

POLICY STEERING GROUP FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF BPL

12. Mr Smart reported that the Group had met twice since it last reported in October 1981 and had made the following progress:

i. Possible conversion of an existing pharmaceutical factory.

At the request of the Steering Group, 3 senior production executives had reported on the viability of converting an existing factory to BPL's purposes. They had concluded that there were no suitable premises available and that there would be little advantage, financial or otherwise, in pursuing this course. Ministers had been advised accordingly.

ii. Supply of Plasma

Regional Health Authorities had been approached concerning their willingness and ability to increase supplies of plasma to the redeveloped BPL. Regions accepted the principle of self sufficiency but were unable to commit resources immediately to the increase of plasma collection to the required level. It would be necessary to build up supplies in stages and this would be taken into account in planning the new Laboratory's capacity.

iii. Capacity for the fractionation of English plasma at PFC Liberton

Following the continuous production experiment at Liberton and subsequent discussions concerning shift - working, the PS& had concluded that BPL should be planned to meet the needs of England and Wales without a contribution from PFC Liberton. The Committee endorsed this approach but recommended that discussions should be initiated between DHSS and SHHD with a view to a reciprocal arrangement regarding supplies of products during times of shortage.

iv. Product Specifications

The product specifications of BPL and PFC had been passed to the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee for consideration with a recommendation that there should be consistency and standardisation in specifications to facilitate interchange of products as necessary. Dr Clarke was asked to pursue with DHSS Medicines Division the question of whether consistency of appearance and presentation should be included in BP/EP standards.

v. Feasibility Study

Matthew Hall Norcain Engineering Ltd (MHN) had been commissioned to carry out a feasibility study on the redevelopment of the Elstree site. The subsequent report had been studied in detail and the views of the Working Party on Fractionation Technology had been obtained. As a result Mr Collins had taken up several aspects of the study with MHN:

- (a) The possible wasteful use of the first floor of the production area in the plan.
- (b) The possible incorporation of a 2-stream system rather than a 3-stream system.
- (c) The possible more efficient use of existing infrastructure installations.
- (d) Estimates for costs of an installation to handle three possible production levels - 200,000, 350,000, 435,000 kg of fresh frozen plasma per annum, in each case plus 50,000 kg of time-expired plasma per annum.

(e) Design options for equipment and layout.

Agreement for the employment of MHN as management contractors had been sought from Treasury. (Mr Bathurst reported that recent correspondence from MHN had raised some doubts about the level of fees if MHN were to be engaged as management contractors. Mr Collins was asked to pursue this with MHN as a matter of urgency in consultation with DHSS Works Group and Finance Division).

vi. Genetic Engineering

The Group had considered the implications of progress in the field of genetic engineering and had concluded that considerable work was needed before genetically engineered blood products became available commercially and therefore the planned redevelopment of BPL, if carried out quickly and efficiently, was still a viable proposition.

vii. Planning permission for the redevelopment at Elstree

A formal planning application had been made and had been agreed in principle by the Planning Committee of the Borough Council. Mr Godfrey reported that individual members of the County Council were pursuing their objections through the local MP. However it was hoped that a visit to BPL would dispel the Councillors' concern about the scale of development in the Green Belt.