

PREPARATIONS FOR THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHERNOBYL ACCIDENT

From: M G Segal
Date: 2 February 1996
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To: Mrs E Ratcliffe - PS/Parl Sec C (+1)

cc Mr M H Nisbet - PS/Minister
Ms K O'Donoghue - PS/Perm Sec
Mr G Osborne
Mr R J D Carden
Mr B H B Dickinson
Mr M Smith - INF
Mr C K McIntosh - SOAEFD
Ms J Gordon - WOAD
Mr J Sinclair DANI
Mrs C C Morris - RSD

1. The purpose of this minute is to inform the Parliamentary Secretary of preparations that are underway at official level for the forthcoming 10th anniversary of the Chernobyl accident at the end of April.
2. We do not advise that Ministers actively seek publicity on this occasion, but it is inevitable that this anniversary will attract much media attention. It will give ample opportunity for attacks on various aspects of Government policy, ranging from the privatisation of the nuclear industry to the question of aid to the countries of the former Soviet Union. Officials from departments concerned are therefore working on co-ordinated briefing to ensure that Ministers have access to all the relevant material. The Prime Minister and Mr Haslam will be fully briefed for the nuclear safety summit in Moscow in April.
3. Officials of the Agriculture Departments also plan to co-ordinate closely on more detailed briefings on our controls on sheep in the restricted areas.

M G Segal

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NOTE OF THE MEETING HELD AT DTI HEADQUARTERS, 1 VICTORIA STREET, LONDON SW1 ON 1 FEBRUARY 1996

Those present:

Neil Hirst (chair)	DTI, Director, Nuclear Industries
Mrs Helen Haddon	DTI, Nuclear Industries Directorate
Maurice Strike	DTI, Nuclear Industries Directorate
Mrs Evelyn Smith	DTI, Press Office
Michael McCulloch	FCO, JAU(E)
Ray Terry	FCO, ESED
Nev Johnson	FCO, ESED
Jorn Beissert	FCO, Eastern Department
Alper Mehmet	FCO, Press Office
Paul Stephenson	Scottish Office
Mike Segal	MAFF
Martin Hum	DOE

Purpose of the Meeting

To consider HMG's response to Parliamentary and media interest arising from the 10th anniversary of the Chernobyl accident (26 April 1986).

Conclusions

2. It was agreed that:

- it was for Minister's to decide whether they wanted to take the initiative regarding publicity arising from the 10th anniversary;
- it would be useful to compile a briefing pack which could be drawn on by Press Offices at short notice and handed to journalists as appropriate;
- the briefing would need to highlight the important contribution which the UK was making to programmes dealing with the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster; however, it should not give the impression that, somehow, the UK was responsible for the accident or imply that the UK, alone, was responsible for carrying forward efforts to deal with the aftermath;
- the subjects on which such briefing was needed were as listed at Annex A; each brief should be no more than one side of a single sheet of paper, with no background and drafted in a fashion suitable for handing to responsible members of the press if the need arose;
- the briefs should be sent to Richard Griffin (DTI, Nuclear Industries Directorate 3B, Room 1-G-22, 1 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0ET), by 16 February, and that he would compile the pack for circulation to other Government Departments;

- before collection of this briefing material, DTI would report to Mr Page (PUSS, Energy) on the conclusions reached at this meeting and the action being taken;
- each Department would provide DTI (Mr Griffin) with the name/address of two individuals who could be regarded by others as contacts for queries arising from interest in the 10th anniversary of the Chernobyl accident [note: FCO/JAU has already done so].

Maurice Strike
 DTI/Nuclear Industries Directorate 3B
 5 February 1996

cc Those present

Mr Griffin	NID3
Ms Walker	DOH
Mrs Fry	NRPB
Dr Prosser	Welsh Office
Mr Dhanak	MOD
DBC 14/16	

cc Mrs Morris

d p/w NE 1346

Copied to: Dr Stephen Brown DoE
Dr Hilary Walker DoH
Mr Mike Segal MAFF *MS*
Mr Iain Gray SO *24/1*
Mr Ian McDonald MoD
Mrs Haddon DTI



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Our ref DBC 14/16
Your ref
Date 19 January 1996

Dear Graham

PREPARATION FOR THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF CHERNOBYL

Since we can expect a fair amount of Parliamentary and media interest in the 10th Anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear accident (26 April 1996), I thought that it might be useful to explore with other interested Departments how we might respond to this interest in the months leading up to the event. The 9th anniversary was remarkably quiet, but clearly we cannot expect to be let off so lightly this year. The recently signed MoU on Chernobyl closure and the Moscow Nuclear Safety Summit will give this anniversary added focus.

A number of Department's have a major interest in different aspects of the accident and its aftermath, particularly FCO, DTI, DoE, DoH, MAFF; and are no doubt already considering the political and technical messages their Ministers will wish to convey. I believe it would be helpful to confer so that we can be clear on the extent of our respective responsibilities and ensure adequate and consistent coverage when dealing with outside enquiries or briefing across the range of Chernobyl related issues or providing briefing. Against this background, I think we need to consider:

- as a first step, exchanging standard briefing on the key issues for each department,
- nominating "working level" contacts in each Department to enable quick discussion on who should deal with correspondence, PQs and briefing clearance where necessary. One of their tasks might be to liaise with their respective Parliamentary Branches;
- the extent to which, if at all, we should consider going into pro-active mode, perhaps through arranged PQs laying down the Government's position. We would need to balance the advantages of having a firm basis for dealing with subsequent Parliamentary or media interest against the disadvantage of possibly generating extra (unwelcome?) interest,



There may well be other issues to address in this context and the linkage with relevant messages in preparation for the Moscow Summit will need to be taken into account. I would be happy to host a meeting here to go over this ground and agree on the tasks to be undertaken, though if FCO feel they should take the lead I would be happy to fit in. Since I am anxious to advise my Ministers on this matter fairly soon, I hope we might hold the meeting in the last week of January if at all possible. If you agree, perhaps we can leave it to our secretaries to sort out a date convenient to us and appropriate representatives from interested Department to whom I am copying this letter. I also suggest that representatives from our Press Offices may care to attend. I recognise that others such as Scottish Office and MoD may also have an interest, so I am copying this letter to them for information.

Yours sincerely,

Neil Hirst

NEIL HIRST

Nuclear Industries Director

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