CONFIDENTI

Who will have the service of the servic

Prime thinister

Agree to mis project
going ahead, sisjert to
colleagues' agreement?

PROPOSALS FOR SUPPLY OF NATURAL GAS TO NORTHERN IRELAND FROM MIS 12/11

In October 1981, colleagues agreed that we should open negotiations with the Government of the Republic of Ireland on a supply of natural gas to Northern Ireland from the Republic's field at Kinsale. The purpose of those negotations was to establish whether the terms attaching to such a supply could provide the basis of a viable gas industry for Northern Ireland.

- 2. Agreement in principle has now been reached with the Republic for a supply of gas. The terms agreed were reached after lengthy and tough negotiations, and I am completely satisfied that the package which has been negotiated represents the best deal that could be obtained. I am now writing to seek colleagues' approval to going ahead with the project on the basis of these proposals.
- 3. The proposal will, in the long term, involve a substantial saving on public expenditure. Funds have already been allocated for the closure of the Northern Ireland gas industry (until we were offered natural gas from the Republic we were committed to closing the industry, and this remains the only alternative to accepting the natural gas), but, as the public expenditure analysis shows, a net present value saving of £140m over the 30 year period will result if we adopt the project instead of closure. During the current survey period there will be additional demands on public expenditure. However notwithstanding the difficulties and pressures I face I am prepared to meet these out of the Northern Ireland total recently agreed in the context of the 1982 PE Survey. I will be looking at the incidence of the capital expenditure critically and may have to provide natural gas for Belfast only first, with the remainder of Northern Ireland being phased in over a period of years.

- in the attached memorandum show, a supply of gas on the terms now available from the Republic would offer the basis of a profitable and viable gas industry which (unlike the present gas industry in Northern Ireland) would make no further financial calls on Government. The resource cost analysis shows that there is a clear advantage in meeting additional energy demands by introducing natural gas as compared to increasing the use of electricity, oil and coal. The financial analysis indicates that the natural gas project should yield an internal rate of return well in excess of our test discount rate of 5%.
- 5. If we do not proceed with the project we shall have to revert to our earlier, much criticised plan to close down the gas supply industry in Northern Ireland. Closure of the gas industry would have a significant impact on public expenditure and would result in a further and early loss of employment in Northern Ireland; it would deprive the region's industry of a piece of infrastructure which industrialists elsewhere take for granted; and it would seriously disadvantage the consumer by restricting his choice of fuels.
- 6. As it is organised at present, much the greater part of the gas industry in Northern Ireland is run by local authorities. The evaluation of the proposals which has been carried out assumes that an industry based upon natural gas from the Republic would continue to lie within the public sector and therefore that any profits would be retained within the public sector and would thus accrue to Government. However, although such a public sector project can be justified fully on grounds of viability, my objective is to secure private sector participation to the maximum extent possible and discussions to this end are being pursued. Obviously there are great advantages in the maximum private investment and with Adam Butler I am seeking from private investors an immediate and substantial capital contribution which would affect public expenditure in return for the profits foregone by the public sector in the later years of the project.

- 7. The supply of natural gas would be drawn from the single source of the Kinsale field. Access to a multi-field system would have attractions but at the present time there is no opportunity to tap into additional sources, since a decision was made in 1979 on the basis of an inter-Departmental study that the natural gas would not be supplied to Northern Ireland from Great Britain. The known recoverable reserves of the Kinsale field, and the projected depletion rates, leave no doubt that the Republic will be in a position to meet its supply obligations to Northern Ireland under the terms of the agreement. Strategic storage facilities have been included in the project and would give protection against limited disruptions of supply.
- 8. There are important security considerations attaching to the project, particularly in the Border areas. The view of the experts is that the security problems can be overcome, and the plan includes provision for the necessary security precautions.
- 9. Within Northern Ireland, Catholic and Protestant representatives are likely to adopt different attitudes to a supply of natural gas based upon an agreement with the Republic. The Unionist parties have argued consistently for a pipeline link with North Sea sources via Scotland. Kinsale gas and other energy topics will almost certainly be the subject of considerable interest in the Assembly, where the Unionist parties are likely to make known the above views although they, too, will be sensitive to any loss of jobs arising from a closure of the gas industry. Closure of the gas industry would draw opposition from all quarters.
- 10. As far as our relationship with the Republic of Ireland is concerned, this project has consistently been treated as a matter of practical co-operation likely to be of real benefit to the United Kingdom, and to the Republic. I think this is the line we should continue to take. We shall need to take special care to ensure that no attempt is made to make party political capital out of the project in the period leading up to the Republic's General Election on 24 November.

- CONFIDENTIAL
- Il. I am in no doubt that it makes sense financially, economically and politically to confirm that the United Kingdom Government is prepared to approve the purchase of natural gas on the terms provisionally agreed. This confirmation would be followed by the signature of Heads of Agreement with the Republic after which negotiations would proceed for the drawing up of a contract between the Irish supplying authority and a Northern Ireland purchasing organisation. Meanwhile, engineering and other preparations for the project would be progressed and proposals would be developed for the re-organisation of the gas industry in Northern Ireland to ensure that it is appropriately structured and managed to exploit the new source of supply.
- 12. I therefore commend to my colleagues the terms of supply which have been agreed provisionally. I recommend that these terms should be accepted, that the project for a natural gas industry in Northern Ireland should go ahead on the basis which they represent, and that officials should as soon as possible proceed as outlined in the preceding paragraph, assuming that confirmation of the agreement is forthcoming from the Government of the Republic.
- 13. I am copying this minute to 'E' Committee colleagues and to Sir Robert Armstrong.



JP

11 November, 1982.



IRELAND.

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

15 November 1982

PROPOSALS FOR SUPPLY OF NATURAL GAS TO NORTHERN IRELAND FROM THE IRISH REPUBLIC

The Prime Minister was grateful for your Secretary of State's minute of 11 November and the attached memorandum.

The Prime Minister agrees, subject to the agreement of colleagues, to your Secretary of State's proposal. She has commented that the heads of agreement and the contract will need to be carefully drafted against the possibility of intervention of supply.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the other members of E and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

M. C. SCHOLAR

Mike Hopkins, Esq., Northern Ireland Office.

CONFIDENTIAL

210

win



Foreign and Commonwealth Office London SW1A 2AH

18 November, 1982

Dear Mike,

Proposals for Supply of Natural Gas to Northern Ireland from the Irish Republic

Mr Pym has seen the Northern Ireland Secretary's minute of 11 November to the Prime Minister, and the attached memorandum. He agrees that the Kinsale project should go ahead on the terms agreed with the Irish Republic.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the other members of E and to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Your ere

(J E Holmes)

M Hopkins Esq Private Secretary Northern Ireland Office



KINSALE PROJECT

PROPOSALS FOR A SUPPLY OF NATURAL GAS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND TO NORTHERN IRELAND

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The proposals to bring a supply of natural gas to Northern Ireland from the Kinsale field in the Republic of Ireland offer the last remaining alternative to the politically contentious and costly operation of closing the Northern Ireland towns gas industry. An agreement in principle for the supply of natural gas has been reached with the Republic after lengthy negotiations and this package represents the best deal that could be obtained. The terms of the agreement, when evaluated in conjunction with professional consultancy assessments of market potential and engineering requirements, show that on resource cost and financial analysis grounds there is a strong case for going ahead with the project. It may be possible to reduce the public expenditure implications of the project through the involvement of private funds.
- 1.2 The following paragraphs deal with the economic and public expenditure evaluation of the Kinsale proposals. They describe the background against which the proposals have developed, including the negotiations with the Republic, the present circumstances of the gas industry in Northern Ireland and some of the measures which will be required for the development of a successful industry based upon natural gas. Political considerations attaching to the proposals are also discussed.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 In July 1979 the Government announced its conclusion that a supply of natural gas from Scotland did not hold out the prospect of providing the basis for a financially viable gas industry in Northern Ireland and that the provision of public funds for such a project could not be justified. The same announcement also made it clear that the existing towns gas industry would not be subsidised

on an on-going basis but that Government would be prepared to provide financial resources to facilitate the orderly run-down of those gas undertakings which decided to close. The estimated cost of such support is £147 million (October 1981 prices).

2.2 Arrangements for the run-down of the industry, including the necessary legislation, were well advanced when in the autumn of 1980 the then Administration in the Republic of Ireland indicated, for the first time, that it would be prepared to consider making natural gas available to Northern Ireland from the Kinsale field. Following preliminary assessments, negotiations were begun with the Republic in December 1981 on the main terms and conditions on which such a supply might be made available. Arrangements for the run down of the Northern Ireland gas industry were suspended pending the outcome of these negotiations.

3. NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE IRISH REPUBLIC

Negotiations with the Republic began in December 1981 and were interrupted by the Irish General Election of March 1982. Agreement in principle was reached in May 1982 between Adam Butler and the Irish Minister for Industry and Energy on terms which each felt could be recommended to their Ministerial colleagues. These terms, which are set out in Annex 1, have been incorporated in the detailed project evaluations. Officials are working with their counterparts in Dublin to translate these terms into a more complete form of Heads of Agreement appropriate for signature by Ministers and which would serve as the basis of a legally binding contract. This work is still in progress, but there are indications that the Republic side is willing to accept additions to the original terms which would provide significant further safeguards for the purchasing organisation in Northern Ireland. These improvements would be achieved without disturbance of the agreed price for the gas.

4. KEY ASPECTS OF THE KINSALE PROJECT

The following paragraphs deal with some of the characteristics and implications of the project:

- (1) The present gas industry in Northern Ireland is an amalgam of 13 disparate and generally inefficient undertakings, some public, some private, some profitable but most loss-making. They require high levels of Government support (of the order of £10 million pa). To switch to gas from the Kinsale field would involve making the transition from oil-based feedstock to natural gas, and establishing a viable and efficient industry.
- (2) The industry and Northern Ireland gas consumers have been burdened by considerable uncertainty about the future of gas for a number of years. The decision now being sought will eliminate this uncertainty and hopefully clear the way for the creation of a progressive and forward-thinking new industry.
- (3) Towns gas in Northern Ireland is at least twice as expensive for the consumer as natural gas in Great Britain and would be even dearer were it not for the Government deficit support which has been provided in recent years. It is estimated that the selling price of natural gas from Kinsale would be some 25%-30% below the equivalent of present Northern Ireland tariff levels. Gas prices in Northern Ireland would however still be above those applying in Great Britain.
- (4) In heat supplied terms, towns gas accounts for some 3% of all energy supplied to Northern Ireland consumers compared to 40% in the UK as a whole. In the domestic sector the respective figures are 4% and 53%.

- (5) Current towns gas sales in Northern Ireland are 21 million therms (70% in Belfast). The marketing consultants who have been retained to advise on the project envisage sales increasing to approximately 115 million therms by 2003/4, with the main load increase arising from domestic space heating. This expansion, which is necessary for a viable industry, could only be achieved with the support of a major marketing effort and significant increases in operational efficiency.
- (6) The capital cost of supplying natural gas to the existing gas undertakings in Northern Ireland is expected to be of the order of £147 million at October 1981 prices (coincidentally this equates with the estimate of the cost associated with closing down the gas industry.) This expenditure would include the costs of the main and supplementary transmission pipeline, strategic storage facilities for liquefied natural gas, compression equipment, conversion of the existing towns gas distribution system, equipment and appliances and expansion of the existing distribution network.
- (7) The most significant criterion used in the evaluation of the project has been the resource cost analysis. Priority has also been given to the financial analysis, and to the public expenditure comparison between Kinsale gas and the only other alternative, closure of the gas industry.
- (8) The project has been carried forward on the assumption that initial financial provisions will have to be met from the public sector. Efforts are continuing to attract private sector involvement.
- (9) A five to six-fold increase in gas sales over the next twenty years will have an impact on other fuel industries. Total demand for energy over this period is likely to be sufficient to accommodate the increased gas share of the market without eroding the position of other fuels. The coal industry in particular disagrees with this thesis. It takes the view that (a) the energy market will not increase significantly and (b) it is unfair that the coal sector should lose any of its share of that increase in the market to gas.

- (10) The advent of natural gas to Northern Ireland would require changes to be made to the existing structure of the gas industry in Northern Ireland. The extent and nature of any re-structuring is at present under consideration. The possibility of introducing a private sector involvement forms part of this consideration.
- (11) European Community assistance would be sought for this project. Commission officials have responded encouragingly to preliminary contacts. Almost certainly the project would qualify for assistance under the Regional Development Fund, and in addition the possibility is being pursued of some special form of assistance.
- (12) There are important security considerations attaching to the project, particularly in the Border areas. The view of the security advisers is that security considerations would not be an insuperable obstacle if it were decided to implement the Kinsale proposals. This view is however associated with the conclusion that the gas project would be an economic target and as such is likely to be the subject of terrorist activity, during construction as well as later. On the basis of this threat assessment the security advisers have therefore recommended certain physical protection measures involving very marginal increases in capital and operational costs which have been included in the evaluation. Arrangements are in hand for discussions on security considerations to continue as the project develops; these will certainly cover pipeline routing, depth of pipeline and other facilities, contingency storage and the co-operation of the Irish authorities.
- (13) If the project is approved, the earliest date at which gas could be made available in Northern Ireland would be in the second half of 1984. A contract with the Republic would initially be for a 20 year supply but there is the prospect of continued supplies beyond that period.



- (14) A decision to proceed with the Kinsale project would safeguard most of the 1,000 jobs in the gas industry and the construction work would in itself provide additional work within the Province.
- (15) Although the project is based upon the importation of gas and therefore has some balance of paymeths implications, it should be noted that the use of Kinsale natural gas would to an extent offset other, increasing, imports of fuels. The proposals would provide a part of the United Kingdom with a supply of natural gas without the penalty of faster depletion of finite North Sea reserves. They would also entail the maintenance and development of the infrasturcture of the gas industry within Northern Ireland in such a way as to enable the Province to utilise any indigenous resources which may become available in the future. The project is therefore compatible with important aspects of energy policy at the national and regional levels.

5. EVALUATION OF THE KINSALE PROJECT

- 5.1 The evaluation includes a resource cost analysis, a financial analysis and an examination of the public expenditure implications and has incorporated outside consultancy advice on the potential market for natural gas and on certain engineering costs.
- 5.2 The resource cost analysis makes a comparison between providing for a given energy demand by either introducing natural gas or increasing supplies of electricity, petroleum and coal. The comparison indicates that in resource cost terms the advantage lies in introducing natural gas since this results in a present value saving of £190m over 30 years.
- 5.3 The financial analysis sets out the total expenditure and income streams of the project over its lifetime in order to show the amount and timing of deficits and surpluses and hence to assess whether the project is likely to make an acceptable financial return. On the assumptions used in the analysis, the Kinsale Gas project yielded an internal rate of return of 6.9% in real

terms (the test discount rate for public expenditure has been assessed by HM Treasury at 5% in real terms).

- The public expenditure analysis has recognised that there are two courses of action open to Government. On the one hand, a decision to bring in natural gas will automatically mean that the gas industry will continue in being while on the other hand a decision against a Kinsale project will entail closure of the gas industry. If the decision is against a natural gas project, the consequential closure of the industry will require expenditure by Government, to which it is already committed, under two broad headings:
 - (a) grants amounting to £65 million to assist consumers to convert towns gas appliances to other forms of energy; and
 - (b) transfer costs deficit support and redundancy payments amounting to a further £82 million.
- 5.5. If the decision is in favour of the natural gas project, PE implications arise only to the extent that the expenditure differs in amount or phasing to that already earmarked for closure of the existing industry. Assessed over a 30 year period and taking account of trading surpluses which are expected to accrue, introduction of natural gas results in a PE saving (compared to closure) of some £140 million. (Further details are given in Annex 2.)

The information which is provided at Annex 2 distinguishes between a supply of gas to Northern Ireland and a supply which would be confined to the Belfast conurbation and to locations along the route of the pipeline from the Irish Border. There is no financial advantage to HMG in confining a supply of natural gas to 'Belfast' and the resource cost and financial analyses are also neutral in this comparison. It would in any case be impossible to defend politically an exclusion of the North and West of the Province which would be seen as discriminating against some of the most socially and economically deprived parts of the United Kingdom.

6. POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 All of the political parties within Northern Ireland actively opposed the Government's decision to close the gas industry. The Unionist parties have argued tenaciously and consistently in favour of a gas pipeline link from Scotland though this has long been rejected by Government on cost grounds. They regard the proposed supply from the Irish Republic as a very poor substitute for a connection with Great Britain and there are clear signs of opposition to the Kinsale project from Unionist sources amounting in some cases to rejection. By contrast, the mainly Catholic SDLP will see the Kinsale project as one to which they can lend full weight.
- 6.2 In the wider political context, a Kinsale gas link is the only major cross-Border project on the horizon which provides opportunity for securing practical economic co-operation of advantage to Northern Ireland. The Ministerial negotiations have been carried out under the aegis of the Anglo-Irish Inter Governmental Council and a decision to proceed would demonstrate the potential for co-operation between the UK and the Republic in technical matters where this would be of advantage to us.

7. PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT

7.1 The possibility of private capital involvement has been pursued with a number of major oil companies but the only proposition currently on the table has come from the firm of Calor Kosangas. This firm has recently put forward a proposal which envisages a partnership with some (but not all) of the existing gas undertakings in the retailing of natural gas in Northern Ireland. Discussions with Calor Kosangas are proceeding in order to determine the extent of the managements willingness to contribute financially to the project. The association of a company with a proven commercial track record could be expected to strengthen the marketing capability of a new gas industry.

7.2 The interest expressed by Calor Kosangas relates solely to the retailing of natural gas. It does not extend to the transmission of the gas nor its wholesaling to retail undertakings. This aspect of the activity would almost certainly have to fall to the public sector.



ANNEX 1

KINSALE GAS - HEADS OF AGREEMENT

1. Quantities

Gas to be supplied as per schedule of Northern Ireland requirements. Details of allowable fluctuation in demand to be discussed.

2. Supply will be initially for 20 years but open to extension beyond that period so long as supplies are available - subject to review of the base price, escalator and currency adjustment.

3. Priorities for Supply

Northern Ireland premium users would receive the same priority as that of premium users in the Republic. This would apply both to the initial period of supply and to any agreed supplies to Northern Ireland beyond that period.

4. Price

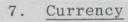
To be 25p per therm for the first 5 years of supply and 25.5p per therm for the remainder of the 20 year period of supply.

5. Transmission Costs

To be 1p per therm over the 20 year period of supply, escalated as per the basic price.

6. Capital Contribution

Northern Ireland to make a capital contribution of £5 million sterling towards the capital costs of the pipeline from Dublin to the Border.



Currency of price denomination and settlement to be sterling, the effects of sterling/dollar exchange rate movements to be shared equally by the parties.

8. Price Escalator

The formula to be 50% Gas Oil; 50% HFO with international index.

9. Application of Escalator

Six monthly; however, if after three months from the last adjustment, the escalator showed a change in excess of plus or minus 10% an immediate adjustment would be effected.

10. Five Yearly Review

There would be a five yearly review of the effect of the price escalator and currency clauses with any changes to be implemented only on agreement by both sides. The contract would continue unchanged even in the event there was no agreement on any adjustments.

ANNEX 2

- 1. The attached table shows the public expenditure implications of introducing natural gas to Northern Ireland, compared to the PE which is already earmarked for closure of the existing towns gas industry.
- Column 1 shows the costs involved in establishing a natural gas industry compared with closing the existing industry.
- Column 2 shows the trading expenses which are expected to arise from 1991/92 onwards.
- 4. To facilitate comparison of financial terms which occur over a period of time, the net total costs shown in Column 3 are discounted at 5% per year and shown in Column 4.
- 5. The totals of Column 3 and 4 show the PE implications summed over 30 years.
- 6. Two scenarios are shown:
 - (i) extending the supply of natural gas to all existing towns gas undertakings;
 - (ii) restricting the supply of natural gas to Belfast and the existing undertakings currently supplied by Belfast and to undertakings en route from the Border with the Republic of Ireland to Belfast.
- 7. Under both scenarios the total of Column 4 shows a saving to PE compared with closure of the order of £140 million.

LUNEVENTIAL

KINSALE GAS; PUBLIC SECTOR FINANCIAL EFFECTS COMPARED WITH CLOSURE (£m)

(Positive numbers indicate a saving compared with closure, negative numbers additional expenditure compared with closure)

1 2 3 4 1

3

4

2

Northern Ireland Option						'Belfast' Option			
Year	Compared to Closure	Retailer Surplus	Total	NPV		Compared to Closure	Retailer Surplus	Total	NPV
84-85 85-86 86-87 87-88 88-89	+ 9.0 -26.0 + 3.3 +11.7 + 8.4 -11.0 + 4.1 + 5.7		+ 9.0 -26.0 + 3.3 +11.7 + 8.4 -11.0 + 4.1 + 5.7	+ 8.6 -23.6 + 2.9 + 9.6 + 6.6 - 8.2 + 2.9 + 3.9		+ 5.8 - 7.2 + 5.9 +14.5 + 9.7 -10.3 + 4.0 - 1.9		+ 5.8 - 7.2 + 5.9 +14.5 + 9.7 -10.3 + 4.0 - 1.9	+ 5. - 6. + 5. +11. + 7. - 7. + 2. - 1.
92-93 93-94 94-95 95-96 96-97 97-98 98-99	+ 8.7 +42.8 +31.2 +23.7 + 9.8 +11.1 - 0.4 + 2.7 -17.5 + 7.8	+ 1.5 + 3.0 + 4.6 + 6.2 + 8.0 + 9.9 + 11.9 + 13.9 + 16.1	+ 8.7 +44.3 +34.2 +28.3 +16.0 +19.1 + 9.5 +14.6 - 3.6 +23.9			+ 4.0 +38.7 +18.6 + 1.6 +16.4 +16.1 + 3.0 + 4.9 - 8.8 +13.0	- + 0.5 + 1.7 + 3.0 + 4.2 + 5.6 + 7.1 + 8.5 +10.2 +11.8	+ 4.0 +39.2 +20.3 + 4.6 +20.6 +21.7 +10.1 +13.4 + 1.4 +24.8	+ 2. +24. +11. + 2. +10. +11. + 4. + 6. + 10.
02-03 03-04 04-05 05-06 06-07 07-08 08-09	- 2.5 -22.2 -13.5 -24.6 -22.2 -22.2 -22.2 -22.2 -22.2 -22.2	+18.4 +20.8 +23.3 +25.9 +28.3 +28.3 +28.3 +28.3 +28.3 +28.3	+15.9 - 1.4 + 9.8 + 1.3 + 6.1 + 6.1 + 6.1 + 6.1 + 6.1	+ 3.5 + 0.4 + 2.0 + 1.9 + 1.8 + 1.7 + 1.6		+ 1.2 - 8.4 + 1.6 -14.7 -12.8 -12.8 -12.8 -12.8 -12.8	+13.6 +15.4 +17.3 +19.3 +21.5 +21.5 +21.5 +21.5 +21.5 +21.5	+14.8 + 7.0 +18.9 + 4.6 + 8.7 + 8.7 + 8.7 + 8.7 + 8.7	+ 2. + 2. + 2.
12-13	-22.2 -22.2 -22.2 -22.2	+28.3 +28.3 +28.3 +28.3	+ 6.1 + 6.1 + 6.1 + 6.1	+ 1.4 + 1.3		-12.8 -12.8 -12.8 -12.8	+21.5 +21.5 +21.5 +21.5	+ 8.7 + 8.7 + 8.7 + 8.7	+ 2.
TOTAL	-159.4	+446.8	+287.4	+135.8		-19.6	+333.2	+313.6	+142.