From the Chair, Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP

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

2nd April 2014

Dear Philip,

Thank you for your letter of 31 March responding to the questions that the Committee raised with you about the decision to refuel HMS Vanguard.

You note in your letter that it is “prudent to assume […] that the operating life of the core may not be as long as previously expected”. You also note that only once the reactor at Dounreay is decommissioned will it be possible to examine it in detail to identify the cause of the issue.

I would be grateful if you were able to provide answers to the following further questions:

- Are there any indicators that the fuel is being used up at a faster rate than previously expected?
- If so, what are those indicators?
- If not, what are the grounds for believing that the fuel is being used up more quickly?
- When do you anticipate that the reactor at Dounreay will be decommissioned and when do you anticipate being able to fully identify the cause of the problem?

I would be grateful if you could reply to these additional questions by Monday 28 April.

I intend to send a copy of your letter and this set of further questions to Vernon Coaker and Margaret Curran. I would be grateful if you could inform me by Friday 4 April if this would cause you any difficulties.

Yours ever,

Chair