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D/9/08

Note for the Record

1. [redacted] Chief Inspector, Petroleum Production Inspectorate, Petroleum Division, Department of Trade and Industry telephoned me on 18 December. He had been approached by the Scottish Office and asked to arrange an informal meeting at which the possibility of storing oil in cavities produced by nuclear explosions beneath the seabed could be discussed. He proposed to offer the Scottish Office a time convenient to [redacted] a Principal working with [redacted] and myself. This has since been agreed as 2.00 pm on 17 January at DTI (Thames House South).
2. The Scottish Office believes that the possible requirement for increased strategic storage of oil and the development of off-shore fields in the northern part of the North Sea may create a demand for the development of tank farms and other types of on-shore storage which would be incompatible with environmental considerations particularly on the coastline and in areas important for tourism. They wish to know more about the possibilities of storage underground and beneath the seabed.
3. I asked [redacted] to confirm the approach in a letter. He said that I was welcome to bring colleagues to the meeting. This he has now done in a letter dated 18 December 1972 (copy attached) - received on 29 December 1972.
4. This is an encouraging development and may open up the way for a detailed appraisal of oil storage beneath the seabed using nuclear explosives.
5. Following discussion with [redacted] it appears that the AWRE team should be [redacted] together with one other who could prepare a report on the meeting. [redacted]

Building [redacted]  
AWRE

[redacted]  
29 December 1972

Distribution

Director, [redacted]  
CPA, [redacted]  
[redacted] Technical Adviser, London Office  
[redacted] SSDM  
[redacted] SRGS  
File  
[redacted]

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**Department of Trade and Industry**  
PETROLEUM DIVISION

Thames House South Millbank London SW1

Telegrams Advantage London SW1

Telephone [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
Building [REDACTED]  
AWRE  
Aldermaston  
Reading RG7 4PR

Your reference

Our reference PET 22/459/02

Date 18 December 1972

Dear [REDACTED]

This is to confirm our telephone conversation today about a meeting to discuss the possible uses of nuclear explosions for underground storage of oil. This meeting will be in my office which is room 1126, Thames House South, Millbank, London SW1, at 2.00 pm on 17 January 1973.

As you are aware the discovery of oil in the North Sea, raises the possible necessity for storage of large quantities of oil on land and the question of underground storage of oil so as to avoid large unsightly tank farms, is very much in mind. Whether underground storage caverns should be produced by conventional means or by use of nuclear explosions is a matter that has to be decided, but we feel that all possible methods should be considered. We are therefore very much looking forward to receiving your advice on the possibility of caverns being produced by nuclear explosions. In addition to myself, [REDACTED] of Oil 1a and [REDACTED] of the Scottish Office will be present.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]  
Chief Petroleum Production Inspector