From the Chair, Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP

Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence
Main Building, Floor 5, Zone D
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB

Dear Philip

March 2014

Further to your statement to the House on 6 March 2014 relating to the decision to refuel the nuclear reactor in HMS Vanguard, the Committee has now had the opportunity to discuss this statement and would be grateful if you could provide answers to the following questions:

- Low levels of radioactivity were detected in the cooling waters surrounding the prototype core at the Naval Reactor Test Establishment at Dounreay in January 2012, but the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) was not informed until October 2012. What was the reason for the delay in informing SEPA?

- Why was the decision taken not to inform Parliament of the problem in both January 2012 and October 2012?

- When the coolant radioactivity was first detected, the reactor was shut down as a precaution, but was restarted in November 2012 following investigations and trials. When was SEPA informed of the decision to restart the reactor?

- Was SEPA informed of the discovery of radioactivity in the cooling waters under a non-disclosure agreement? Were any constraints placed on SEPA informing the Scottish Government about this discovery?

- When was the Scottish Government first informed of the discovery of radioactivity in the cooling waters?

- What is the full definition of a level 0 event?

- Why has it been concluded that the operating life of the core may not be as long as previously expected?

I would be grateful if you could provide answers to these questions by Monday 31 March.

Yours ever

[Signature]

Chair