



SCOTTISH HOME AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Dear John

PFC, LIBERTON

1. I spoke to you by telephone on Friday in reply to your letter of 21 December about the use of the facilities at the Protein Fractionation Centre, Liberton for the processing of English plasma. You wanted an early response to your letter since you were to be seeing Mr Geoffrey Finsberg today to discuss with him future developments in blood processing. Because time was pressing, I therefore gave you certain information by telephone, but I think that for the record I should confirm in writing what I told you on Friday.

2. I prefaced my remarks by mentioning two conditions which would have to be met before any progress can be made. First of all, I stressed that although the shift-working trial round the clock at the PFC had been concluded satisfactorily, the staff cannot be expected to work in shifts regularly until an agreement on shift-working has been concluded through the usual Whitley Council machinery. That is, as you recognised when we spoke, very much a matter for your colleagues on the Whitley Council side of DHSS to pursue, and you indicated that the necessary action would be taken.

3. Secondly, I pointed out that the PFC, Liberton could process substantial quantities of English plasma only if further ancillary facilities can be provided, and that more land will be needed for the building required. There is suitable land adjacent to the PFC but it belongs to Lothian Health Board, who may have other uses for it, and not to the Secretary of State. Before plans can be made to expand production at Liberton it will be necessary to ensure that the land for this can be made available.

4. Given that the obstacles referred to in the two previous paragraphs can be overcome, I do not think that the Common Services Agency Management Committee, who are responsible for the PFC, would raise any difficulties; and as we have indicated all along we ourselves would be quite willing to have English plasma processed at Liberton.

5. I then went on to say that the shift-working trial had demonstrated that the PFC, Liberton is capable of processing 200,000 litres of English plasma annually in addition to the 80,000 litres which we estimate are required for Scotland and Northern Ireland. These are still provisional figures, but we have made a very cautious assessment of potential production capacity, and would probably be able to improve marginally on the 200,000 litres of English plasma if, for example, the needs of the nearest English regions, whose plasma we presume would be sent to Liberton, were somewhat greater than this.

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6. Although there is sufficient production capacity at Liberton to enable the plant under shift-working to process 200,000 litres of English plasma annually, it would be necessary to expand the ancillary facilities to cope with such a workload. Substantial additional expenditure would be required to provide more space for freeze-drying, packaging, labelling, storage, etc. If it is decided that English plasma is to be processed at Liberton we would of course expect DHSS to fund an appropriate portion of the capital cost of the additional facilities that would be needed, making due allowance for your initial capital investment in the PFC and for the expenditure that would be required in respect of the Medicines Inspectorate's report if it were to be processing plasma only for Scotland and Northern Ireland. We estimate that the total expenditure called for would be of the order of £6-7 million, but we cannot give you a detailed breakdown of this at present.

7. It is also impossible at this stage to give you any idea of the revenue costs of processing English plasma at Liberton. As I told you on Friday, these would depend on the total volume of plasma to be sent to the PFC; the proportion of this which would be fresh, outdated, hyperimmune and supernatants; whether PPF or SPPS would be required; whether normal IgG from fresh and/or outdated plasma would be required; the albumin solutions required; and on the cost of transporting the plasma and products between the English Regional Centres and the PFC. Once we have information on your requirements these costs could be worked out fairly quickly because, as I told you, PA Management Consultants have recently been working at the PFC and, if commissioned urgently, could produce reasonably satisfactory costings by the end of this month.

8. Subject to what I have said in paragraphs 2 and 3 above, we do not foresee any difficulties over the time-table for new capital developments at Liberton once agreement is reached on whether to proceed. We estimate that the necessary building work could be completed in 2½ years.

9. We shall of course give you detailed information about the shift-working trials at Liberton as soon as this has been assessed and properly assembled. Meanwhile, I hope that my conversation with you on Friday and this letter will enable you to have a meaningful discussion with Mr Finsberg and to report accordingly to the Policy Steering Group on 15 January.

10. I shall also try to let you have before 15 January - though this may have to be by telephone - the further information you asked me for this morning by telephone on the quantity of English plasma which it would be possible to process at the PFC, Liberton without shift-working and without the provision of additional ancillary facilities for freeze-drying, packaging, etc.

Yours sincerely

GRO-C

A M MACFARLSON