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Date: 2 October 2008
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**SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN BLOOD PRODUCTS 1970-85 – RELEASE OF
10 DOCUMENTS TO LORD OWEN COPIED TO LORD ARCHER**

Issue

1. A number of unregistered files were recently found in Wellington House some time ago. These are in addition to 121 files, the contents of which we have reviewed and released. A search of these has now been carried out and has revealed 10 documents from Lord Owen's term of office as Minister of Health. These documents need to be released now.

Timing

2. Immediate. Lord Owen previously expressed disappointment when papers from his term of office went missing and it is therefore, it is proposed to issue the papers as soon as possible. Due to the number involved, it has taken some time to crosscheck them against the thousands of papers we have already released. The papers will also be copied to Lord Archer, as we are committed to do so.

Background

3. We have compiled an inventory of all the documents found in these unregistered files and are still reviewing them, with Sol, in the light of our commitment to release all relevant documents. There may be a few more it would be prudent to release but they do not relate to Lord Owen. There are no further Lord Owen documents that we are considering. We are committed to issue any which are previously unissued, to Lord Archer. However, given the background we feel Lord Owen should have his papers immediately. We plan to publish any remaining and relevant papers, as soon as possible. Lord Owen has previously taken a keen interest in the blood safety and self-sufficiency issues, stemming from his time as Health Minister.
4. We believe these to be the last such papers held by the Department and we are conducting a Division wide search of all cabinets to confirm this. We consider they should be copied to Lord Archer as soon as possible as his inquiry is currently preparing its report and it would be

embarrassing to release further Ministerial papers following the publication of his conclusions.

5. The documents (attached, with an inventory) do not materially alter the story of the self-sufficiency initiative as set out in the DH report 'Self-Sufficiency in Blood Products in England and Wales: A chronology from 1973 to 1991' (issued 2006). However, they do show that Lord Owen took a strong personal interest in this issue, requesting regular progress reports. Lord Owen agreed that £0.5 million (£0.25 million each for capital and revenue costs) should be made available to the NHS to support the initiative. This is the first time a document discovered has been discovered which includes a breakdown of this expenditure. The final document, from October 1975, shows that Lord Owen was satisfied with the actions taken to launch the initiative in 1974-5. Some of the documents include Lord Owen's handwritten comments, suggesting they are originals.
6. The documents have been redacted in line with Section 40(2) of the Freedom of Information Act. The names of individual officials and experts have been redacted, as we have concluded that to release them after this period of time would be unfair, in line with other documents issued on this subject.

Action

7. Draft letters to Lord Owen and Lord Archer are, to cover the release of documents, are attached for information. I also attach a brief Q&A to cover questions that may be raised about this release of documents.

William G Connnon
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Attachments:

- 10 scanned documents for release to Lord Owen and Lord Archer
- Inventory of the documents (to go with documents on release)
- Draft letter to Lord Owen from Liz Woodeson
- Draft letter to Lord Archer from William Connnon
- Q&A on release of documents (for internal use in DH)