

VOICE OF THE FUTURE 2015



The Speaker of the House of Commons, Rt Hon John Bercow MP, opens the event

On Wednesday 4 March the Boothroyd Room was packed with young scientists and engineers – and some sixth form science students – who were taking part in this year's Voice of the Future.

Organised by the Society of Biology on behalf of the whole science and engineering community these young scientists had a unique opportunity to sit as a special 'select committee' and question all the key Parliamentary and Governmental figures involved in science policy.

The event was opened by the Speaker of the House, Rt Hon John Bercow MP, and broadcast live on the BBC Parliament Channel as well as streamed on the Select Committee website.



Sir Mark Walport, Government Chief Scientific Adviser

The first witness was Sir Mark Walport, Government Chief Scientific Adviser, who handled a variety of Questions about the science policy-making process in Government.

Then it was the turn of the 'real' House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology – led by its outgoing Chair Andrew Miller MP – to respond to Questions. Asked which of the Select Committee's recommendations had been ignored by the Government, Andrew Miller cited the report on the Forensic Science Service and he also hoped Ofqual would reconsider its policy on practical science for A level and GCSEs.

Other Members of the S&T Select Committee said that many MPs struggled to understand the most basic scientific issues that came before them – especially the concept of “risk” which renders MPs liable to believe scare stories and come to the wrong conclusions. Stephen Metcalfe MP advocated a constituency-based approach by scientists seeking to raise science issue



A question from the floor

with their local MP as “that is a good way of cutting through the noise” of a “cacophony of voices on hundreds of issues”.

Concluding the packed morning session the Science Minister, Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, and the Shadow Science Minister, Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP, both talked about their respective party’s commitment to science.



Members of the Select Committee



Rt Hon Greg Clark MP



Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP



On 11 March 2015 representatives from six of the UK’s main political parties clashed over how immigration, tuition fees and fiscal policy were affecting science in a unique pre-election debate organised by the Society of Biology on behalf of the science and engineering community.

Seen here are (l-r); Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Science Minister (Conservative); Pallab Ghosh (Chair); Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP, Shadow Science Minister (Labour); Dr Alasdair Allan, Minister for Learning and Science in Scotland (SNP). Dr Julian Huppert MP (Liberal Democrat), Dr Julia Reid MEP (UKIP) and Hywel Williams (Plaid Cymru) also took part.