Initially people will be swayed by the argument that the Department of Business (BIS) have done well to protect the science from cuts, but of course there are cuts. Not as severe as predicted but flat cash will be about a 10% real terms reduction over the spending round which, taken with other changes will result in a net reduction in science activity even with the most optimistic efficiency savings.

Those of us outside the golden triangle will be looking enviously at the capital projects confirmed by the chancellor; the UK Centre for Medical Research and Innovation (UKCMRI), the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology (LMB), the Institute for Animal Health (IAH) at Pirbright and the Diamond synchrotron on the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus. These are all welcome commitments. But all of this occurs within an overall resource saving within BIS of 25%, comprising 40% savings from the reform of Higher Education and an average of 16% savings from the other areas of the Department's budget. The effect of these, added to the restrictions imposed by the Home Office on overseas students and researchers plus cuts in the budgets of every other department that funds its own science, (with the possible exception of health) means that there will be real pressure on almost every institution in the country.

My plea to those charged with distributing the available money during this period is to not to forget their responsibilities towards the whole of the UK.

Financial pressures on manufacturers to reduce their use of energy and other hidden costs, especially the loss of the rebate for carbon reduction, in the CSR, plus the uncertainty around regional support mechanisms mean it is far from clear that growth in the private sector will be sufficient to offset public sector job losses. The excellent partnerships that I see between our academic and industrial sector will not be able to support the quality science and engineering if the axe is too large.

Finally, I was delighted to see the Mersey Gateway bridge get the go ahead. It is hugely important to the NW economy but it does illustrate why you have to invest to save. The modeling shows the beneficial impact to the economy so it will be money well spent. But even today at the design stage we need to invest. Our home based engineering talent can, I am sure, solve the challenges and ensure that issues ranging from design to the toll collection to maintenance are cost effective – if we invest in the necessary research today!

Andrew Miller MP
Chairman, Parliamentary and Scientific Committee

SCIENCE IN PARLIAMENT

sip

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.

The Parliamentary and Scientific Committee

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

CONTENTS

Front cover: NEF Diamond – repositioning and private sector income generation for FE