

VOICE OF THE FUTURE

Young Scientists Make Their Voice Heard



It was standing room only on 11th March for the biggest science event held in the House during this year's National Science and Engineering Week.

Entitled *Voice of the Future* it was organised once again by the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) on behalf of the whole science and engineering community with the aim of strengthening links between scientists, Parliament and Government.

It brought together over 150 younger scientists and engineers in the early stages of their career, typically aged from their early twenties to mid-thirties, from all the UK's major science disciplines. The audience also comprised 6th Form science students from four secondary schools within London who are contemplating careers in science.

These scientists came from the RSC, the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Royal Society, the Institute of Physics,



the Institute of Biology, the Campaign for Science and Engineering, the Biosciences Federation, the Geological Society and many more. Encouragingly, the majority were female.

The centrepiece was the *Science Question Time*, similar to the BBC TV Question Time, which was chaired by Phil Willis MP. The subjects raised included standards of education, gender inequalities in science, research funding and how to tackle pseudo-science. The young scientists had the opportunity to put their probing questions to the panel of MPs – from the Commons Select Committee on Innovation, Universities and Skills – which included Dr Ian Gibson MP, Dr Evan Harris MP, Tim Boswell MP, Dr Brian Iddon MP, and Dr Des Turner MP. The ensuing exchanges opened up a dialogue between the next generation of talented scientists and Members of the Select Committee.

Voice of the Future also included a chance for the young scientists to hear from, and question, Ian Pearson MP, Minister for Science and Innovation. Mr Pearson's address highlighted the importance of science and engineering to the challenges faced globally, such as climate change and food security. He also discussed the important role science plays in Britain for maintaining competitiveness in the global economy, and the need for dialogue between scientists and the public.

Jennifer Clark, a Health, Safety and Environment specialist at Eastman Chemical Company, was delighted by



the chance to attend as one of the young delegates: "The Voice of the Future is a fantastic experience providing the unique opportunity to speak to MPs, learn what they are doing to support chemistry and science in the UK, and ask provocative questions."

The RSC Chief Executive Dr Richard Pike, commenting on this year's event, said, "We are very pleased to be able to provide these scientists with such a great opportunity to question MPs and Ministers on how scientific issues are dealt with, and also hear from them what their vision is for the future. This event allows younger members of the community to ask unrestricted questions, and on subjects most relevant to the future of the scientific community, such as education, skills and the infrastructure for research and funding."

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