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Mr Michael Dorricott

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*Deo N. Dorricott.*

Thank you for your letter of 18 October and e-mail of 20 October regarding my statement in the House on 18 October and the debate later that morning.

I am so sorry that you are unhappy with the content of the statement, and that you think it is inconsistent with comments I made in our meeting in July. However, I do not have the same recollection as you.

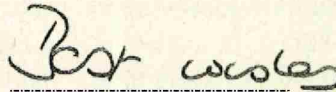
Your e-mail of 20 October raises a number of issues about the note I placed in the House Library explaining how the estimate of £3billion was calculated. However, in focusing exclusively on the estimated cost you are overlooking the key point of principle that is made in the statement. Linking payments in the UK to those in the Republic of Ireland (RoI) would require the UK to defer to the resourcing decisions made by the government of another sovereign state operating under different fiscal constraints and policy circumstances. Placing such a decision on UK expenditure in the hands of a foreign Government would be constitutionally questionable step. You will note that even Lord Morris's Contaminated Blood (Support for Infected and Bereaved Persons) Bill avoids making such an explicit linkage. The issue of costs is secondary to that point of principle.

We have always attempted to be clear that we are trying to estimate the average payment to an infected individual. The figure that you cite of €353,636, is the average payment to all claimants to the RoI scheme, which includes dependents and carers, so we are therefore comparing estimates of two different things.

Again, we have always said the figure of £3-3.5 billion is an estimated cost. The note that I placed in the Library clearly outlines the uncertainties involved in the calculation. You are quite correct that the note was drafted in the last few days, but the actual estimate was made some time ago, under the previous Government. It is the same estimate that formed the basis for the answer to the Parliamentary Question that you cite in your letter. The note that I placed in the library is simply a fuller explanation of the answer that was given to that question.

We are arranging an open meeting in Westminster Hall on 11 November, at which my officials and I will be available to meet and discuss the issue with MPs and those affected. I will be writing to interested parties to let them know. I hope you will be able to attend.

I hope that even though you are not happy with what I have said, you know that I will at all times, act in good faith.



GRO-C

ANNE MILTON