



Campaign for Science and Engineering Monthly update for February 2008

What we are working on

A new section of the e-bulletin to keep you informed about what we are working on at the moment. Please get in touch if you have any issues that you would like to raise with us.

- **Research Excellence Framework:** CaSE will be responding to HEFCE's consultation on Research Excellence Framework.
- **Science at the Foreign Office:** CaSE is lobbying to keep science and innovation a priority within the Foreign Office after a recent announcement by the Foreign Secretary.
- **Science and Innovation Strategy:** CaSE will be responding to the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills consultation on the Science and Innovation Strategy.
- **Engineering Inquiry:** CaSE will be responding to the Innovation, Universities and Skills inquiry into engineering.

CaSE News

- **Voice of the Future 2008:** This free event is open to anyone under the age of 35 with an interest in science. The event will allow participants the chance to ask searching questions to Members of Parliament from the Innovation, Universities and Skills Select Committee. Participants will be selected on a first come basis:
<http://www.rsc.org/ScienceAndTechnology/Parliament/Events/VOF2008.asp>

January Diary

31/01/08 Higher Education

CaSE welcomed the Royal Society's report *A Higher Degree of Concern*. The report looks at the current state of higher education in the UK. It noted a relative decline in the study of most STEM subjects at the postgraduate level. Commenting, Nick Dusic, said "the Government needs to ensure that the higher education sector attracts the best UK and non-UK students onto masters and doctoral courses. CaSE supports the report's recommendations for providing incentives for UK students to study STEM subjects and also to attract STEM students from abroad."

31/01/08 Women in Science and Engineering

Nick Dusic and Hilary Leever met with Terry Marsh of WISE (Women into Science, Engineering and Construction). They discussed policy issues related to CaSE's forthcoming report on underrepresented groups in science and engineering.

30/01/08 Science and the Media

Nick Dusic and Hilary Leever attended the Daily Telegraph's "Science Meets the Media" reception held at the Royal Society.

28/01/08 Nick Dusic and Hilary Leever met with the Institute of Physics to discuss science policy issues facing the physics community including the funding issues related to the STFC's delivery plan.

24/01/08 Funding for STEM Subjects

CaSE welcomed the Schools Minister's announcement for £140 million to support Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects in schools. Commenting on the

announcement Nick Dusic, CaSE's Director, said: "It is a good sign that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) is funding a number of initiatives to improve the state of science, engineering and mathematics in schools. However, it will take sustained commitment and funding from the Government to ensure that every student has the opportunity to excel at science and mathematics."

24/01/08 Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee

CaSE welcomed the announcement that the Government has agreed to add "Science" to the title of the Innovation, Universities and Skills Committee. CaSE campaigned to keep the Science and Technology Committee, which was merged into the new IUS Committee. Nick Dusic, CaSE's Director commenting said "it is crucial that Parliament effectively scrutinises the Government's science policies and budgets, the renaming of the Committee should give greater weight to its work in this area. CaSE will work with the Committee to ensure that this happens across government departments, not just within Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. If it doesn't, CaSE will lobby for the reinstatement of the Science and Technology Committee."

23/01/08 Science at the FCO

CaSE is concerned about the future of science and innovation at the Foreign Office after a recent statement by the Foreign Secretary. Science and Innovation has been one of the FCO priorities set out in its 2006 White Paper. The Foreign Secretary has indicated that he would like the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills to take over its science responsibilities. CaSE has written to the Foreign Secretary asking him to maintain the Network and appoint a departmental Chief Scientific Adviser. Nick Dusic said that "Science should remain a priority as the FCO as it crucial to informing its diplomatic work. The FCO's Science and Innovation Network provides a crucial service to the UK's science community and should be strengthened."

16/01/08 Innovation, Universities and Skills Scrutiny

Nick Dusic and Hilary Leever enjoyed a productive meeting with Phil Willis, MP, Chair of the Innovation, Universities and Skills Select Committee, which included discussion of the issues facing the new IUS select committee and its ability to monitor Government science across all departments.

16/01/08 Nick Dusic and David Hawksett met with Sir Brian Fender Chairman and President of the Institute of Knowledge Transfer.

15/01/08 Science teachers pay

CaSE was pleased that the Department for Children, Schools and Families has accepted that recommendations of the School Teachers Review Board aimed at increasing the number of mathematics, physics and chemistry teachers. First, a strategy is being developed to encourage headteachers to use the pay flexibilities available to them to improve recruitment and retention of these teachers. Second, a pilot project will be implemented to offer teachers £5000 to retrain to develop a specialism in these critical subjects. CaSE supported both of these proposals. CaSE also suggests that a mechanism is developed to target specialist teachers towards those schools that actually lack them and that targets for teacher training recruits should be subject specific rather than over all the sciences.

10/01/08 Monitoring of Science GCSEs

CaSE welcomed the inclusion of the number of children achieving two A* to C grades in GCSE science in school league tables. Although it was disappointing that only half of children across the country attained this level of performance, the inclusion of these measures in the tables indicates to headteachers, teachers, parents and children how fundamental a good science education is for all and not just for those intending to work as scientists. Obviously, CaSE hopes to see increasing numbers of students achieving two good science GCSEs over the coming years, although it is important to make sure that this is not driven by decreasing numbers of children being entered into triple science or increasing numbers being entered into less demanding science GCSEs.

CaSE has also urged the Government to include whether a school has specialist science teachers in biology, physics, and chemistry in performance tables; this should be easier now that schools are required to report this information centrally to Ofsted.

09/01/08 Nick Dusic and David Hawksett met with representatives of the University of East Anglia and the Norwich Research Park.

08/01/08 Opposition debate on funding for Equivalent or Lower Qualifications

CaSE welcomed the opposition debate on higher education, which examined the Governments proposed changes to the funding equivalent or lower qualifications (ELQs). CaSE was pleased to hear the Minister for Higher Education confirm that students studying strategic and vulnerable subjects, which includes science and engineering, will be protected. CaSE will be working to ensure that all STEM subjects are protected from any changes to ELQ funding.

7/01/08 Anxiety at STFC cuts

CaSE urged the Government to bring in new funds for astronomy and physics following a shortfall in the budget of the Science and Technology Facilities Council. Writing in Laboratory News, Hilary Leever, Assistant Director of CaSE, commented: "The number of university physics departments has already been shaved down to a bare minimum, with tens of departments closing following falling student numbers in the '90s and reduced funding per student. Thankfully, the Government has started to address both of these issues. It has produced a plethora of initiatives to enthuse secondary students and to attempt to make sure that physics teachers are in place to teach them. It also provided £25 million a year over all the "strategic and vulnerable" subjects to prevent further departmental closures in critical areas. It would be ridiculous to wreck all this good work by such a short-sighted funding error."