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THE PRIME MINISTER

1 December 2010

Dr John

Thank you for your letter of 17 November.

You will by now have seen the announcement that the new Director General, Knowledge and Innovation, at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is to be Professor Adrian Smith FRS. His appointment was the result of a rigorous Whitehall competition, overseen by a Civil Service Commissioner and run in accordance with the Civil Service Commissioner's rules. I am sure you will agree that Professor Smith is eminently well qualified to undertake all the aspects of this new and important role, and that it is important to maintain the independence of the appointment process from external lobbying.

You also expressed concern that the Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir John Beddington, was not consulted about the proposed amalgamation of existing Director General roles. As I understand it, Sir John has now clarified that he was consulted on this point. When the options for the new senior structure in BIS were under discussion in the summer, as on Tuesday, Sir John agreed that there is merit in bringing together responsibility for science and research, higher education and innovation, particularly at a time of decreasing resources.

I strongly believe that this challenging new position will help ensure that the Business Department achieves real synergies between its policy areas and delivers benefits for universities, science and business in the years ahead.

Yours sincerely

The Lord Krebs