

PRIME MINISTER

Electrification of the Hastings/Tonbridge Line

Mr. King minuted you on 20 September seeking agreement to electrification. At your request he set out at greater length his reasons for preferring electrification as opposed to the diesel option which had been agreed in the Spring - see Flag A. A meeting was arranged but was postponed to allow Mr. Ridley to consider the case. This he has now done and he is now ready to come to a meeting. I am told he endorses Mr. King's conclusions.

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I wonder, however, whether in the light of Mr. King's further explanation, and of the Policy Unit's (lukewarm) endorsement of <sup>Flag B</sup> electrification, you still feel a meeting is necessary.

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25 October 1983

Not for the decision. AT  
But just the change  
in facts and circumstances -  
reaching and clearing.  
It is a very bad basis for  
any future proposal  
from M.O.T. - and has left  
No 10 with lack of  
confidence in their  
submissions. MB

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

26 October 1983

Hastings/Tonbridge Railway Line

In his minute of 20 September your former Secretary of State reported that he favoured the electrification option, reversing the earlier decision reached by Mr. Howell after consulting MPs for the constituencies affected. Mr. King wrote again on 12 October setting out why he had come to a different view and how British Rail and the Department conduct the investment appraisal of electrification proposals.

In the light of this further explanation, which she understands your new Secretary of State endorses, the Prime Minister now agrees that the electrification option should be pursued.

She has commented, however, that she found the changes in facts and assessment disturbing. She wishes to emphasise that investment appraisals from British Rail and the Department cannot command confidence unless they are properly argued and are economically sound.

I am copying this letter to John Gieve (Chief Secretary's Office).

Andrew Turnbull

Miss D.A. Nichols,  
Department of Transport.



Prime Minister<sup>2</sup>

To note that DoT have taken your strictures to heart.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT  
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AT  
31/10

Andrew Turnbull Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

27<sup>th</sup> October 1983

Dear Andrew,

HASTINGS-TONBRIDGE RAILWAY LINE

Thank you for your letter of 26 October.

The Secretary of State is grateful for the Prime Minister's agreement that the electrification option should be approved.

Mr Ridley shares the Prime Minister's concern about the deficiencies in BR's appraisal of this scheme. He understands that action has been taken since the scheme was submitted to improve the Board's appraisal arrangements. Clearly, this is essential and we shall be drawing the deficiencies in the submission to Mr Bob Reid's attention as an illustration of the need for improvement.

I am sending a copy of this letter to John Gieve (Chief Secretary's office).

Yours,

Dinah

DINAH NICHOLS  
Private Secretary

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