

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.



In the survey of P&SC membership, published last June, 55% of members regarded this Journal as high value to them. Whilst its content was praised, many members commented that the Journal looks old fashioned, lacks colour and that the layout and font style

could be improved. Beginning in the New Year, we will carry out the changes that our membership have requested, and this will be the last edition published in the 'old' format.

When the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) was switched on at CERN on 10 September, scientists involved in this £5 billion project were jubilant. Sadly, their hopes were dashed just a few days later when a 'quench' occurred, and some of its supercooled magnets overheated. This announcement will come as no surprise to those who have visited CERN and seen the size and complexity of the LHC. It would be ironic if the £2 million Zeplin project, housed at the bottom of Boulby mine in Cleveland, provided the answers on 'dark matter' first.

There was an interesting exchange on BBC's Newsnight on 10 September between particle physicist Prof Brian Cox of Manchester University, who was defending the cost of the CERN project, and former Chief Science Adviser to HM Government, Prof Sir David King, who is now a champion of climate change research. Scientists are concerned now that the cost of supporting large research programmes is severely reducing the money available for responsive mode bids to the Research Councils.

The Institute of Physics publishes the Visions series of 'briefing papers for policy makers'. The latest is on 'T-rays' (number 22 in the series). There has been an explosion of interest recently in terahertz radiation, which has enabled a new type of security scanner to be brought into use. These strip search the body, revealing any metallic objects that a person may be carrying, such as guns or knives, and we should be concerned that the operator is using the 'modesty devices' provided with the controls.

Rhenium, hafnium, indium, rhodium and tantalum are almost unheard of metals, soaring in value presently. Rhenium, for example, is now twelve times its 2006 price. Their future availability will limit the growth of the electronics industry.

Dr Brian Iddon MP
Chairman, Editorial Board
Science in Parliament

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.*



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Front cover: Colonies of *Streptomyces coelicolor* A3(2) producing droplets of the blue-pigmented antibiotic actinorhodin. The droplets sit on the surface of the colonies due to the hydrophobic nature of the aerial hyphae and spores. The production of antibiotics and the developmental cycle of *S. coelicolor* is complex. Photograph courtesy Dr Paul A. Hoshisnon

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