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LP1

Dr R S Lane  
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Your reference  
RSL/AH

Our reference

HB23/RH05/4  
Date

7 February 1980

Dear Dr Lane

Thank you for your letter of 24 January 1980 seeking the Department's formal agreement to starting a number of projects which are essential if the upgrading of the Blood Products Laboratory is to go ahead with the necessary speed. I am pleased to be able to convey approval substantially to all the projects outlined in your letter although there are reservations in connection with certain of them.

1. The project originally described as the "Stopgap" programme and the modular cold storage

The Department accepts your recommendation that this project should be carried out as originally planned (including the fixed cold storage) in view of your assessment that this cold storage space and that which you intend to install in modular form will be necessary if the laboratory is to be upgraded as planned. I understand that you propose to place the order for the modular units at once.

2. The redesign and relocation of the Microbiology Unit

The Department agrees with the proposals for removing microbiology from its existing premises and reworking the space then available to provide the alternative facilities specified in your letter, including closing and repositioning the main entrance to the laboratory. Associated with this would be the planning of step-over facilities in the CF laboratory and the Large Fractions Laboratory.

3. (i) Advance payments on the washing machine and any other equipment;  
(ii) Contracting for the new PFF bottle and closure

It is not usual practice for the NHS to make down-payments or payments in advance for items of equipment, not least because such payments can become losses if for any reason the contractor defaults on the contract. Equally there are circumstances where deposits, or payment in stages as work progresses, may be necessary.

I appreciate you wish to have the new washing machine and new container in service as quickly as possible and I suggest you discuss with Mr Lee at North West Thames RHA how you can best both protect your timetable and minimise the risk to public funds.

4. Improving the ceilings where necessary and the environmental air in certain production and testing rooms

The Department accepts the need for professional consultations to begin as soon as you are able to arrange them.

5. Modification and extension of the Coagulation Factor Laboratory

I understand that you envisage no increase at present in production of Factor VIII and that the modification and extension of manufacturing facilities and premises are essential to safeguard the product currently made in the laboratory by introducing, as far as is practicable within the existing premises, the upgrading recommended by Medicines Division.

6. Expenditure in the Financial Years 1979/80 and 1980/81

The Department has taken note of your assurance that any expenditure which you are required to incur in connection with these projects in the current Financial Year can be met from the existing financial allocation. However it is as you know the RHA not the Department which is immediately responsible for ensuring that CBL expenditure remains within the notified cash limit. I suggest therefore you confirm that Mr Lee is content with your expenditure plans.

I should perhaps mention the 1980-81 position. You are aware of the additions we have been able to make to the basic CBL provision and that we have sought to meet both the BPL revenue and BPL capital bids (at November 1979 prices). In due course there will be a cash limit addition. However our estimates have not yet received Treasury or Parliamentary sanction and can only be regarded as provisional. We will let Mr Lee know the cash-limited totals as soon as possible; in the meantime I suggest you discuss your plans for committing future expenditure with him.

7. Proposals regarding additional personnel

The Department notes your intention to place job descriptions for the posts specified in your letter before the RHA Personnel Department after which, presumably, they will be referred to the Scientific and Technical Committee. I have been asked to explain that the revenue allocation for 1980/81 referred to above will have to cover such of these posts as it is decided to fill in that year.

8. General

We recommend that any work which you intend carrying out via your existing architects should be plotted on the Development Control Plan they have produced to ensure that it does not inhibit any future large scale development of BPL.

Copies of your letter and this reply have been sent to Mr Harley, Dr Walford, Mr Brechin, Mr Lee (RHA), Mr Connor, Mr O'Leary and Mr Flint.

Yours sincerely

GRO-C

T E DUTTON