

## Meeting Note: Policy Forum 16th September 2021

### Attendees:

Jane Banks SC (Staff & Chair)  
Ryan Mercer SC (Staff)  
Sarah Beacock NI  
Flo Bullough GSL  
Lorenzo Casarosa IMAREST

Jonathan Carruthers RSB  
Sarah Garry BSSS  
Joseph Lewis IES  
Rob Massey RAS  
Andy Smith BASES

### Apologies:

Elizabeth Chamberlain IOP  
Laura Marshall RSB

Arthur Nicholas IST  
Tanya Sheridan RSC

### 1) Welcome

- **Jane Banks** opened the meeting.
- **Jane Banks** explained that no agenda had been circulated beyond the note that the majority of the meeting would focus on the spending review. This is due to the Science Council Board meeting the previous day (15 September) and the plan for a Policy Advisory Committee could not be shared until after that meeting.
- **Ryan Mercer** briefly highlighted that the Science Council had written to Patrick Vallance regarding the Government Science and Engineering Profession (GSEP) strategy, highlighting how the Science Council can help Government in supporting its scientists in building links with member organisations, on achieving professional registration and drawing on our work on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI).

### 2) Spending Review

- **Ryan Mercer** gave a presentation on the Spending Review, outlining its importance to Science Council members highlighting that:
  - Current Government commitment to for R&D investment to reach £22bn by 2024/25, part of achieving 2.4% of GDP in R&D by 2027.
  - 2.4% target was based on OECD average, which is now higher than that, with the USA having reached 3%.
  - Government commitment is backloaded, putting off the substantive investments for longer.
  - These commitments by Government were previously championed by George Osborne and Dominic Cummings, may not be prioritised by Sunak.

- Alongside R&D spending, investment in skills and the application of research are important to leveraging the private investment needed alongside public spending.
- **Ryan Mercer** proposed a letter to Rishi Sunak, which had previously been suggested by **Elizabeth Chamberlain** (IoP) to highlight the shared priorities of the UK science community. The letter would be produced by the Science Council, with members given the opportunity to contribute then sign the letter to maximise its impact.
- Policy Forum members supported the proposal for a joint letter and made the following points:
  - Rather than simply seeking more overall funding, it is important to highlight the need for a balanced portfolio shared across the sector, with core research budgets rising rather than just targeted spending.
  - The letter should highlight not just the success of UK science to date, but that investment in science is key to resilience of the country to future science related challenges whether these be pandemics, climate change or something unknown.
  - The 2.4% GDP target relates to R&D spending, but science isn't just R&D, it needs to be supported by investment in better application of science.
  - For the future success of UK science education in science is as important, apprenticeships, FE, not just in ensuring workforce needs are met but in equipping citizens to make informed choices both politically and in how they live their lives.
  - Linking investment in science to the Green Recovery Plan could be helpful; there is a case to be made that spending on decarbonisation/net zero programmes now will be cheaper than waiting and needing to make larger, more expensive investments in the future.
- It was agreed that Science Council would take forward the letter, consulting with policy forum members on drafting, giving opportunity for further input then giving member organisations the opportunity to sign prior to the deadline for spending review submissions on the 30 September.

### 3) Policy Advisory Committee

- **Ryan Mercer** explained that the Science Council's Board had agreed to the creation of a small Policy Advisory Committee.
  - The Policy Advisory Committee's role is to help shape the priorities for the Science Council's policy activities and provide expert advice and guidance to the Science Council on policy matters.
  - The Committee is distinct from the much larger Policy Forum, which exists to facilitate communication and collaboration between Science Council and its member organisations, rather than making decisions over the Science Council's own activities.

- The Committee will be chaired by a member of the Science Council's Board and be comprised for six other members, three of which will be appointed from amongst Policy Forum members to ensure accountability to the membership.
- **Ryan Mercer** asked for Policy Forum members to contact him should they wish to be put forward for this Committee. The hope is for the three Policy Forum members to represent member organisations of differing sizes and fields of science.

#### 4) Other Activity

- **Ryan Mercer** explained that following the letter to Rishi Sunak, it is intended that a second joint letter will be written to Amanda Solloway regarding the range of other priorities Science Council members share, particularly in relation to the R&D People and Culture published earlier in the summer.
- **Jane Banks** explained that in strategy discussions with the Science Council's Board, it was recommended that the Science Council also plays a role in convening discussion between member organisations on areas of policy difference in relation to scientific challenges, rather than solely focusing on highlighting areas of consensus (for example on approaches to achieving Net Zero). Policy Forum members agreed that this could be a useful activity, and so it was agreed that the Science Council would come back to the forum in December with more details on what form this could take.

**Ryan Mercer, Policy Officer**  
**4 October 2021**