

# 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.



Since 1997, this Government has doubled the amount of money invested in science and engineering, yet significant tensions remain. It seems that there is a recognition at last that university science and engineering departments are underfunded, with a one-off extra investment to them of £60 million during 2006/07, and a promise of a further £75 million to support applied research during 2007/08.



Sir David Cooksey's report has resulted in a jointly held health research fund of at least £1 billion, to ensure that medical research is translated into health and economic benefits. The pressure to move medical research closer to the clinic is

being felt acutely by the National Institute of Medical Research, which is at the centre of a controversial proposal to move it into central London.

PPARC is merging with the CCLRC, and the NERC is reorganising the CEH, with four of its centres closing. According to the public sector union Prospect, "more than 4 in 10 working scientists are either unsure they will be able to stay in science or certain that they will have to leave". No wonder, with all these changes afoot. 2006 was a significant year for the Royal Society. As part of the Queen's 80th birthday celebrations, they organised a special science exhibition at Buckingham Palace, the fourth of the Prime Minister's "Our Nation's Future" series of lectures in Oxford, and Sir Nicholas Stern was present at the Royal Society's HQ, along with the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and the Secretary of State at DEFRA, to launch the "Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change", which will be hard to ignore.

After more than eight years in the job, Lord Sainsbury announced his retirement as Science Minister in November last year, although he is now carrying out a review of the Government's policies on science and innovation. His successor, Malcolm Wicks MP, will find him a hard act to follow.

2007 will see the launch of "International Polar Year". Therefore, it seems appropriate that the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee has launched an inquiry into "Investigating the Oceans".

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Science in Parliament

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