

# PARLIAMENTARY LINKS DAY 2015

## SCIENCE AND THE NEW PARLIAMENT



The Attlee Suite was once again filled to capacity with MPs, Peers, scientists and engineers – it was standing room only from the very start – for this year's Parliamentary Links Day at the House of Commons on the theme of *Science and the New Parliament*.

There was a stellar array of speakers and for connoisseurs of Twitter this year's #LinksDay2015 was *trending* by 10.30am and reached #5 – a new record!

The Speaker of the House Rt Hon John Bercow MP – a steadfast supporter of science during his Speakership – launched the event as he had done throughout the last Parliament.

Links Day remains the largest annual science event of its kind on the Parliamentary calendar and this year was sponsored on a bipartisan basis by the newly-elected Chair of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee Stephen Metcalfe MP and Shadow Minister Chi Onwurah MP (whom the Speaker later allowed to put

**"The Society is to be congratulated for its initiative and leadership in organising today's event on behalf of the wider science and engineering community"**

Rt Hon John Bercow MP, Speaker of the House of Commons

**"I would like to congratulate the (Royal) Society of Biology for its vision in organising this event which I know has long been an established fixture in the annual Parliamentary calendar."**

Rt Hon David Cameron MP  
Prime Minister





Links Day into the *Hansard* record on the floor of the House).

Organised by the Royal Society of Biology on behalf of the science and engineering community Links Day promotes links and understanding between the worlds of Science, Parliament and Government.

This year's format included a mixture of keynote speeches and panel discussions. The speakers explored the importance of effectively engaging Parliament and Government and concentrated on the value of Science in both a national and international context.

The political contributions to Links Day were made by Jo Johnson MP, the newly-appointed Minister for Universities and Science, Nicola Blackwood MP, the newly-elected Chair of the House of Commons Science & Technology Select Committee, and by the Earl of Selborne, Chair of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology.

In his Keynote address the Minister of State for Universities and Science, Jo Johnson MP, said that developing collaboration between academia and business will be among his main priorities during this Parliament.

The Minister addressed over 200 MPs and representatives from the science community and, in one of his first appearances since being appointed to the role in May, Johnson admitted that he was 'no science buff at school' but had been 'putting in the hard yards' to visit the UK's wealth of



**"Many of the key global issues that we face – whether they involve Health, Global Climate Change, Food Security, the Environment or Access to Water – have a scientific aspect to them. None can be addressed or solved without scientific advice."**

Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP  
Leader of the Opposition



#### A SELECTION OF TWEETS CAPTURED ON THE STORIFY ABOUT LINKS DAY

BSI Resources Parliamentary Links -  
British Society for Immunology

The Society of Biology demonstrated its heft in bringing together a heavyweight set of panellists and speakers for this latest Parliamentary Links Day

Joanna Barstow @DrJoVian  
Innovate or regress - Speaker of the House supporting development of science facilities in schools #LinksDay2015

BES Policy Team @BESPolicy  
A new Parliament offers new opportunities...exciting time for the scientific community says Stephen Metcalfe MP #LinksDay2015

Jenna Stevens-Smith @J\_DoubleS  
Great to hear @ChiOnwurah address #linksday2015 a female engineer on #NWED #womeninengineering

CaSE @sciencecampaign  
"I welcome the strong cross-party commitment to science" says @JoJohnsonMP #linksday2015

RSB @RoyalSocBio  
.@JoJohnsonMP 'We want to make Britain the best place in the world to do science'  
#LinksDay2015

Jane MacArthur @Jane\_MacArthur  
"Chinese science spending is overtaking European science spending, likely to overtake US spending in 2019." @LiamByrneMP #LinksDay2015



science and engineering centres and get to grips with his brief.

He welcomed the fact that there was strong cross party consensus for investment in science and said that science ran through the Conservative party's manifesto – which he helped to write – 'like through a stick of rock'.

The Minister reiterated the Government's commitment to investing £6.9bn in science infrastructure capital by 2020/21, and set out three 'themes' that he said will be priorities for his Department. These include the acceleration of collaboration between universities and businesses, 'making the most' of the UK's

**"Arriving at the Links Day, I was immediately struck by how well attended the event was by both scientists and parliamentarians... Parliamentary Links Day was filled with inspirational speeches that instilled hope in the future of science in the UK."**

Arikana Massiah, Society Champion and pre-registration Clinical Microbiologist at Barts Health NHS Trust



**"This House congratulates the (Royal) Society of Biology.... and welcomes the continuing contribution that Parliamentary Links Day makes to strengthening the dialogue between Parliament and the science and engineering community."**

Early Day Motion 141  
Tabled 17 June 2015



scientific expertise and output, and ensuring the UK nurtures the best scientific talent in the world and continues to inspire others into science and engineering careers.

The Panels were both chaired by Stephen Metcalfe MP and they discussed the national and international value of science to the UK. These debates (and across Twitter) were lively question and answer sessions.

The contributors on the first Panel were Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP (Shadow Science Minister),

Naomi Weir (Acting Director of the Campaign for Science & Engineering), Clare Viney from the Royal Society of Chemistry, Sarah Hartwell-Naguib (Head of the Science and Environment Section, House of Commons Library) and Dr Luke Alphey of the Pirbright Institute.

The contributors on Stephen Metcalfe's second Panel were Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell (President of the Royal Society of Edinburgh), Dr James Larkin (Royal Marsden Hospital), Dr Hetan Shah (CEO of the Royal Statistical Society), Dr Chris

Tyler (Director of the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology) and Chris Whitty (Chief Scientific Adviser at the Department for International Development).

Sir Venki Ramakrishnan FRS, Nobel Laureate and incoming President of the Royal Society, gave the closing speech at the event. He addressed several issues that hinder growth in science and engineering but at the same time acknowledged the achievements that UK research has made and called for improved immigration and

education policies that would encourage an influx of scientists into the country. Sir Venki highlighted how science is crucial to maintain the advanced society status that Great Britain has, enabling us to help not just ourselves, but other citizens of the world too. This advancement is, however, limited by the salary element of the UK immigration system, and the turmoil in the EU that may discriminate against overseas research scientists.

This year's Links Day made another welcome and unique contribution to the debate about the role of science and well and truly launched Science in the New Parliament.

Further details about Parliamentary Links Day are available at: <http://blog.rsb.org.uk/links-day-2015-keynote-speakers/>