,

RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT WHITE PAPER: ORAL STATEMENT

As you know, Mr King is currently planning to announce the publication of the White Paper on radio-active waste management in an oral statement on Thursday 22 July. I attach the latest draft of the statement which does of course follow closely the contents of the White Paper.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales, Defence, Employment, Energy, Northern Ireland and the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, and I would be grateful for comments as soon as possible, and in any case no later than close of play on Tuesday 20 July.

Yours Sincerely,

Martin Brasher

MARTIN BRASHER
Private Secretary

Nick Huxtable Esq

DRAFT

With permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the government's policies and priorities on radioactive waste management as set out in a White Paper published today, copies of which are available in the Vote Office.

We have been reviewing current practices and priorities, and the research programme, in the light of the transfer of responsibilities in this field to the Environment Secretaries of State under the terms of the previous government's White Paper in 1977. In this we have had considerable assistance from the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee under the chairmanship of Sir Denys Wilkinson, which is predominantly made up of independent members but also includes members from the nuclear industry, CEGB and the relevant trade unions.

The Government attach great importance to the safe and effective management of radioactive wastes. As a result of research undertaken in this and other countries over the last five years, there is no evidence of major scientific problems and we have concluded that it is feasible to manage and dispose of all the wastes currently envisaged in the United Kingdom, in acceptable ways. The main task is to identify the most appropriate of the methods available to us for each category of waste, and then ensure that this method is implemented according to an agreed programme and in a way that meets the objectives for radiological protection.

This will depend on public support based on a full and accurate assessment of the situation, and we shall take the necessary measures to provide the basis for that, in particular by continuing to make very full information publicly available. As with other industries, the cost of waste management measures must be met by the industry and reflected in its accounting practices. The nuclear industry has confirmed to me that it fully accepts this.

Radioactive wastes vary very widely in radioactivity and toxicity and the practices adopted must reflect that. They certainly do not come exclusively from nuclear power. For the small quantities of high-level, heat-generating waste, the sensible approach is to solidify them, making use of the vitrification process, and store them for at least 50 years until the activity and heat-generation have substantially declined and a decision can be taken between the various options, in the light of research results.

For low-level wastes, disposal routes already exist, and RWMAC have confirmed that these should continue to be used, subject to appropriate controls and monitoring. In the case of liquid discharges from the Sellafield works of BNFL, which have been substantially reduced in recent years, a new and more stringent authorisation will be issued after the treatment plant now under construction comes into operation.

The main needs we have identified are the early development of land disposal facilities for intermediate-level wastes, and a suitable organisation to undertake that. We have therefore agreed with the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, British Nuclear Fuels Limited and the generating boards that they will set up forthwith a Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive (NIREX) so that they can collaborate effectively, within a comprehensive plan, in the development and management of disposal facilities. It will have a staff at Harwell, provided by the UKAEA on a repayment basis, and will be supervised by a Directorate made up of senior representatives of the component bodies. The costs of disposal operations, which are expected to be roughly £65m over the next 10 years, will be met by the producers of the waste. NIREX will also take over responsibility, as from next year, for the sea disposal operations for low-level waste, and for improving the arrangements.

The new executive will make periodic reports to the Environment Secretaries of State. These will be published and I shall keep the House fully informed.

Mr Speaker, we believe that this is the most suitable form of organisation for these tasks, but my rt hon Friend the Secretary of State, together with my rt hon Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales will remain responsible for the overall strategy of waste management. These Departments, together with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, will use their regulatory powers to ensure that NIREX maintain high standards, and that the public are fully safeguarded both now and for future generations.

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to Press Office
Mrs



PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

16 July 1982

Prime Minister

New Willie

Mr King's draft statement on
Radioactive waste management is
attached. He plans to make it on

This should have been copied to you. Thursday.
I now remedy the oversight.

Content?

I am copying this letter and enclosure
to Murdo Maclean and Michael Pownall
who have also been slighted.

Yes WH
not 19/7

Your own
Nick

N P M HUXTABLE
Private Secretary

Willie Rickett Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
London SW1

Mr Rickett

Press Office

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I do not
think a final reply
necessary

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MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

17
17/7

- 1) Mr Rickett
- 2) Prime Minister

13 July 1982

To be aware of

Prime Minister

Yes to publication of the
White Paper and statement

The Lord President takes the
view that it would be best not
to court controversy by announcing the publication
of this White Paper by written answer. He agrees

13/7

Dear Nick, that Mr King should make a statement,
probably next Wednesday. Content? WH 13/7

We spoke this morning about the publication arrangements
for the forthcoming White Paper on Radio-active Waste
Management.

The present position is that the final revised draft
is now with the printers, having received clearance from
E Committee and other colleagues concerned at the end of last
week. This means that we should be in a position to publish
the White Paper next week, which would be desirable since
it will be an important background document for the
Sizewell inquiry, and ought to be available when the inquiry
opens formally, in preliminary session, on 26 July.

Ministers here take the view that there could be a
risk of criticism if there was not an oral statement to announce
publication. As agreed, therefore, I attach a brief list of
'main points in the White Paper', and I would be grateful for
clearance for Mr King to make an oral statement on this subject
next week (preferably 21 or 22 July).

I am sending copies of this letter to Tim Flescher
(Prime Minister's Office), Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office,
House of Commons), Michael Pownall (Chief Whip's Office, House
of Lords), and to the Private Secretaries to the Secretaries
of State for Energy, Scotland and Wales.

Yours Sincerely,

Martin Brasher

MARTIN BRASHER
Private Secretary

RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT

MAIN POINTS IN THE WHITE PAPER

1. Agreement with industry on the setting up of NIREX, so that industry can collaborate to provide new facilities, subject to regulatory controls and prior consultation with government, which will continue to develop the broad strategy. RWMAC in favour. Definite role for the private sector. NIREX preferred to the Royal Commission's Nuclear Waste Disposal Corporation.

2. Work is proceeding on the basis of bringing new disposal facilities for intermediate - level waste into operation by the end of the decade plus extra facilities for low-level waste. All appropriate safeguards, including provision for public inquiries, will apply.

3. Solutions generally available with present science and technology. Waste problems not therefore a barrier to further development of nuclear power as now foreseen. Effective action needed to put solutions into practice in publicly acceptable ways. Government will continue to make full information available.

4. General description of nature of radioactive wastes, what has been done since 1977 White Paper, and the current position, including heat-generating wastes.

5. Response to recommendations of the Expert Group which reviewed the 1960 Act, including restatement of objectives for radioactive waste management.

N.B.

NIREX = Nuclear Industry Radio-active Waste Executive.

RWMAC = Radio-active Waste Management Advisory Committee.

3 JUL 1982

