



Meeting Note: Policy Forum 4th April 2023

Attendees:

Andy Smith BASES (Co-Chair)

Christian Burt IBMS & AAPT

Sarah Beacock NI

Lorenzo Casarosa IMarEST

Elizabeth Chamberlain IoP

Frances Evans ASE

Sabrina Fleurime RSB

Stephen French IFST

Katie Jones GSL

Joseph Lewis IES

Henry Lovett RSC

Laura Marshall RSB

Arthur Nicholas IST

Jane Banks SC (Staff)

Ryan Mercer SC (Staff)

Apologies:

Tanya Sheridan RSC (Co-Chair)

Robert Massey RAS (Co-Chair)

Sean Edmunds IPEM

Sarah Garry BSSS

Catriona Inverarity IPEM

Nicky King SNS

Megan O'Donnell GSL

Rachel Stonehouse IOM3

Lynda Rigby IBMS

Jane Pritchard ACB

David Wells IBMS

1) Welcome

Andy Smith opened the meeting, which is his first-time chairing.

- He reminded forum members that the forum belongs to all of them and encouraged them to come forward with items for discussion at future meetings.

2) Science Council Events 2023

Ryan Mercer provided an update on the Science Council's events programme for 2023 including:

- The next policy forum meeting will be held in person at the Geological Society in Burlington House, Piccadilly, on the 22nd May 2023.
- On 28th June 2023, the Science Council, in collaboration with the British Science Association (BSA) and Foundation for Science and Technology (FST) will be holding an evening event on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, which follows the earlier publication of the House of Commons Science and tech, comprised of a panel discussion and networking reception.
- On 19th October 2023, the Science Council will be holding its second annual policy conference, this time focused on the STEM skills component of the workforce challenges. Member organisations are asked for their thoughts and made the following points:
 - The RSC of Chemistry will be conducting the first phase of research on workforce over the summer, and so the conference will be a useful milestone for their work, presenting progress so far and gathering input.

- Ensuring that the policy link is maintained will be more challenging than with the net-zero conference, it will be important to focus on the levers that exist in policy to address gaps rather than just talking about the gaps themselves.
- The challenges in STEM skills are urgent, so consideration of short-term measures would be helpful, and exploring what's common between sectors could be useful. Also need to dig deeper into definitions, for example, what are “sustainability skills” or “digital skills”?
- There is considerable competition between sectors for limited pools of STEM skilled individuals, and some sectors perceived as less exciting such as the food industry struggle particularly.
 - How can awareness of the range of careers be raised?
 - Changes in patterns of work, such as portfolio careers are of interest.
- Artificial Intelligence is rapidly emerging as a disruptive element in workforce policy, in terms of technical skills needs and how it impacts on ways of working. It has emerged as a major consideration in HEIs for assessment.
- There is a need for greater clarity on the objectives of the conference and what useful outputs there can be.

3) Horizon Europe check in

Members held a brief discussion on the current status of the Government's efforts to affiliate with Horizon Europe or provide a replacement.

- Temporary arrangements have been extended until the end of June.
- The new Secretary of State for Science and Technology has been meeting with EU officials in Brussels.
- DSIT still working in parallel on the 'pioneer programme' which is the alternative – supposedly due to publish soon.
- It has been reported in the media that Sunak is personally sceptical – on Horizon Europe around the benefits to businesses.
 - RSC, RSB and IoP writing to PM and Chancellor and communicating
 - Employers are reluctant to voice the benefits they get from Horizon Europe
- Once negotiations start, the financial settlement will be an issue,

4) Current consultations

- The Treasury is running a consultation on strength of investment around science, focused on the finance sector.
- House of Lords select committee on 11-16 year olds is consulting on challenges and opportunities faced by secondary education system, which includes a focus on future skills needs.
- IBMS has been approached by the COVID-19 enquiry regarding lab capacity and the AAPT approached on mortuary capacity.

5) AOB

- The IES is undertaking a Horizon Scanning foresight project, which currently focused on emerging science, and other members are welcome to contact **Joseph Lewis** should they be interested in learning more or feeding into the process.