

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 University of Sussex has decided to maintain its Chemistry Department, albeit with an emphasis on "biological chemistry". At Exeter, another Vice-Chancellor Smith has announced that, although a decision to close the Chemistry Department and downsize RAE 4-rated departments will cost money in the short term, the long-term prospects for the university are looking better as a result. But, what about the country?



Speculation that the last RAE was just that has proved wrong. About a third of Vice-Chancellors would welcome a new approach; the rest feel that they have invested too much already in preparing for the 2008 RAE.

"Metrics" is the new fashion but clearly more work needs to be done to convince the academic community to invest in this new methodology.

The Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir David King, has never been afraid of expressing his views. On climate change he has expressed the view that it is "more serious even than the threat of terrorism". In this edition of *Science in Parliament* Robert Freer reviews a House of Lords report entitled "Economics of Climate Change", which challenges some conventional views. Sir David has now waded into the debate on "mind bending" drugs. He predicts that smart drugs that affect people's performance will be commonplace within 20 years. A new generation of "recreational psychoactive substances" could be given to healthy people to enhance their lives. His new report certainly challenges conventional thinking, and will make the Government nervous.

The House of Commons Science & Technology Select Committee has just announced an inquiry into the use of science to enhance human performance, particularly in sport.

PPARC and CCLRC have decided to endorse the formation of a Large Facilities Council providing that PPARC's grant-awarding powers are transferred to the LFC and not to the EPSRC, a proposal that is meeting with some resistance within the research community.

Dr Brian Iddon MP
Chairman, Editorial Board
Science in Parliament

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