

SCIENCE IN PARLIAMENT

The Journal of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee.

The Committee is an Associate Parliamentary Group of members of both Houses of Parliament and British members of the European Parliament, representatives of scientific and technical institutions, industrial organisations and universities.

Science in Parliament has two main objectives:
a) to inform the scientific and industrial communities of activities within Parliament of a scientific nature and of the progress of relevant legislation;
b) to keep Members of Parliament abreast of scientific affairs.



The March Budget brought more good news along with some surprises. The Chancellor announced an increase in the supply of science teachers for secondary schools of at least 3000 and further promotion of science in schools by opening 250 science clubs. He announced too £1 billion per annum to bring together NHS and MRC R & D, and consultation on the best institutional arrangements to deliver this will be announced before the 2006 Pre-Budget



Report in the Autumn of this year. A similar amount of money is to be invested in a new Energy Research Institute. The Chancellor surprised the STEM community by announcing a consultation on

merging the CCLRC with the large facilities operated by the PPARC and on simplification of the funding arrangements for the physical sciences, essentially the end of PPARC. The "Science for the 21st Century" syllabus, which makes science appear more relevant to pupils' experiences and gives them a chance to discuss controversial subjects, will be rolled out across the country next September. At a meeting that I attended recently in the Palace, teachers paid a tribute to the work of the Science and Technology Select Committees in both Houses for initiating work on this new syllabus. How is it that, with increasing resources for STEM, we see continued closures of departments in universities, the latest announcement being a proposal to close the Chemistry Department at Sussex University, previously home to Nobel Prize winners Sir Harry Kroto and Sir John Cornforth, and continued closures of Research Council Institutes, the latest announced by the NERC?

By contrast, the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) has announced that it will re-open its degree course in chemistry, which it closed in 1999, in 2007, as a result of its forensic science graduates realising that they need a chemistry qualification before proceeding to work in forensic science as a career.

Dr Brian Iddon MP
Chairman, Editorial Board
Science in Parliament

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