



House of Commons
Science and Technology
Committee

**Office of Science and
Innovation: Scrutiny
Report 2005 and 2006:
Government Response to
the Committee's Sixth
Report of Session 2006–07**

Second Special Report of Session 2006–07

*Ordered by The House of Commons
to be printed 13 June 2007*

HC 635
Published on 19 June 2007
by authority of the House of Commons
London: The Stationery Office Limited
£0.00

The Science and Technology Committee

The Science and Technology Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Office of Science and Innovation and its associated public bodies.

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A list of Reports from the Committee in this Parliament is included at the back of this volume.

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The current staff of the Committee are: Dr Lynn Gardner (Clerk); Dr Celia Blacklock (Second Clerk); Dr Anne Simpson (Committee Specialist); Dr Sarah Bunn (Committee Specialist); Dr Christopher Tyler (Committee Specialist); Ana Ferreira (Committee Assistant); Jonathan Wright (Senior Office Clerk); and Christine McGrane (Committee Secretary).

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Second Special Report

On 3 April 2007 the Science and Technology Committee published its Sixth Report of Session 2006–07, *Office of Science and Innovation: Scrutiny Report 2005 and 2006* [HC 203]. On 5 June 2007 the Committee received a memorandum from the Government which contained a response to the Report. The memorandum is published without comment as an appendix to this Report.

Government response

Introduction

The Government welcomes the Committee's Scrutiny Report of the Office of Science and Innovation, following the Committee's constructive and stimulating consideration of a range of key issues during the last two years. The Government's response is presented below under each of the report's conclusions/recommendations.

Maintaining and exploiting a strong research base is crucial to the UK's future competitiveness in the global economy. World-class research delivers major economic benefits which include:

- improving performance for existing businesses;
- creating new businesses;
- training highly productive people who are in great demand from employers;
- improving public policy and services (eg in health, environment and defence), and
- attracting investment from global businesses, working with our research base.

In March 2006, as a follow-up to the Science and Innovation 10 Year Framework, the Government set out an ambitious programme ("Next Steps") to deliver further improvements in the efficiency of the science and innovation system. These included:

- maintaining and improving the UK's excellent Research Base;
- attracting the brightest students into science from the next generation;
- delivering and demonstrating more strongly the economic impact of the Research Base;
- the Cooksey Review, leading to a more coherent structure for medical research in the UK;
- the merger of two Research Councils to deliver stronger science and more commercial benefit from major research facilities, and
- an independent Technology Strategy Board with a business led remit to boost UK growth and productivity by highly targeted investment in business innovation.

Plans are well advanced to operate the Board at arms length from central Government.

The Chancellor reinforced his commitment to science and the research base by announcing in the 2007 Budget a 2.5% average annual rate of growth in real terms over the Comprehensive Spending Review period 2008/09 to 2010/11. This is a strong settlement for science, particularly when set against the overall fiscal environment.

As the Committee recognises, significant challenges and opportunities lie ahead. The UK's research base is in the healthiest position it has ever been to tackle these.

From OST to OSI

Objectives of the reorganisation

1. (Recommendation 1) The OSI must remain alert to the potential of closer integration with the DTI to compromise its role in looking at science across the whole of Government and its duty to promote the health of UK science, including basic research as well as innovation and economic returns. This may argue for a separate Ministry of Science and we recommend that the Government consider this in any future change to the machinery of government. (Paragraph 14)

We very much welcome the Committee's endorsement of the re-structuring which led to the creation of OSI, stating in the report "*The merger of the OST and the Innovation Group has been a success. We congratulate both those who had the foresight to plan the change and those responsible for implementing it*" (**Recommendation 3**).

The 10 year Science and Innovation Framework made clear the Government's long term commitment to promoting the health of the UK science base, including basic research. The Framework also makes clear the need for strong coherence between the science base and innovation activity across the UK, if the nation is to secure the maximum economic and wider public benefits from its long term commitment to research. All these elements will remain central to the Government's approach to science and innovation in the future.

Role of the Director General for Science and Innovation

2. (Recommendation 2) The departure of the previous Chief Scientific Adviser was an opportunity for the DTI to change its stance on appointing its own independent CSA. We hope that the DTI will keep the arrangement whereby the DGSI also undertakes this role under review. It must be prepared to consider separating the roles, should it become apparent that the job of the DGSI has become overloaded. (Paragraph 16)

In appointing Sir Keith O'Nions as its new CSA in April 2006, the DTI followed Government best practice in that it:

- appointed a Department CSA who was an experienced and highly regarded scientist who commands the respect of his peers through the scientific contributions he has made, and

- recognised his membership of the Department's Management Board and ability therefore to be effectively engaged in the policy-making process at all levels, and be able to put his advice directly to departmental Boards and Ministers.

In the case of DTI, there are advantages in the CSA role being combined with specific responsibility for advising Ministers on science and innovation policy.

Importantly, Sir Keith also had relevant experience as CSA to the MoD for five years up to 2004. His immediate goal was to develop a culture within the Department that more often sought out the view of the CSA on relevant topics. With time and increasing awareness of the CSA role, requests and opportunities to provide scientific input that informs policy will increase. This may in turn increase the CSA's workload. The issue of time commitment and whether to continue to combine the DGSI and CSA roles will therefore be kept under review.

The review process

3. (Recommendation 4) We expect to receive earlier notification of any structural changes to the department which involve the OSI in the future. (Paragraph 19)

The Government will provide earlier notification of future structural changes where practical. The timing of any notification will depend to a certain extent upon the nature of the changes and whether they are part of any wider machinery of Government changes.

The Technology Strategy Board

4. (Recommendation 5) The need to appoint new members in October 2007 should provide an opportunity for a review of the Technology Strategy Board's activities in order to inform decisions on new appointees. We recommend that this review be carried out before October. (Paragraph 23)

The Technology Strategy Board was established in October 2004 with the primary aim of increasing business investment in R&D. Over its first two and a half years the Board, with the support of OSI officials, has built a sizeable programme of activities and increasing influence with partners across Government Departments, the Regional Development Agencies and Devolved Administrations and the Research Councils. The work of the Board has also gained considerable support from business and business organisations such as the CBI.

The activities of the Board will in future be taken forward by an Executive Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) to be based in Swindon and on track to be operational from July 2007. At this time the new body will take over responsibility from the DTI for the delivery of a number of technology and innovation related support activities, most notably Collaborative R&D, Knowledge Transfer Networks and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships.

In October 2006, all the current Board members were reappointed for a further 12 months or until such time as the new Board members for the Executive NDPB had been appointed. The creation of the new organisation has moved ahead rapidly and the appointment of the new Board members is now expected to be completed by mid-June 2007. As part of the work to establish the Royal Charter (approved by Parliament in December 2006) which

provides the Technology Strategy Board with legal personality, the role and activities of the Technology Strategy Board have been reviewed. This has included consultation with a number of organisations to ensure the new Technology Strategy Board not only builds on the work of the current Board but also encompasses new ideas and opportunities. The Board members currently being assessed are being recruited against the specification for the new Board.

The formal relationship between the DTI (as the sponsor department) and the TSB will be set out in a management statement and financial memorandum, underpinned by a framework letter setting out the Government's policy priorities for the TSB. The role of the Technology Strategy Board will be kept under review. The Government plans to give further guidance to the Board on its future role, in the light of the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Objectives and performance measures

The OSI performance management system

5. (Recommendation 6) We accept that it is necessary to adapt the output frameworks used to measure the performance of the Research Councils as it comes fully into use in order that it remains a practical and useful document. We are concerned, however, that the measures should be firmly established in order to allow comparison from year to year. There must not be too many changes once the system has been allowed to bed down. It would be helpful for the OSI to highlight in the introduction to future output frameworks reports exactly which metrics have been amended and which are causing difficulties in terms of data collection or meaningfulness. (Paragraph 27)

The Performance Management System for the Research Councils has completed its second year. It has been reviewed and updated in order to continue to provide a robust mechanism for measuring the impact of the Science Budget investment by the Research Councils, and each Council's performance. The Government is pleased that the Committee recognises the important contribution the system has made to the monitoring and evaluation of the Research Councils.

The first Annual Report on the output frameworks was not able to provide an in-depth analysis of trends in the data as the situation had been in operation for only one year. The purpose of the report was to outline the baseline data, comment on any particular aspects for future monitoring and summarise the current position. OSI made comments on consistency across the Research Councils where appropriate, and identified where further work needed to be undertaken on data collections and identification of new metrics. The expectation is that at this early stage the metrics should continue to evolve and the output frameworks should be revised accordingly. OSI also fully recognises the importance of being able to compare year on year so that the metrics are meaningful and serve a useful purpose.

The Delivery Plan reports for 2006–2007 with draft populated output frameworks will be submitted to OSI at the end of June 2007. The intention is to use the accumulated data this year to inform decisions about the allocation of the Science Budget for CSR 2007.

The format of the second Annual Report on the output frameworks will differ from the first but there will be a full explanation of how it has been formulated and indicate exactly how the data has been analysed. OSI is working with the Research Councils to ensure that any changes to metrics are transparent and add value to the framework, and to make any analysis easily understood.

The DTI Performance Report

6. (Recommendation 7) There is room for improvement in the transparency and presentation of information about how the performance of the OSI and its associated bodies is to be assessed across the board and we urge the DTI and OSI to address this. (Paragraph 28)

There are a number of performance management arrangements in place for OSI which are publicly available, including the PSA Spring and Autumn Assessments, the 10 Year Framework Annual Reports and the Research Council Performance Management System. The Government will give further consideration as to how clearer read-across can be provided between the different sources of information.

7. (Recommendation 8) We welcome the work going on to identify meaningful and accessible output measures for the OSI and the Research Councils. We expect to receive updates as the work progresses in this area and before the changes have been finalised. (Paragraph 32)

The Government is developing a revised reporting framework to measure how investment in science and innovation delivers economic benefits at the aggregate economy level. This framework aims to improve the presentation and transparency of current 10 year framework reporting of indicators and output measures. It will provide a structure for an annual report of progress indicators and evidence.

This framework is being developed with input from the Research Councils, industry, and the academic community. It is envisaged that the framework will be placed on OSI's part of the DTI's website shortly, for public scrutiny and to allow feedback, before the first report based on the framework, to be published in July.

A separate publication reporting baseline information on the economic impact of the Research Councils will also be published in Autumn 2007. The two reports together will provide a comprehensive picture of the economic benefits of investment in science and innovation, from the whole economy level down to the more detailed level of contributions made by particular Research Councils.

The 2.5% Target for R&D

8. (Recommendation 9) We recommend that the OSI, in its response to this Report, make a clear statement on how it intends to meet the target of 2.5% as a percentage of GDP within its current strategy. In addition, although we appreciate the logic of including service sector R&D within the scope of business R&D, we believe that the 2.5% target would need to be revisited if the basis of measurement were changed. (Paragraph 33)

The 2.5 per cent target for UK Government and business R&D is a challenging one, deliberately set high to drive the trajectory for R&D spend upwards (as set out in the ‘Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004–2014’). It was set as part of the Government’s 10 year Science & Innovation Framework, published in 2004, which described a comprehensive range of commitments to improve the UK’s science and innovation performance, in the face of increasing globalisation. Progress on all the measures and indicators included in the 10 year Framework is reported annually.

R&D expenditure is only one indicator of how the economy is performing in terms of increasing innovation and transferring results from the science base into high value added products and services. In some sectors, for example, firms tend to innovate with little or no formal spend on R&D. Hence it is important that a broader set of indicators are used to track progress rather than just the total input figure.

Progress towards the 2.5% target is dependent upon both Government and business investment. In this context, it must be noted that the target applies to the UK as a whole, and that the Government only partially controls the means of achieving it. The Select Committee rightly note the backward looking nature of data for this target. The Government agrees with the committee view that the inevitable time lag in compiling BERD data “*makes it hard to be precise about the current state of R&D investment and the effect of Government policies*”. It is too early to make any clear assessment of progress against this target and the most recent data still only refer to the second year covered by the 10 year framework

In its ‘Update on Progress on’ the UK National Reform Programme (2006), the Government commented “given the long-term nature of the measures involved, an overall assessment of their impact is not possible after only two years. Furthermore, the expected lags in the system mean that policies are unlikely to translate into a more favourable investment climate immediately. Against this background, the Government is committed to monitoring progress on an annual basis, supplemented by a set of detailed indicators”. It is in the development of these supplementary indicators and the overall trajectory as more data become available for the Framework period that progress will be assessed.

Business R&D is measured following the guidelines in the internationally agreed Frascati manual. These include the service sector; indeed about a fifth of UK business R&D is carried out by service sector firms. There are no current plans for revisions to the guidelines that would change the basis for compiling UK R&D. Any major amendments in the future would affect R&D measurement in all countries.

Budgets and other financial issues

The SR2004 settlement for science

9. (Recommendation 10) We deplore the willingness of the DTI to “raid” the Science Budget to meet its obligations elsewhere. Ring-fencing the budget should mean that it is guaranteed and not available for other purposes. We recommend that the DTI make an absolute commitment to observing the strict principle of ring-fencing the Science Budget in future. We welcome the assurance from the Chancellor and DTI that the end of year flexibility for 2007–08 is guaranteed. We note that this difficulty arises because

of the embedding of the OSI within DTI, a department with priorities other than science and innovation. (Paragraph 37)

The Committee's recognition of the high priority in which science has been held by the Government is welcomed. This has led to a more than doubling in the Science Budget—in real terms—between 1997–98 and 2007–08.

The report comments on two actions affecting the ring-fenced Science Budget in recent years—(1) the £115 million loan in 2006 and (2) the reduction of end year flexibility in 2007.

It would not be correct to describe the loan as a breach of the Science Budget ring-fence. The loan was a financial arrangement concerning funds not immediately required which provided for repayment of the loaned amount in 2006/07 and 2007/08. The first repayment was made on schedule during 2006–07.

The reduction in science funding in 2007 was to accumulated underspends (end year flexibility). This was achieved by a transfer out of the Science Budget of £33 million of underspends which arose during 2006/07 and by cancelling the £65 million loan repayment due in 2007/08. This £98 million reduction represents less than 1% of the £10 billion allocated to the Science Budget in the SR2004 period.

The ring-fence around the Science Budget remains in place and there is no intention to change that position.

DTI had to deal with a number of exceptional pressures across its non-science budgets which could not have been foreseen at the time of the SR2004 settlement. It was only following an extended exercise to seek to manage those DTI pressures in the non ring-fenced budgets that Ministers reluctantly agreed to the reductions in science budget end year flexibility.

In making these reductions to science funding the Government has taken care not to make any changes to the annual budget allocations. The money has been found from accumulated underspends of previous year's budgets.

The Government remains committed to the 10 year Science and Innovation Investment Framework published in 2004. The CSR2007 settlement for science announced in Budget 2007 is consistent with that—ensuring 2.5% annual real terms growth in Government spending on science through to March 2011.

The 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review

10. (Recommendation 11) We are particularly concerned in the CSR 2007 round that having encouraged the Research Councils to think in interdisciplinary terms, due priority should be accorded to spending in this area. We will examine the outcome with attention as to whether this proves to be the case. (Paragraph 39)

The process of allocating the Science Budget will involve careful consideration of the balance of investment between Research Councils. They will be encouraged to invest in interdisciplinary areas. The Research Councils already recognise that a strong

interdisciplinary approach is required to address successfully the Government's five long-term challenges, and this is expected to be reflected in their delivery plans.

Science and Innovation Framework 2004–14: Next Steps

11. (Recommendation 12) We have consistently argued that the Treasury should address its position as the only major Government department without a departmental chief scientific adviser. We remain strongly of the view that this would add rigour and credibility to Treasury thinking on science. (Paragraph 44)

The Government Chief Scientific Adviser advises central Government through his direct access to the Prime Minister and Cabinet, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. Furthermore the Council for Science and Technology is able to advise the Chancellor, as well as the Prime Minister. In practice the Treasury often seeks advice from the GCSA and/or the OSI on scientific and technological matters. The Treasury and the GCSA will keep under review the case for appointing a separate Treasury CSA.

Research Councils

The Cooksey Review and OSI

12. (Recommendation 13) We recommend that the OSI publish a timetable of the reviews it is conducting under the auspices of the Cooksey recommendations on public/charity funding streams, a strategy for skills in health research and a review of technology transfer activities, and that the results of these reviews be made public. (Paragraph 54)

Sir David Cooksey recommended three reviews which involve OSI, as follows:

- OSI and DH, with input from DTI, should carry out an analysis of the entire range of public / charity funding streams which are applicable to the translation of health research, to create a coherent picture of the support available and identify any gaps in that support. (Paragraph 7.9 of Cooksey Report)
- DFES, HEFCE, DH and OSI, together with their counterparts in the DAs where appropriate, establish a working group with a remit to develop a strategy to ensure that the UK has the right mix of skills, experience and career structures across the whole spectrum of health research, including ensuring more effective translation of research. Membership of this working group should include representation from across DFES, HEFCE, DH, OSI, MRC/RCUK, NIHR, UUK, industry and healthcare charities. The strategy should complement initiatives already underway, such as the RCUK strategy and UKCRC's initiatives. The working group should be responsible for implementing the strategy and monitoring progress. (Paragraph 7.16 of Cooksey Report)
- HEFCE and OSI should review the current technology transfer activities across the HEI sector so that strengths and best practice can be identified and promulgated across the sector. (Paragraph 7.40 of Cooksey Report)

While all three of these are important reviews, which will provide Government and other stakeholders with valuable information, the priority for OSI since the publication of Cooksey review has been establishing OSCHR and developing its institutional arrangements. OSI will work with other Government Departments to agree the best way to undertake these reviews and anticipates that the timetable for these reviews will be published later this year.

Science and Technology Facilities Council

13. (Recommendation 14) We recommend that the funding for the Science and Technology Facilities Council from the CSR round be an increase over the combined existing budgets of its component parts in order that it can achieve its potential. (Paragraph 57)

STFC is in effect a merger of PPARC and CCLRC, plus a minor transfer of functions from EPSRC (nuclear physics). The budget of the new Research Council for 2007–08 is the sum of the inherited budgets from PPARC, CCLRC and the EPSRC budget for nuclear physics. As a result, the budget for 2007–08 is £609.7M.

Longer term funding for STFC, in common with all the Research Councils, will be addressed following the Budget 2007 announcement of a settlement for the Science Budget.

14. (Recommendation 15) We will monitor the operations of the STFC once it has come into being and will look for an opportunity to discuss its progress, work and administration with Professor Mason once a reasonable period has elapsed. (Paragraph 59)

The Government welcomes the intention of the Committee to examine the progress of the STFC after a reasonable period of time has elapsed.

Science across Government

15. (Recommendation 16) We expect the review of the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees to address the concerns raised in our scientific advice report, and we look forward to examining the new Code when it is published. (Paragraph 60)

The Code of Practice is currently being reviewed and will go to public consultation this summer. The Committee's recommendations will be taken into account.

16. (Recommendation 17) We recommend that the OSI again review the resources available to its Science in Government team, with a view to increasing the turnover and production of departmental science reviews. We also recommend that the OSI publish a more realistic assessment of timetables for each review and for the programme as a whole. In general, we recommend that far greater attention is paid by the OSI to updating its website. The OSI should be expected to set an example in communications and the use of IT to inform the public and stakeholders of its work. (Paragraph 65)

Following its publication of the review of DCMS in October 2004 and in order to run reviews concurrently, OSI contracted out the main phase of three subsequent departmental reviews which were published between December 2006 and early April 2007. The need to

increase the rate at which reviews are conducted is recognised. From its experience of the four published departmental reviews, OSI has found that the main work of a review can normally be completed within about 10 months as originally planned but that the total elapsed time is usually significantly greater as a result of discussions with the department in the lead up to the main review work and with the steering panel and the department at later decision points, in particular on drafts of the report. These discussions are essential to the credibility of the reviews, and to achieving ‘buy-in’ from the department to the recommendations. OSI is continually reviewing its processes with a view to increasing their effectiveness and reducing the timescale for reviews wherever possible. This has already enabled it to make significant progress on its current review of the Home Office which it expects to publish later this year. For the first time, an interim report with initial findings has been published (electronic copies were sent to the Committee as well as to the Home and Constitutional Affairs Committees and to the House of Lords Science & Technology Committee) . The findings of this interim report have informed the Home Office Reform Programme which preceded the announcement of its reorganisation. OSI expects to adopt this approach in two further departmental reviews which it will announce in the near future and which it expects to complete in 2008.

OSI, like other parts of Government, has to operate within tight resource constraints. However, within that resource, two additional posts have been transferred to the Science Review team with effect from 1 April 2007.

OSI recognises the need for its part of the DTI website to be kept up to date, and that this has not always happened. It is committed, within the resources available to it, to making improvements for the future, taking account of the Committee’s comments.

17. (Recommendation 18) We recommend that the OSI adopt a policy of forwarding copies of departmental science reviews and subsequent responses upon publication to the relevant select committee in the Commons. We urge our colleagues on other select committees to make thorough use of these documents to inform their scrutiny of the departments under review. (Paragraph 66)

The Government is pleased that the Committee has found the reviews useful and welcomes its recommendation urging departmental select committees “to make thorough use of these documents to inform their scrutiny of the departments under review”.

OSI has routinely forwarded copies of each of its reviews to the Committee and to other relevant select committees ahead of publication and will continue to do so.

Scrutiny of the Science Minister

18. (Recommendation 19) We recommend that the OSI outline in its response to this Report the new dialogues and initiatives within the OSI established since November 2006 to encourage the creation of a “knowledge democracy” and spread the use of science throughout Government and beyond. (Paragraph 69)

In November 2006, the Minister explained his desire for the UK to become a ‘knowledge democracy’—which is one where the value of science is both fully recognised and appreciated as underpinning both our continued economic success and improving quality of life for all in the UK—and one where more people want to become actively involved in

science education and careers. There are two key elements to achieving this goal. The first is to secure improved participation and attainment on science education leading to a better qualified science workforce at all levels—with the right skills to maintain a strong science base. OSI staff are working closely with DfES colleagues to deliver the participation and attainment commitments set out in the 2006 budget document *Science and Innovation Investment Framework: 2004–2014:Next Steps*, and the commitments to improve the delivery of STEM support to every school, college, learning provider and learner which were set out in the *Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Programme Report* published jointly by DTI/DfES in October 2006.

The second element is to secure consistently better public engagement with science. OSI's public engagement with science programme provides a lead in this area enabling and encouraging open, constructive and informed debate on the social, ethical, health, safety and environmental implications of new and emerging science and technologies.

Since November 2006 OSI has funded a wider range of projects to develop effective public engagement in science and technology areas related to key Government policies through its Sciencewise Programme. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) has been awarded £60,000 to run a public dialogue project to support their public consultation on the ethical and social implications of creating human/animal embryos in research which was launched in April. In March, the UK's two major funders of stem cell research, BBSRC and MRC, were awarded a Sciencewise grant of £300,000 to run a programme to bring scientists and the public together to identify public expectations, aspirations and concerns about stem cell research.

In January, Sciencewise also launched sciencehorizons, the first ever mass public engagement programme designed to get the nation talking about how science and technology could affect our lives in the next 15–20 years. The results of the £330,000 project will inform policies and decisions regarding the direction of research and regulation of science and technology. The project seeks to involve community groups, schools, families and friends up and down the country in their own sciencehorizons discussions using discussion packs which include stories, cartoons and a CD-ROM to prompt discussion. They cover four topics based on a professionally designed series of scenarios showing how life in 2025 could differ from today: mind and body, home and community, work and leisure and people and planet.

The Minister for Science and Innovation has also set up a series of discussion meetings with leading science and social science researchers in areas that demonstrate UK scientific excellence. The first of these focused on the topic of Stem Cells in March and the second on the Basic Biology of Ageing in April. Two further events are in the pipeline—Earth-like and Habitable Planets and, Sea Level Rise. The discussions are an opportunity to develop a better understanding of the current status and UK capability in these areas. The discussions incorporate a media element as developments in science will raise a wide variety of questions and the media have an important role and responsibility for communicating these accurately.

OSI supported National Science and Engineering Week, held in March, which is a leading UK showcase for celebrating the vital contribution that science, technology, engineering and innovation make to the economic and social well-being of the UK. This year, over

780,000 people attended over 2,500 Science Week events, including 500 engineering-related events. Thanks to specific OSI funding, over 300 'hard-to-reach' schools took part, many for the first time.

While OSI will continue to support key activities in this area, the Government expects the science community itself (both in the private and public sector) to take a much stronger lead on this, by finding and making opportunities to pull together its considerable resources, expertise and energy to take a more strategic and targeted approach to encourage even more people to take an active role in engaging with science.

OSI will continue to develop its Sciencewise programme for projects that support key policy areas. It has already supported fourteen projects through the Sciencewise programme, committing over £1.5m, on a range of critical science challenges, including brain science, stem cells research, nanotechnology and a range of new and emerging technologies identified through OSI's Horizons Scanning Centre. Building on the success of the existing Sciencewise programme, OSI is developing an Expert Resource Centre for Public Dialogue on Science and Innovation (ERC), for launch in April 2008, as part of a bigger and better programme. The ERC will build capacity across government (Departments and Agencies) for dialogue on key science issues and will capture and disseminate best practice, with the aim of integrating public engagement and dialogue in the development of policy.

Other organisations are also being actively encouraged to develop and fund their own activities, such as the recent announcement of the 4-year Beacons for Public Engagement pilot programme, funded by Research Councils UK, the higher education funding councils and the Wellcome Trust.

On spreading the use of science throughout Government the OSI supports these objectives through several mechanisms. It responds to perceived gaps or weaknesses across Whitehall by supporting workshops and seminars that bring together key stakeholders and experts where relevant. Example issues include Peer Review, the role of horizon scanning and sharing good practice between Scientific Advisory Councils. Additionally, the Chief Scientific Advisers Committee meets regularly as does its Officials Group to explore issues and policies. The role of the Government and Departmental Heads of Scientific and Engineering Professions is another area where good practice can be promoted under Professional Skills in Government.

This process is underpinned by regular dialogue with Departments at all levels, the Science Reviews and annual cycle of reviews under the 10 Year Science and Innovation Investment Framework, 2004–2014.

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Fifth Special Report	Research Council Support for Knowledge Transfer: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2005–06	HC 1653
Sixth Special Report	Watching the Directives: Scientific Advice on the EU Physical Agents (Electromagnetic Fields) Directive: Responses to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2005–06	HC 1654