



HOUSE OF LORDS

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Dear Prime Minister

I am writing as Chairman of the Science and Technology Committee in the House of Lords.

Yesterday, the Committee heard evidence from Professor Sir John Beddington, Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Adrian Smith, Director General of Science and Research, and Professor David Delpy, Chief Executive Officer of the EPSRC. During the course of the evidence session, Sir John was asked about the decision within the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to merge three posts at Director General level, including Director General of Science and Research, into one, and to subsume science and research into a broader Knowledge and Innovation group.

The DGSR is responsible for the science budget and for allocating the £4.6 billion “resource spending” provided for by the recent Comprehensive Spending Review. Given this, it is of key importance that the new Director General of Knowledge and Innovation, who will take over this responsibility, should be a senior scientist who is able to maintain the trust and confidence of the scientific community. It is for this reason that, since the DGSR post was created in 1993, each postholder has been a senior scientist (Sir John Cadogan FRS, Sir John Taylor FRS, Sir Keith O’Nions FRS and Professor Adrian Smith FRS). I have discussed the matter with Andrew Miller MP, Chair of the House of Common’s Science and Technology Select Committee, and he shares our concerns.

The evidence session with Sir John has significantly increased the Committee’s concerns about this matter. Two points about process emerged during the course of the questioning. First, Sir John confirmed that he had not been consulted about the proposed amalgamation of posts, despite the DGSR being one of two of the most senior science posts within government, and said that he had found this omission “deeply regrettable”. Secondly, Sir John also confirmed that the appointment panel for the new post would not include an independent, external expert. We find both these points extremely troubling.

On behalf of the Science and Technology Committee, I urge you to take appropriate action to ensure that the post of Director General for Knowledge and Innovation is filled in a way which fully meets the concerns of the Committee. Were the holder of the new post to be other than a senior scientist, there would be a significant risk of damaging the relationship

between government and the scientific community and of undoing the good work for science in the CSR. I look forward to your reply.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, Dr Cable MP, and also to David Willetts MP, Minister for Universities and Science in BIS.

In accordance with our usual practice, this letter and your reply will be posted on the Committee's webpage.



The image shows a handwritten signature in black ink on a white background. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "John Krebs". The signature is positioned in the center of the page, below the main body of text.

Lord Krebs
Chairman of the Committee on Science and Technology

Rt Hon David Cameron MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

cc

Rt Hon Dr Vince Cable MP
Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
1 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET

Rt Hon David Willetts MP
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