

From the Presidents of the Academies
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The Rt Hon David Cameron
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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23 March 2012

Dear Prime Minister

The Academies note with great concern the House of Lords Liaison Committee's report on select committee activity, and in particular, their recommendation to reduce the Science and Technology Committee's resources to that of a single Committee. While recognising that the House of Lords would benefit from the support of additional committees, we strongly feel that this should not be at the expense of the current wide-ranging and highly valuable contributions of the Science and Technology Committee.

The House of Lords Science and Technology Committee is an essential forum (with a scope which exceeds that of the House of Commons committee) in which government policies are scrutinised, and through which upcoming areas of opportunity and concern for policy makers can be identified and examined. The breadth of activities, supported through its current resources is impressive, and has helped to frame significant debates, driving evidence-based policymaking. These activities are made possible by the flexibility and range of expertise that are brought together within the current working practice of the committee.

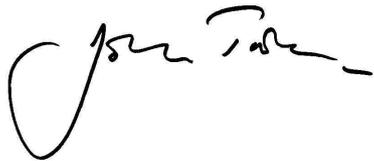
In the last year, the Committee has covered areas as diverse as behaviour change, nuclear research and development capabilities, public procurement as a tool for driving innovation, the role of departmental Chief Scientific Advisers, and the state of science, technology, engineering and maths in higher education. These inquiries consider areas where the UK is undertaking world leading research, tackle issues of national capacity, monitor the health of the UK's education, research and innovation base, and identify ways in which evidence-based policy making might be put on a firmer footing in the UK. Any reduction in the output of this committee would be a

significant loss to Parliament's capacity to understand and respond to advances in science and research for the benefit of the country.

The Coalition Government has recognised the vital role that science, engineering, research and innovation play in the social, cultural, and economic landscape of the UK. It is important that the commitments made in the Innovation and Research, and the Life Sciences strategies are realised in the most effective way and take into account the latest scientific developments. At this time, it is crucial that capacity to provide effective scrutiny of government policy in these areas is maintained.

Our Academies urge the Government to acknowledge the significant contribution made by the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee to robust evidence-based policy making in Parliament, and to ensure that the Committee continues to be resourced at its current levels. A recognition of the importance of science and research requires not only funding and institutional support, but also acknowledgement of the role that that research can play in formulating future policies.

Yours sincerely,



Sir John Tooke PMedSci
President, The Academy of Medical Sciences



Sir Adam Roberts KCMG PBA
President, The British Academy



Philip Greenish CBE
Chief Executive, The Royal Academy of Engineering



Sir Paul Nurse PRS
President, The Royal Society

CC: Lord Krebs FRS FMedSci
Sir John Beddington CMG FRS
Sir Jeremy Heywood KCB CVO
Andrew Miller MP
Members of the House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee