



Response to the Office of Science and Technology's Review of Science within DCMS

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Introduction

The full text of the OST report is available on their [website](#).

Response

Recommendation 1

DCMS's social and economic Research Strategy should be regularly reviewed and costed. In its development, DCMS should:

- *ensure that it adequately reflects DCMS's current and future needs, including what it needs to deliver, how and by when;*
- *be clearer about how the contributions it seeks from stakeholders and the aims of such consultation;*
- *consider at the highest level in the department how it fits in with DCMS's strategic priorities;*
- *integrate the processes of departmental planning and research planning;*
- *consider how engagement with its NDPBs and other stakeholders might best be achieved e.g. via the ASD Research network or a one day seminar for all interested parties.*

DCMS needs to review and subsequently to develop its Science and Innovation Strategy so that it adequately covers its current and future needs and is properly costed. The social and economic Research Strategy should clearly flow from the overarching Science and Innovation Strategy and sectoral research strategies (see recommendation 2)

A review of the Research Strategy will be completed by Autumn 2005. This will examine internal DCMS research budgeting processes; identify key areas of analytical work for the department over the next three years and the resources to achieve these; and improve the way that the Department works with research and analysis within our NDPBs, other departments and the wider academic community.

DCMS is involved primarily in social science because of the direct relation to our key strategic priorities. Occasionally wider scientific expertise on specific matters is required, and we are aware that we need to seek advice when this applies. The DCMS Science and Innovation Strategy cites 'hard science' work which relates to the remit of our NDPBs, for example English Heritage's work on restoration of buildings, the British Library's services for the science community, and the various museums' scientific activity, notably The Natural History Museum.

The DCMS's wider approach to Science and Innovation could be considered further once a Chief Scientific Adviser is in post (see recommendation 4), and we will ensure that our social and hard science activities are aligned as appropriate.

Recommendation 2

DCMS should work with and encourage stakeholders to establish science strategies that:

- *meet the current and future needs of DCMS's sponsored sectors; and*
- *take account of priorities across government as a whole.*

We have already brought the review's recommendations to the attention of stakeholders, who have endorsed as beneficial the need for effective engagement with DCMS on establishing science strategies. We will be publishing the report and our response on our website, and encouraging stakeholders to develop their comments, possibly with the help of a Chief Scientific Adviser (see recommendation 4).

Recommendation 3

To fulfil its stewardship responsibilities, DCMS should:

- *assure itself that its main science-using NDPBs have science strategies in place that are based on and support the NDPBs' objectives, responsibilities and priorities;*
- *assure itself that such science strategies take account of the needs of the NDPBs, DCMS and the wider government / stakeholder community; and*
- *use its NDPBs' science strategies in the development of its own Science and Innovation Strategy.*

DCMS sponsored bodies operate with a degree of operational autonomy that precludes our determining the science and research they undertake. We are currently reviewing funding agreements to encourage NDPBs to focus on business planning and clear outcomes in all areas of their work. This should help to ensure both that NDPBs plan strategically when undertaking any science activity and that the above recommendations are taken into account. DCMS's wider approach to science is dealt with under recommendation 1 above.

Recommendation 4

DCMS should appoint a senior part-time Chief Scientific Adviser, preferably external to DCMS. This would be a respected scientist, whose role would be to ensure that the science needs of DCMS are strategically addressed and that science and scientific advice form an effective part of the evidence base for policy-making and delivery, dealing both with substance and processes.

We agree to this recommendation and hope to advertise the position soon.

Recommendation 5

DCMS should ensure that a systematic approach to horizon scanning is undertaken across all its sectors and the results used (e.g.; as part of the department's risk assessment and management). This should ensure that the results of its NDPBs' horizon scanning activities are taken into account where appropriate (and a coherent approach taken with NDPBs to such work where this would be beneficial).

In developing its horizon scanning processes, DCMS might find it helpful to call upon the expertise in:

- *the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit and OGDs which have established approaches to horizon scanning in place; and in due course*
- *the planned new centre of excellence in science and technology horizon scanning in OST*

This recommendation is being implemented. An early role for the new "Think Tank" in Strategy Division was to carry out an initial horizon-scanning project across DCMS sector areas. We have worked very closely and productively with OST's Foresight Horizon-Scanning Unit on Strategic Futures for DCMS. The project outputs will include:

- 'actionable insights' for the future
- identifying key trends we will need to track within sectors and across the Department, contributing to our research agenda
- a rich, updateable source of references, further information and ideas for use by Divisions and NDPBs.

This project is likely to lead to further ongoing research and to provide a focus for discussion of strategy and risk in the Permanent Secretary's Strategy group and the DCMS Board. We have had extensive contacts with the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit about ways to develop the Department's strategic capacity.

Recommendation 6

DCMS should ensure that research is reviewed regularly across all its sectors, with a view to identifying gaps and opportunities for future research. This should include ensuring that the results of NDPBs' science-reviewing activities are taken into account.

We are improving our processes for identifying research priorities. There are three main ways in which this is being achieved:

1. regular discussions with Policy Divisions across the Department, identifying where research resources are allocated to greatest affect;
2. quarterly meetings with the NDPB Network. This provides regular opportunities to identify research needs across our sectors, to discuss common methodological issues, and to scope out projects best tackled through collaboration;
3. building our relationships with bodies such as ESRC and the newly formed AHRC, to help us understand the broader context in which the Department operates.

Recommendation 7

To assure quality, value for money and full consideration of follow-up action needed and lessons learned, among its formal processes for commissioning and managing science, DCMS should develop clear protocols for the quality assurance and evaluation of the science it commissions and guidance for deciding which projects should have a scoping phase.

We welcome this recommendation. We have made better use of scoping work to establish the extent of work to be commissioned, most noticeably for Taking Part, our new national survey of participation in DCMS sectors, which involved an

extensive scoping phase and report prior to commission. We have also made use of peer review for major projects, consulting with academics to ensure that we get greatest value from our research investment.

Our review of the DCMS Research Strategy will consider how we can best involve independent peer review of our research and evaluation activity. More generally, we are giving a high priority to effective project management across the Department, including for research projects.

Recommendation 8

To meet its business needs and minimise identified risks in relation to evidence needed to underpin policy, DCMS should optimise its spending by identifying how it might make more or better use of external funding sources.

We accept this recommendation. Our new CSA will represent DCMS on the Chief Scientific Advisers' Committee. This should ensure that DCMS does not miss out on opportunities to get value from jointly addressing research gaps, and help to identify where scientific research can play a major role in establishing the way forward. The Research Strategy will seek to improve the way that the Department works with research and analysis within our NDPBs, other Departments and the wider academic community.

We have already strengthened our links with the ESRC – we currently sit on the Advisory Group for the ESRC funded 'Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change', and are in the process of establishing a formal Concordat arrangement with them. This latter development will strengthen the relationship between research and analytical work in the Department and the active academic community across our sectors.

Recommendation 9

To ensure that the wider science needs of Government are met:

- *DCMS should explore the introduction of Memoranda of Understanding [or similar arrangements] with its major science- using NDPBs and OGDs; and*
- *DCMS funding agreements and targets with its major science- using NDPBs should recognise key science activities and, where appropriate, reflect priorities in the wider Government agenda*

We agree with the recommendation to reflect science, where relevant, in the funding agreements with NDPBs, which are currently under review. We do not consider that additional memoranda could add anything useful to the funding agreements, which are the key documents covering our relationship with NDPBs.

Recommendation 10

DCMS should assure itself that the NDPBs (and in particular the main science-using NDPBs) have appropriate processes in place for the commissioning, progress monitoring, performance management, quality assurance and evaluation of their science, including guidance on the use of external quality assurance and evaluation. This would fulfil DCMS's stewardship responsibilities by ensuring that quality, value for

money, consideration of follow-up action and lessons learned were taken fully into account

We agree that there is a case for ensuring the quality of the science carried out by NDPBs and for having quality assurance measures in place. We have already canvassed reactions to the recommendations to the NDPBs' attention, and they have made helpful suggestions on how this could be arranged.

Recommendation 11

DCMS should familiarise itself with the range of science expertise and advice available to it from within its NDPBs, e.g. through networks and or directories of research sources and named experts (see recommendation 16).

DCMS should considerably extend its use of the full range of science expertise (including hard science) available to it from all sources (including its NDPBs, OGDs industry and academia) e.g. involving a range of experts in horizon scanning and policy scoping exercises.

As noted above we work with the Research Network on social science issues. We also work closely with experts at OST on horizon scanning and with the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. Our wider approach to science is dealt with under recommendation 1 above.

Recommendation 12

To ensure open debate and publication of research findings and results, DCMS should:

- *aim to ensure that significant research findings are debated in fora that are sufficiently knowledgeable to recognise the full implications of those findings, e.g. bringing in external expertise; and*
- *consider ways in which it could further target its publication activities.*

We currently publish relevant findings on our Website, provided there are no issues relating to confidentiality, privacy or commercial sensitivity. We agree that we should ensure that information and findings should be made available to those who would benefit most from it. We will address this in the context of our research strategy.

Recommendation 13

DCMS should consider ways to encourage NDPBs to adopt targeted approaches to the publication of science findings, so that the right audiences are reached, either for further debate or to ensure that the results are properly understood by different groups that could use them.

We believe our NDPBs are best placed to know and take decisions on which interested groups should share in such information. We will ensure that this recommendation is brought to their attention.

Recommendation 14

To avoid duplication of effort, or incomplete use of evidence, DCMS should encourage direct links between its policy divisions on science areas of common interest.

We welcome this recommendation. We are currently working hard to promote evidence-based policy making in DCMS, including through training.

Recommendation 15

To avoid duplication of effort, share good practice and widen exploitation of existing knowledge, DCMS should use both existing and new fora to:

- *identify areas of common scientific interest to NDPBs and both encourage facilitate contacts between them e.g.; on cross cutting subjects such as conservation and digitisation; and processes including quality assurance, monitoring, publication, etc;*
- *improve contacts on science issues between policy divisions and NDPBs; and*
- *achieve better understanding of both DCMS's and NDPBs' needs, so that communications can be more focussed and relevant (see paragraph 94 and recommendation 11)*

We welcome this recommendation; DCMS fora already exist to help the exchange of information with and between NDPBs. For example, the Sustainable Development Forum has initiated several productive collaborative ventures involving DCMS policy divisions and NDPBs. The Museums and Galleries Energy and Carbon Forum (MAGEC) are carrying out a benchmarking exercise to improve energy efficiency and address the new EU buildings directives. Our Creative Industries Division has encouraged knowledge transfer more widely i.e. in Higher Education, in furtherance of our strategic aims.

Recommendation 16

To improve DCMS's awareness and take-up of science and scientific expertise in its NDPBs, DCMS should consider:

- *ways of establishing means of easy access to all science activity and expertise across the DCMS family, e.g. via a database or suite of [existing] databases (see Recommendation 17 below)*
- *keeping itself informed of [external] sectoral or NDPBs' research Advisory Group activities;*
- *using secondments between DCMS and NDPBs (see Section 10); and*
- *encouraging NDPBs to train their scientific staff on the provision and interpretation of technical information for non-specialists.*

The AGORA extranet site will provide a potentially good reference resource for science related activities. The DCMS Evidence Tool-kit provides a searchable source of data across DCMS sectors and is a resource for all working across our sectors. We are currently looking at ways in which we can better organise wider research on the social and economic impact of our sectors, and, ultimately, make this available to all via our website. See also references to the NDPB network (above) and the response to recommendation 20.

Recommendation 17

DCMS should consider how the extra-net could usefully be used to improve the availability and use of science findings and expertise. As a starting point, for example, a directory could be maintained on the extra-net of key experts, together with lists of organisations, including academia involved in or with the potential to be involved in scientific work, taking account of Data Protection Act requirements.

Our Extranet site AGORA is now being built and we are aware of its potential for disseminating information. We will carefully consider all suggested contributions.

Recommendation 18

Feedback should be provided at all levels to improve the usefulness of science-based information and advice.

We agree that in order to improve the targeting of science-based information, we need to work with those commissioning the material to clarify their requirements as far as possible. Similarly, effective feedback can be valuable to improving the relevance of information gathered.

Recommendation 19

To meet the wider needs of Government, DCMS should play a stronger facilitatory role in improving communications between its NDPBs and others, including OGDs. To this end, DCMS should consider how to improve:

- *the dissemination of information on Government science issues to its NDPBs, e.g. information obtained via CSAC and other sources such as GSR, GES and GSS;*
- *awareness of the areas of NDPBs' science, which can be of use to itself and wider Government*

Our CSA would attend meetings of the Chief Scientist's Advisory Committee. It is envisaged that the AGORA extranet site may help with the dissemination of information on Government Science issues to our NDPBs.

Recommendation 20

To improve the value that DCMS obtains from its NDPBs' science, DCMS should:

- *bring forward to training for its own staff on evidence-based policy making*
- *encourage training for NDPBs' staff on communication of the relevance and implications of technical information for non-specialist readers/audiences;*
- *make greater use of secondments/workshops and seminars.*

We agree with the recommendation for DCMS staff. Our Strategy Division brings together work on research, capacity-building and performance and is actively supporting evidence-based policy making across the department. Our analysts and performance team are working closely together to ensure we have a strong evidence base for our PSA targets.

We will also bring to the attention of our NDPBs that there are existing examples of good communication with non-specialist audiences in the Science Museum's programme of activities at the Dana centre. These events provoke discussion on the cutting edge science issues of the day e.g. genetic profiling.

DCMS also appreciates the value of secondment and workshops to both its staff and DCMS's overall aims, e.g. the Science Museum has provided training to DCMS environmental champions on sustainable development.

Recommendation 21

DCMS should make itself aware of where NDPBs' science is unique or hard to replace and of importance to wider Government / the UK, so that it can ensure that such expertise is not lost (e.g. by decisions on funding) without proper consultation and recognition of the consequences.

In making decisions about funding our NDPBs, we will seek to take account of the full implications, including the impact on science.

DCMS

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