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### **Twenty years of success, plenty of challenges left**

The Campaign for Science & Engineering today celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday by re-setting the agenda for the science and engineering community in the coming years.

“Two decades ago, on 13 January 1986, a forward-looking group of scientists and engineers took a half-page advertisement in *The Times* to protest against cuts in research funding,” said Dr Peter Cotgreave, Director of CaSE. “They didn’t realise that they were starting something quite so important. Over the years, CaSE has issued 4 million words of advice to various Governments, met with 20 different ministers and shadow ministers with responsibility for science research or education, been supported by thousands of individual scientists and engineers and by hundreds of organizations, from universities to venture capitalists.

Most importantly, many of the changes in policy for which we called have actually happened: Government investment in science has risen by around £1.5 billion in the last five years compared to a fall of about £400 million (at today’s prices) in the five years before the Society.”

One government insider told us after the last Spending Review: “I think CaSE could reasonably claim a portion of the credit for the Chancellor’s latest pronouncements”.

But CaSE has always been about the future not the past. Last week, CaSE brought together two groups of academics, researchers, parliamentarians, businesspeople, Vice Chancellors, and industrialists from all parts of the UK to discuss the challenges for the scientific community if the country’s economy is to thrive over the next twenty years.

“First, we need to sort out the mess of science education,” said Peter Cotgreave, “we must stop tinkering with the curriculum and focus on the fact that we’re short-changing thousands of children who are being taught the sciences by people who have never qualified in the relevant subject.

“Second, we need to stop pretending that somehow the universities are going to make a load of money appear out of thin air. If we want serious science and engineering departments, someone has to fund them, and we need a proper debate about the balance of public and private sources of money.

“Third, and most important, the nation has to set an economic context in which companies see the UK as a competitive place for investment in research. The British economy depends on science even more now than it did twenty years ago, and that trend isn’t going to slow down any time soon.

“If we don’t get the tax regime right, provide the right skills in the labour market, and support scientific businesses, the UK will not thrive in the twenty first century as it did in the twentieth”.

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