



CaSE Briefing in advance of the Scottish Government Debate for Thursday 19th March 2009 on:

Science for Scotland

Science for Scotland Strategy

- Although the publication of the strategy was welcome it was weak on policy and budgetary commitments that would deliver the Government's vision. It was primarily a reiteration of existing commitments rather than setting out a coherent agenda for science in Scotland.
- **The Scottish Government needs to follow up the strategy with action and make science and engineering a cross-government priority.**

Research funding

- Scottish universities have been well placed in the past for winning competitive grants from the research councils due to a higher spend per person than other parts of the UK. Changes to university funding will erode this competitive advantage unless action is taken.
- **The Scottish Government must ensure that universities and research institutes in Scotland are appropriately funded so that they can compete within the UK and globally for research funding, talented individuals and corporate investment.**

Science and Mathematics Education

- The TIMSS survey indicated that the performance of Scottish students in science and mathematics is lowering compared to other countries. The Scottish Government cannot be complacent about science and mathematics education.
- **The School Science Summit set for May needs to be backed up with measures to support teachers – from practical work to continuing professional development.**

Science in Government

- The strategy made little reference to either the importance of Scottish Government funding of research for its own use or the importance of independent scientific advice in policymaking.
- **A coherent strategy for science in government should be developed.**

Scottish Science Policy in Context

- The strategy made an important reference to this by saying that Scottish ministers will engage in UK and EU policy debates. There is currently an important debate regarding the future direction of UK science funding initiated by Lord Drayson, UK Science Minister.
- **Scottish ministers need to engage in this debate as it could affect the breadth of areas that are funded by research councils.**

How is progress measured?

- How will the Scottish Government know if the strategy has been a success? Are we going to have a better funded research base, more educated scientists and engineers, greater business investment in R&D?
- **The Scottish Government should publish an annual progress report. This will require improving the collection and dissemination of science, engineering and technology (SET) statistics for Scotland.**

Further information

- The Campaign for Science & Engineering (CaSE) is a policy advocate for science and engineering in the UK.
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