

Professor Sir John Tooke PMedSci
President

23 February 2012

Dr Julian Huppert MP
Member of Parliament for Cambridge
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Dr Huppert,

Thank you for your letter of 31 January, we would be delighted to contribute to your update of Liberal Democrat policy on research and innovation in STEM subjects and the humanities. Enclosed are a number of recent Academy publications that I hope will be of use in your work. Headline messages that relate to the issues you raised in your letter include:

Money

The positive relationship between world-class medical science and national gains in health and wealth is well established. We believe that Government should publish a new long-term strategy for science that will help to reassure increasingly mobile researchers and industries about the future of the UK science base. The Academy sees no reason to change the balance between the two strands of the dual support system for funding research that has allowed the UK to develop world class, research-intensive universities. The business and charity support elements of higher education funding should be conserved given increasing collaborations between academia, industry, charities and the NHS. Of particular importance is the need to review VAT arrangements that currently disincentivise collaborations between academia and industry. Streamlined research regulation will reduce the funding that is wasted on unnecessary bureaucracy and encourage external investment. Measures such as adaptive licensing will help support medium sized biotechnology companies to increase jobs, enable sustainable economic growth and increase tax revenue.

People

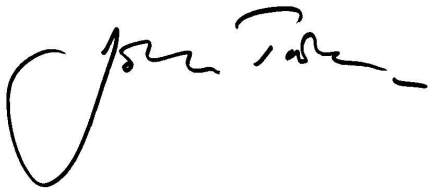
Highly skilled individuals are the UK's most valuable resource, ensuring resilience and enabling our rapid response to future economic recovery. We place particular emphasis on supporting doctoral students, early postdoctoral researchers and clinician-scientists, both as a cost-effective way of sustaining the research base and for their important role in supplying the wider workforce and economy. The health challenges of the 21st century such as ageing or obesity are so complex that they can only be tackled if many different disciplines, sectors, organisations and nations work together. The Academic Health Science Centres and proposed Networks offer frameworks for such collaborations in the future. Additional priorities include: the need to ensure that academia is involved in healthcare workforce planning; teaching is valued; researchers can move easily between academia and industry; and immigration policy does not deter the brightest and best researchers. The Academy is currently considering how to ensure women are even better represented among our Fellowship and in biomedical science more broadly.

Science in policy

Government must actively seek and encourage authoritative, independent scientific advice at the earliest stages of policy development. National academies are well placed to assist with this process. Key principles underpinning scientific advice to government include: the academic freedom of scientists who provide advice to government should be safeguarded; the advice scientists give should be protected from political or other interference in their work; and that increased clarity and transparency in the processes behind Government's consideration of scientific advice is required. While we believe that Government should set the overall strategic direction of research scientists are best placed to identify which initiatives should be supported. This system, often described as 'The Haldane' principle, has helped ensure that the UK punches above its weight in science internationally. A balance is needed between more basic and more applied research since ground breaking medical innovations are generated through an iterative process between the two.

I hope that this letter and enclosures are helpful. If you would like to arrange a meeting or call to discuss these issues further then please get in touch with Laurie Smith at the Academy office (tel: 020 3176 2167, laurie.smith@acmedsci.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Tooke', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.