

Questions to Northern Irish Party Leaders - Supplementary Note

Investment

CaSE calls for an upward trajectory for investment in science and engineering over the long-term. Science and engineering is a national success story to which every part of the UK, including Northern Ireland, contributes and benefits. Over the next five years there is enormous opportunity for science and engineering to drive economic prosperity and public wellbeing as a central feature of the Northern Ireland Executive's long-term economic plan.

- How would you encourage science and engineering industries to locate and remain in Northern Ireland?
- What plan would you set for investment in research and development over the next five years?

Education & skills

CaSE calls for all children in Northern Ireland have access to a stimulating education in science and mathematics taught by qualified teachers. This includes introducing a requirement for all students to study science up to the age of 16. Furthermore, CaSE calls for science and engineering courses in Northern Irish universities to be fully and sustainably funded.

- Research shows the strong impact that teachers' knowledge and confidence in science have on students' attitudes towards science and their attainment and progression in it, and yet limited subject knowledge and low confidence in teaching science is common. Northern Ireland has a unique mechanism to help tackle the challenge. Would you include subject-specific professional learning in the Professional Update, and provide continued funding through ENTHUSE awards?
- Science isn't a separate subject at primary level but the 'new world around us' curriculum could provide great opportunities for teaching science. Yet there is no requirement to teach science and with many primary teachers lacking confidence in teaching science, it is likely to have much less time spent on it. Would you commit to providing more detailed guidance for the science curriculum 'world around us' and greater access to subject specific continuing professional development to ensure all primary teachers are equipped and supported to deliver high quality science teaching?

Science, Engineering & Policy-Making

CaSE calls for all parties to agree that scientific evidence should be gathered, assessed and considered in policy-making decisions. Further, CaSE calls for Government to be transparent about the reasons behind policy decisions, particularly the relevant evidence that informed the decision, but which might also include social or political factors.

- What commitments will your party make to improve the use of scientific expertise to inform policy-making in government? What steps will you take to ensure that relevant evidence is gathered, assessed, and used to inform policy decisions?
- What steps will you take to ensure this process of gathering and assessing evidence related to policy decisions is transparent?
- What steps will you take to ensure that there will be appropriate support for scientific advice for government ministers?
- Will you commit to appointing a Science Minister and Chief Scientific Advisor?
- What steps will you take to ensure that the new Chief Scientific Advisor with the support of the Science Advisory Committee will be consulted regarding policy decisions?