

SCIENCE AND THE DEVOLVED BODIES

SETTING THE SCENE

Science and Technology have become steadily embedded in the life of the devolved bodies over the past decade, beginning in Scotland, followed by Wales and now with real progress in Northern Ireland. The influence of scientific societies has been crucial in encouraging this process and it has been this influence that effectively created some of its key components.

The first step was to hold major events highlighting science in each devolved body. This in turn greatly contributed to the pressure on devolved administrations to take science seriously. A Chief Scientific Adviser [CSA] was first appointed in Scotland and then a few years later in Wales and both played a significant role in drawing up a science strategy for the Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly Government. The science community in Northern Ireland is now pressing for the appointment of a CSA for Northern Ireland.

Over the years Cross Party Groups on Science and Technology have been successfully established – thanks to the initiative of the

science community – in the Scottish Parliament, the Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly. They all comprise Members of the devolved bodies (MSPs, AMs, and MLAs) from all the major political parties and include representatives from the leading scientific societies and tend to meet about three times a year.

Major events are now held with each devolved body on an annual basis. The inaugural Science and Stormont event is scheduled for 15 October, the next Science and the Parliament on 14 November, and the next Science and the (Welsh) Assembly on 21 May 2013.

SCOTLAND

The Cross Party Group on Science and Technology is chaired by Elaine Murray MSP, closely supported by the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the rest of the science community, and has for several years been holding regular meetings in the Scottish Parliament, most recently last month (in a joint meeting with the CPG on Colleges and Universities).

The Scottish Government announced in September its intention to bring forward a Referendum Bill. As the question of Scottish independence is now on the agenda of Scottish – and British – politics the science community is now starting to address these constitutional issues. What might the consequences of full independence be for science in Scotland? Would they be beneficial or damaging? What might 'Devo Max' mean for science? How might these potential options affect the future of science in Scotland? What effects would the possibility or fact of independence have elsewhere in the UK? These questions will be debated at this year's major science event *Science and the Parliament* being held on 14 November.



WALES

The Cross Party Group on Science and Technology is chaired by David Rees AM, closely supported by the Royal Society of Chemistry and the rest of the science community, and has for many years been holding meetings in the Welsh Assembly. The Welsh CSA, Professor John Harries, spoke recently about the *Science for Wales* strategy document published in March. He also presides over the Science Advisory Council for Wales.



SACW reports directly to Professor Harries, rather than to Ministers, and has no statutory or financial responsibilities. The appointments are unpaid and it has an independent co-chair,

Professor Chris Pollock. A National Science Academy has also been established and it is currently engaged in a survey of all STEM activity in Wales. Looking ahead to next year the

annual major event *Science and the Assembly* will be held in May which will include an exhibition in the Senedd.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Progress in the NI Assembly has been encouraging and the All Party Group on Science & Technology was formally established this year, chaired by Basil McCrea MLA. At its autumn meeting in September it discussed the issue of 'fracking'. An inaugural *Science and Stormont* event has been planned for 15 October in the Parliament Buildings at Stormont, co-sponsored by a wide range of scientific societies, on the theme of *Innovation: How Science and Engineering can drive economic growth in*



Northern Ireland including speakers from Queen's University, Bombardier Aerospace, the Nanotechnology

and Integrated Bioengineering Centre, the Engineering Research Institute, Ulster University and SiSaf Ltd.

Included in the programme is a Panel discussion with MLAs and an exhibition in the Long Gallery.



Listed opposite (grouped by subject area) is a selection of Debates on matters of scientific interest which took place in the House of Commons, the House of Lords or Westminster Hall between 1st July and 18th September.

SELECTED DEBATES

Aviation		Food and Health	
Aviation	4.7.12 HoC 249WH	Cosmetic Surgery	5.7.12 HoC 327WH
Defence		AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria	4.7.12 HoL 745
Defence Equipment and Support	17.7.12 HoC 845	High Energy Caffeine Drinks	11.7.12 HoC 417
Education		NHS: Specialised Services	18.7.12 HoL 293
Higher and Further Education	11.9.12 HoC 203	Rickets	4.9.12 HoC 59WH
Energy		Industry	
Energy Resources	18.9.12 HoC 262WH	Aerospace Industry	12.9.12 HoC 105WH
Energy Supply	6.9.12 HoC 137WH	International Competitiveness	6.7.12 HoL 793
Nuclear Power	4.7.12 HoC 309WH	Science Policy	
Environment		Behaviour Change	11.7.12 HoL GC561
Oceans & Marine Ecosystems	11.7.12 HoC 98WH	British Council: Funding	19.7.12 HoL 452
Protecting the Antarctic	12.9.12 HoC 136WH	Science and Public Service Broadcasting	4.9.12 HoC 51WH
		Transport	
		High Speed 2 (Heathrow)	17.7.12 HoC 223WH
		Horses: Transportation	6.7.12 HoL 843
		Railways: High Speed 2	11.7.12 HoL 1209