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SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

Results of OST's Public
Consultation on its Response to the
British Association Report 'Science
in Society'

OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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Introduction

The recent consultation on OST's response to the British Association's report 'Science¹ in Society' aimed to give interested parties an opportunity to comment on our proposed implementation plans.

The closing date for the consultation was 30 June 2003. We received 54 responses (names attached at Annex 3 - responses can be accessed via our web site www.ost.gov.uk/pest). The breakdown of type of respondent was as follows: individuals: 11; organisations: 43, of which 5 were private, 21 public and 17 voluntary.

We are very grateful to all those who responded. Responses were well considered and will be of great use in developing our proposals further, then implementing and evaluating them.

In the main, respondents were supportive of the proposals. The general feeling seemed to be that, if implemented, they would help to ensure that science and society activity is based on a more clearly defined need, that it is better targeted and evaluated, and that collaboration and co-operation is enhanced.

¹ In the context of this publication, 'science' includes: engineering, technology, medicine, mathematics and natural and social sciences

Background

The Public Engagement with Science and Technology Team within the Office of Science and Technology (OST) funds a programme which aims to:

- increase public awareness of the role of science in society and everyday life;
- promote public engagement with and dialogue about science in society;
- inform policy-making and public engagement strategies by identifying public attitudes to science;
- and, increase the impact of public engagement and science communication activities in the UK by promoting and enabling collaboration, co-operation, networking and dissemination of best practice within the science communication community.

A huge number of science in society activities take place in the UK. These include public debates and consultations, science festivals, and science clubs. All of these operate against a background of increasing media coverage. Some of this activity is funded by Government, but much is not. This makes it important for OST to place its own work in this area in a wider context and to ensure that the science in society agenda is being properly addressed in the UK.

It is for this reason that the Science Minister, Lord Sainsbury, asked the British Association for the Advancement of Science (the BA) to undertake a study (published as [Science in Society](#)) and make recommendations to us about what processes the Government could put in place to ensure that it:

- has an adequate overview of the activities of all the main organisations in the science in society 'community';
- can assess how effective this activity is - for example, whether it is meeting the needs of its audiences, offering quality and value for money - and identifying where there are gaps and duplications;
- can encourage and assist organisations to work together, share best practice, and make recommendations for action and change;
- has the best mechanisms in place to manage the oversight and direction of the activities it funds directly.

We supported most of the BA's recommendations and undertook a public consultation on our proposed implementation plans between 4 April and 30 June 2003. The BA's Science in Society study and the consultation document can be viewed at www.ost.gov.uk/pest.

Summary of responses, OST's reaction to these and proposed way forward

Each BA recommendation is shown below, followed by the proposal(s) on which we consulted, the main responses to these and OST's reaction, and finally our implementation plans ('outcome'). We have not attempted to directly answer every point made by respondents. In general we have tried to group points into themes and respond to these.

Science in Society activities database

BA Recommendation: A detailed and ongoing mapping of science in society activities is provided through an actively-managed database, in order to provide high quality, comprehensive and up to date information to the OST and to other organisations, and potentially capable of development as a UK-wide information service for the public.

OST proposed to:

- Establish, on a two year pilot basis, an activities database and web site.
- Undertake a snapshot survey of science in society activities;

The database project will provide information. This is not an end in itself. It will help OST and others to address gaps and overlaps in provision, and take action to deal with them. It will also help us and others to identify opportunities for collaboration, and to develop more effective, targeted projects and programmes to bring science and society together.

Activities database: The vast majority of respondents were supportive of this idea. Among other things, it was felt it could be a central source of information on project ideas, potential collaborations and specific events.

"A major potential benefit of this database would be the scope it gave for establishing a central pool of ideas/activities which can be re-used in other contexts/places by other groups. Substantial investment is often made in one-off events which could, in fact, be re-used or adapted for other audiences." British Council

There was almost universal support for a web based approach to the database and we support this. If the database were to include details of budgets (as we wish) then a web approach does raise possible confidentiality issues, but this is something to be considered during the development stage. We are not wedded to the idea of a single database holding all information. Standardised presentation of information in existing databases might be preferable along with development of software that allows us to interrogate them and a portal web site.

Respondents' suggested issues for further consideration tended to focus on the following areas:

- *The breadth of the database's objectives:* There was some concern that it might seek to be all things to all people and that OST needed to be clearer about its objectives for the database. This is a valid point. Initially at least, we see the database as a tool for policy-makers (e.g. who is doing what in what areas and what should an organisation's contribution be?) and those communicating science (e.g. potential for collaborations, potential funding sources). Whilst we would expect the data collected to feed into an events diary and thus be of interest to the public, this aspect is not our immediate priority. We need to ensure that the database is viable (e.g. enough contributors, timely information) before spending significant time and money on the public element. For this reason we continue to believe that the database should be run on a pilot basis.
- *What activities should be included in the database?* The BA's suggestions provide a useful starting point on the database's coverage. This will obviously be a key issue during the development stage.
- *Comprehensiveness and timeliness of data:* It would be unrealistic to try and capture details of every science and society activity. Our aim is to gather enough information, across as broad a range of scientific disciplines as possible, to be of genuine use to the science and society 'community'. We would expect the database manager to seek out potential contributors (e.g. to make links with regional organisations), to 'sell' the benefits of the database to them, and to ensure that the database is up-to-date, in short, to be *proactive*. As we said in our consultation document, we also need to ensure that contributing to and interrogating the database is made as easy as possible (the majority of respondents said that they would contribute to it if this was the case).
- We would expect the database to include details of activities aimed at young people.

- *Possibility of duplicating existing activity:* We continue to believe that the database *must* build on existing activity, must not duplicate effort, and must bring genuine added value. We particularly want to build on work that has already benefited from public funds, such as that being done by SETNET, the BA and the ETB.

Outcome:

With this in mind, we will be approaching selected organisations that are already receiving public funds for similar work to put a proposal to us on the development of the database.

Snapshot Survey: There was little support for a snapshot survey as an alternative to the database. The main reasons given for this were: it would be of less use to the wider community; as a result, there would be less 'buy-in' from the community and an unwillingness to give up time to supply data; that it would be less comprehensive than a database; and that data would quickly become outdated.

However, there was some support for a snapshot survey as a one-off exercise to augment the database. There were suggestions that it could provide baseline data and help with the design of the database.

Outcome:

Given the length of time it will take to establish a database, we would still find it useful to collect some data on the activities of the main funders (e.g. on areas of science covered, types of activity, geographic coverage, audiences reached, evaluation) which builds on that already collected by SETNET and others. However, we intend to scale down this exercise from that originally envisaged and will undertake it either ourselves or through our programme manager. We will make all collected (non-confidential) data available to the wider community.

Regular national public surveys

BA Recommendation: A nationally representative survey of the public is carried out regularly to establish the extent of participation by various groups of the public in science in society activities, as well as information on public priorities and publicly visible topics and activities, including awareness through the media. It is particularly important that both the Government and providers of initiatives work from the basis of a detailed understanding of public interests and needs.

OST proposed to:

- Undertake a national public survey on a biennial basis which will seek to establish, inter alia, the public's participation in existing science in society activity; barriers to participation; the areas of science that interest them; their interests more generally; their awareness of specific areas of science; and their attitudes towards science and scientists.

Overall, respondents strongly supported our intention to undertake regular national surveys. There was a general recognition that public engagement activity could be better targeted if we knew more about the public's interests, concerns, participation in activities and barriers to participation. There was also a belief that regular surveying would allow us to monitor and respond to change.

"In order for initiatives to be properly targeted it is necessary to know what the public perceptions about SET are and how they would best like to be targeted". Engineering and Technology Board

Many of the responses we had on the survey fell into two broad areas:

Survey Content:

- Suggestions included: the need to strike the right balance between generic and issue specific questions; related to this, the public's knowledge of and attitudes towards hot topics within science; public interests, priorities and concerns; exploration of science governance issues; influences on public attitudes to science; and views on SET careers. All of these are useful suggestions and will be considered in the design of the survey. We also agree that a dissemination strategy should be developed for the results of this and other work we intend to fund.
- Other suggestions on content included: *seeking scientists' views on communicating with the public.* We agree that scientists need to be further engaged on public engagement activities. However, given limited resources, we need to prioritise our activity and believe that there is a clear role for research funders (e.g. Research Councils, Funding Councils) on this issue. We will therefore encourage them to consider this further; *that the survey should cover activities aimed at young people.* SETNET is undertaking a major evaluation of its work and the resources and activities aimed at young people in schools. We would not wish to duplicate this

work and therefore believe that our survey should not focus on the under 16s.

Methodology: A number of respondents with experience of social research commented on the methodology for the survey:

- Several stressed the importance of choosing an appropriate sample size. We agree that this will be key in providing robust data and will consider boosters in specific areas if required (e.g. in relation to minority ethnic groups).
- A number felt that surveying every two years was too frequent. They believed that public attitudes tend to change over a longer time-frame and that surveying every two years would not be insightful or cost effective. This is an important point and given our limited resources we will consider this further (see below).
- Opinion varied on how best to explore issues relating to participation and barriers to participation in existing science and society activity. There was general agreement that it should be done, but some respondents questioned whether the survey was the correct mechanism for doing so. Some felt that this data should be gained from evaluation of specific activities; others felt that qualitative work (such as discussion or focus groups) would be better suited. The need for more information about public participation in activities is a key output from this strand of our programme. Based on the consultation responses, we agree that we need to give further consideration to what mechanisms are best suited to obtaining this information. We have thus held discussions with the Economic and Social Research Council on this and other methodological issues, and they have kindly offered to convene a meeting of experts in this field to provide us with further advice.

Outcome:

We are almost certain to undertake both quantitative research (e.g. national public surveys) and qualitative research (e.g. discussion or focus groups), and in the next few weeks will establish:

- which method is best suited to answer our key questions;
- the intervals at which this work should be repeated;
- whether costs could be reduced by making use of existing channels (e.g. omnibus surveys).

Needs analysis

BA Recommendation: Market analysis is commissioned to draw together the mapping data, new survey work and, by relating back to previous analyses, identify trends over time to provide a complete picture of the public's needs, how existing activities meet needs and where there are gaps in provision.

OST proposed to:

- Commission research on a biennial basis to compare data from the national public survey and the activities database/website
- Present the results to the annual conference with suggestions for action.

There was very strong support for our proposals. In the main this was for the reason given in our consultation document, namely, that we need to link the database and public survey activities together in order to see whether existing activity matches public needs and whether there are gaps and overlaps in provision.

Our consultation document also asked for suggestions of other work that the analysis could draw on. We received a number of useful responses on this point and these will be taken into account when the needs analysis is undertaken. Our intention was that this should be every two years - this was based mainly on the national public survey also being undertaken every two years. As stated above, due to a number of respondents questioning the need for a survey to be carried out as frequently as this, we intend to consider the issue further. This might also impact on the frequency of the needs analysis.

Outcome:

We will undertake a needs analysis on a regular basis, disseminate the results as widely as possible, and encourage their use for identifying priorities and required action.

Activity evaluation

BA Recommendation: A range of activities is evaluated, linked to the survey of the public, exploring which activities are most engaging for particular groups of people. This might include evaluation of the relative awareness and impact of many small activities to larger national or regional events.

OST proposed to:

- Establish best practice for evaluating science in society activities;
- Develop existing evaluation of the activities it currently supports.

There was clear support for work in this area. The reasons most frequently cited were:

- The need to focus on outputs of activity rather than process and the need for guidance on how this can best be done.
- The potential for evaluation to show value for money of different types of activity.
- The need to promote evaluation as a key tool for policy development and amongst practitioners (e.g. best practice in project management).

"...clearer advice on the intended outputs of a project or activity, the outcomes generated against those and a perception of the wider impact. All might be helpful to practitioners and for OST in evaluating the use of its budget." Association of Medical Research Charities

Lots of good suggestions were made about work that we could draw on, for example, EPSRC's pilot project involving longitudinal tracking of impact on young people of a range of public awareness activities, and SETNET's work on the long term impact of its own work, that of the SETPoints and the resources going into schools.

Outcome:

OST and the Research Councils will take forward a joint project to produce guidelines for funders and practitioners on evaluating public engagement activities and programmes. A programme will also be developed and delivered to disseminate the results of this work.

In addition, OST will fund work to compare selected types of public engagement activity and their effectiveness and value for money. The mechanism we choose to do this will partly depend on that chosen for the public attitude survey (for example, we could, as the BA recommended, recruit members of the public through the survey for evaluation work) and so we will consider this strand of work further once our discussions on the survey have taken place.

Special group research

BA Recommendation: Qualitative research is carried out among groups for which there is particular policy commitment, such as women, the socially excluded and minority ethnic groups, in order to establish the best means of engaging such groups and making science relevant to them.

OST proposed to:

- Ensure that any public surveys we fund should provide sufficient data on those groups who are under-represented in science in society activities;
- Continue to make projects that seek to widen participation in science in society activity a theme of our grants scheme.

There was very strong support for our proposed approach in this area. Suggested issues for further consideration included:

- *The need to involve and consult a wide range of organisations and individuals on widening participation issues.* We agree that we should not be guided solely by academic research in this area. Science communication practitioners themselves will have much to contribute as will non-science networks, such as groups representing the disabled.
- *That we should seek to draw on the results of other work.* We agree. We received several useful suggestions in this regard, such as the evaluation of the Planet Science outreach project.
- *That the proposed data collection will identify problems not solutions.* Agreed, but we would hope that the data coming out of our research (and that of others) will help to stimulate interested parties to develop projects which aim to widen participation. As stated above, this will be a theme of our grant scheme.
- *That perhaps this should not be a specific priority for science and society activity.* We are seeking to widen participation in science and society activities for a number of reasons: debate on scientific issues will benefit from as diverse a range of inputs as possible; transparency on the research being supported with public funds; our non-curricula focused activity aimed at young people seeks to encourage all groups to think about science subjects as academic options and science based careers; we are legally required, through the Race Relations Amendment Act, to promote racial equality through our activities.

- *That wider issues of better representation of women and minorities in science and governance need to be considered.* We agree, and work on this is being taken forward by colleagues in the new Science and Society directorate. We will ensure that our work is mutually supportive.

Outcome:

We will take forward the two proposals above.

Media monitoring

BA Recommendation: A media monitoring service is established to support organisations engaged in developing science in society activities, so that they can be better and more immediately informed about issues of public interest as reflected in the media.

OST proposed to:

- Produce an annual summary of media coverage of science and thus establish the media background against which to evaluate the impact of particular events.

There was no clear consensus amongst respondents on our proposal.

Those that supported it, or a development of it, felt that, among other things, it would:

- Help to track trends in media coverage and inform the development of science and society activity.
- Enable us to identify the emergence of possibly controversial issues and develop strategies to address them.
- Help to track coverage of controversial issues and allow us to learn from the experience.
- Allow us to compare media coverage data with that derived from the public attitudes survey (e.g. is the tone of media coverage affecting public attitudes?)

Amongst the reason for respondents not supporting the proposal were:

- An annual digest being too infrequent and not allowing quick enough reaction to emerging issues.

- That organisations in the science and society field should be undertaking this type of activity themselves.
- That what was really needed was a better horizon scanning process rather than media monitoring.
- That this type of media monitoring would produce relatively superficial results and that what was needed was in-depth research on specific topics (such as that carried out recently by Cardiff University).

“The Trust agrees that existing media-monitoring services are sufficient for public/science issues. Instead of focusing on issues retrospectively, more horizon-scanning information would be useful to identify at an early stage scientific issues that may become of public interest in the future.” The Wellcome Trust

It was noticeable that there were very few comments on the main driver behind our proposal, namely, that a clearer picture of science media coverage would bring a greater sophistication to the evaluation of specific science and society activities. This ambivalence has encouraged us to reflect further. We still believe that science media monitoring will be a valuable input to evaluation, the question for us is, what is the best mechanism to deliver this? For example, should this be part of a wider process of horizon scanning for emerging scientific issues? OST’s Foresight programme has a clear interest in the latter and we are working with colleagues there, more widely within DTI, and with others, to establish the best mechanism to meet our own requirements and those of the science and society community more widely.

Outcome:

Any media monitoring service we introduce will provide data either quarterly or monthly and thus be more timely and relevant to users. It is likely that it will form part of a wider horizon scanning exercise aimed at identifying emerging scientific issues which might be of public interest.

Annual providers’ conference/forum

BA Recommendation: An annual conference of organisers and funders of initiatives is supported, to review, discuss and respond to the mapping and survey results, to share practice and to identify areas for co-operation and collaboration.

OST proposed to:

- Use it as input to our own policy development;
- Use it to disseminate the results of our research and thus stimulate discussion and help to identify areas for action.

There was very strong support for the conference. Among other things, it was felt that it would provide an opportunity to: share best practice and experience (including with those outside the science community); identify possible areas for collaboration and co-operation; consider research outputs; make recommendations for action; and network.

Suggested issues for further consideration included:

- *Speakers and audience composition:* Many respondents felt that more needed to be done to attract a more diverse range of speakers and audience, including: science communication practitioners; decision makers; researchers; those involved in marketing and PR; user groups; the media; and business. It was suggested that a bursary scheme might help to address the issue of wider participation (see next paragraph). Many respondents felt that there was much to be learnt from those working outside the area of science.

"The annual conference must not become a repetitive talking-shop for the 'usual suspects'. It must aim genuinely to involve a wide and diverse group of interested parties, and aim to generate new and innovative ideas." Save British Science

The conference is seeking to engage a wide range of organisations and individuals including funders, practitioners and activity/scheme managers. OST agrees therefore that both the speakers and audience should come from as wide a constituency as possible. If costs related to the conference are proving a disincentive to some individuals/organisations attending then we agree that a bursary scheme could help to address this. We therefore intend to provide some funding for such a scheme to be set up on a trial basis and are in discussions with the BA and RS about its modalities.

- *Frequency:* Some feared that an annual conference was too frequent and that there was danger of it becoming a talking shop.

We believe that an annual conference is probably right. There may well be years when there is less research to consider and perhaps less strategic thinking to be done. However, on these occasions

the balance of the programme might lean towards practical issues. In addition, we should not underestimate potential benefits of regular networking (e.g. collaboration/co-operation).

- *Location:* Could the conference be held in the regions?

We do not have strong views on this. However, it should be borne in mind that networking is one of the themes of the OST grant scheme, proposals for regional networking would thus be welcome through the scheme.

- *Objectives:* Could the conference be used to reward good practice in public engagement through prize giving? Could the conference be themed?

The conference would certainly represent a good opportunity to celebrate success in this field. If there was an overriding reason for the conference to be themed then we would support this. However, sometimes themes can be contrived and bear little relation to the content of a conference.

Feedback from the science communication conference held at the Institute of Electrical Engineers in May has been very positive. For the foreseeable future, the BA and the Royal Society are keen to continue to work together on the conference. OST has therefore passed the consultation responses on the annual conference to both the BA and RS as an input to the conference's further development.

Outcome:

We will work with the BA and Royal Society to develop the conference further. As stated above, we will use it to disseminate results of our own work and use the conference as an input to our policy development. We will establish a bursary scheme on a trial basis.

Networking fund

BA Recommendation: A networking fund is established to facilitate all year round networking for collaboration and co-operation between funders and providers.

OST proposed to:

- Consider network proposals through its grant scheme.

The balance of opinion was strongly in favour of supporting network proposals. It was felt that these could focus, for example, on particular regions, specific subjects, or groups of professionals (e.g. in PR).

It was also suggested that we should encourage existing networks to work together; and that we should do more to encourage the transfer of ideas between activities and ensure that best use was being made of evaluation reports etc.

All of the above are good suggestions. We intend to establish a 'Collaboration and Networking' theme within our grant scheme and will discuss the parameters of this theme with our grant scheme manager once they have been appointed. We would want to place as much emphasis, if not more, on making existing networks work better and/or together as we would establishing new ones.

We also agree that more could be done to help grant holders as projects develop and to encourage projects to learn from one another. This might best be done by project mentors. We will be supporting mentoring through the forthcoming rounds of the Copus grants scheme (which is funded largely by OST). If feedback from this is positive we are likely to adopt this approach in our new, consolidated grants scheme.

Outcome:

We will establish a 'Collaboration and Networking' theme within our grant scheme. Depending on feedback on existing mentoring, we will support mentoring through our consolidated grant scheme.

OST work plan consultation

BA Recommendation: The OST consults periodically on its objectives and work plan for the following period, perhaps synchronised with the Comprehensive Spending Review, to ensure that its programme is informed and influenced by the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders.

OST proposed to:

- Consult on our overall programme every two years;
- Consult on some of the priorities for the grants scheme every year.

The vast majority of respondents supported this level of consultation. Some useful suggestions for further consideration were:

- *That the suggested periods between consultation should not be too rigid.* We agree with this. Our suggestions set out the minimum level of consultation we would expect. We would not rule out more frequent ad-hoc consultation if it was necessary.
- *That the cycle of consultation could usefully tie in with the establishment of science funding priorities through the Spending Review.* These changing priorities are likely to have the biggest impact on the Research Councils' science and society activities, but we agree that they would be a useful input to the development of our own programme.
- *That we should not consult solely on the areas that we have policy lead and that we should adopt an holistic approach (on, for example, education issues).* We hope that the formation of the new Science and Society Directorate will help us to better synchronise development of related strands of work within it. It should also allow OST to enhance its relationship with other Government Departments and those outside Government. A more holistic approach to policy development should stem from this.

Outcome:

We will consult as described in our proposals.

OST call for proposals

BA Recommendation: The OST commissions work and offers calls for proposals based on the information available through this process, with specific panels to examine each call to ensure appropriate peer review, fairness and transparency.

OST proposed to:

- Continue to support the Copus grant scheme in 2003/04.
- From 2004/05 consolidate our support for small, medium and large grants into one scheme.
- Direct our support at the following themes: science in society; widening participation; collaboration and networking; good practice in science communication; science in the media.

There was strong support for our proposed grant themes. Suggestions for further consideration tended to relate to either the themes or modalities of the scheme.



Themes:

- *Suggestions that projects aimed at class-room activity should be included.*

We agree that science should be interesting and relevant in the classroom. However, we have to prioritise our own activity. Given that others within Government (particularly DfES and the devolved administrations) and outside are focusing on this issue, we feel that our funds should continue to be aimed at activities outside the formal education system (activities aimed at young people *outside* the formal education system can still be funded through our grant scheme). DTI's support for SETNET and SEAs is now being managed by Tony Kesten within the new Science and Society Directorate in OST, so there is now an even better opportunity to ensure coherence between these activities, our own and those outside the DTI.

- *That grant rounds could occasionally have an overall theme.* We would not rule this out and would be open to suggestions.
- *Suggestion that our 'science in the media' theme could be seen as an attempt to manipulate media coverage.* This is certainly not our intention. We currently support AlphaGalileo and this is the type of activity that could be funded under the 'science and the media' theme.
- *Suggestion that we might fund research into public attitudes to science through the grant scheme.* This is something that we intend to fund through directed research. We will then consult others on such data (e.g. through the annual meeting) and agree what action should be taken and by whom.
- *That improving the involvement of scientists in science and society activity should be funded through the scheme.* Linked to this, *that we should support the training of scientists in this area.* Again, it is a matter of priorities for us. The funders of research (e.g. Research Councils and Funding Councils) have a clear role in this area. We see our own role as working with these funders to ensure that scientists are both encouraged to engage with the public and are rewarded for doing so, and that they are suitably trained to do so.

Modalities:

- *Several respondents felt that we should give priority to one or more of the themes we had suggested.* We are looking to support a good

spread of projects across our proposed themes. However, our overriding consideration will be the quality of proposals.

- There were also a number of comments on the *balance to be struck between small, medium and large grants*. Again, given limited resources, we need to prioritise our support. We feel that our funding would be best aimed at projects aiming for national impact, or those that develop an idea or methodology that could be rolled out nationally. This in turn points towards our priority being larger projects (with budgets of approximately £20,000 and over).
- We agree with suggestions that there should normally be more than one grant round per year.
- There was also a suggestion that *all projects in the science and society area should be rated in research project style*. Whilst having a theoretical appeal, we doubt whether this would work in practice. All existing funders of activity have their own criteria for assessing grant applications and monitoring projects and we do not believe that they would be willing to adopt common criteria. OST believes that it can bring about change through encouraging the adoption of best practice and through taking forward the evaluation work outlined above.

Outcome:

OST currently funds small (£500-£8,000) and medium (£8,001-£20,000) size grants through the Copus grant scheme which is managed by the Royal Society. We manage and fund larger public engagement grants (over £20,000) directly from OST.

For 2003-04 we will introduce a transitional arrangement for external grants, extending the Copus grant scheme to cover grants up to around £200,000.

From April 2004, OST will amalgamate its funding for small, medium and large grants into a single scheme. Later this year we will issue an invitation to tender for the grant scheme manager's role. Part of their job will be to establish and service a suitable grants peer review panel.

This year's Copus grants scheme will be launched on 10 September 2003 and will focus on the themes listed above (details are at www.copus.org.uk). Initially, our consolidated grant scheme will do the same, but we will consult regularly on the priorities for the scheme (through, for example, the annual science communication conference).

Evaluation of the process

BA Recommendation: The OST commissions an evaluation of this process and suite of activities to inform the next cycle of activity.

OST proposed to:

- Evaluate the programme as a whole and its individual strands.

Outcome

We will evaluate individual strands of work as they are completed and the whole programme once a cycle of activity has been completed.

Advisory Group

BA Recommendation: The OST [should] appoint a small advisory committee of independent expert individuals to advise it.

OST proposed to:

- Establish a Strategy Advisory Group to advise us on our programme.

We believe that the Council for Science and Technology, or a sub-group of it, could provide useful advice on OST's Science and Society activity. CST's new work programme will be developed in the coming months and we will explore with its two chairs and its members whether it is willing to take on such an advisory role.

Miscellaneous points from respondents:

- *Funding of public engagement activity:* Suggestion that funds for public engagement activity should be embedded in research grants.
- *Training for scientists:* Suggestion that this should be more widely available.
- *Feedback from dialogue and informal consultation:* Suggestion that we need to strengthen existing mechanisms for using feedback.

We will hold discussions with the Research Councils on all of the above points and will consult more widely as necessary.

- *Links with the industrial sector:* We agree that the science communication community could engage more effectively with the industrial and business sectors. Proposals to do so would be welcome under the 'Collaboration and Networking' theme of our grants scheme.

Annex 1

Summary of proposed actions and target completion dates

- *Activities database*: Building on existing information sources, develop a database, and/or a means of interrogating existing databases, containing information on science and society activities. This would form part of a website containing additional information on issues such as evaluation best practice. We would hope that the database could be producing useful data within a year.
- *Snapshot survey*: Undertake a snapshot survey of the science and society activities of the major funders in this area. End of January 2004.
- *National public surveys*: We are likely to undertake regular qualitative and quantitative research into public interest in and attitudes towards science and their participation in existing activities. Report by end of October 2004.
- *Needs analysis*: Compare data from the database with that from qualitative/quantitative research to identify whether activity is meeting the public's 'needs'. End of January 2005.
- *Activity evaluation*: In partnership with the Research Councils, produce guidelines on evaluating public engagement activities and programmes for funders and practitioners. Compare different types of science and society activity and their effectiveness and value for money. Timetable to be agreed with the Research Councils.
- *Special group research*: Ensure that any research we undertake produces sufficient data on traditionally under-represented groups. Establish 'widening participation' in science and society activity as a theme within our grant scheme.
- *Media monitoring*: Establish a process for media monitoring which might form part of a wider horizon scanning activity aimed at identifying scientific issues of potential interest to the public. Work to begin by end of November 2003.
- *Annual providers conference/forum*: Use the annual conference to disseminate results from research we have funded. Establish a small bursary scheme for attendance at the conference. Modalities of bursary scheme to be agreed by end of December 2003.

- *Networking fund*: Establish a networking theme within our grants scheme.
- *OST work plan consultation*: Consult on our overall programme every two years and key issues as they arise. Discuss the outputs of the above work at the science communication conference in May 2005 in the context of, among other things, the future direction of our programme.
- *OST call for proposals*: Grant support to initially focus on the following themes: Science and Society; Widening Participation; Collaboration and Networking; Good Practice in Science Communication; Science in the media. We will fund a further round of Copus grants in 2003/04, to be announced September 2003. From 2004/05 we will establish a consolidated scheme. Two rounds of our consolidated scheme will be held in financial year 2004/05.
- *Evaluation of the process*: Evaluate our overall programme once we have been through a cycle of activity. Likely to be Summer 2005.
- *Advisory group*: Seek strategic advice on our Science and Society programme from the Council for Science and Technology by end of 2003.

Annex 2

Numerical summary of consultation responses

	Responses	Yes	%	No	%
Q4² - Do you think that the establishment of a database/web site of science and society activities would be useful?	43	40	93	3	7
Q5 - Do you believe that an annual snapshot survey would be a useful alternative approach?	43	15	35	28	65
Q6 - Do you think that a national public survey is needed?	42	37	88	5	12
Q7 - Do you agree that a needs analysis should take place?	44	40	91	4	9
Q8 - Is there any specific research you feel should be conducted on evaluation techniques for science in society?	27				
Q9 - Do you believe that this approach will help to address the needs of under-represented groups?	38	33	87	5	13
Q10 - Do you think that an annual [media] digest as described above would be useful?	36 ³	8	80	2	20
Q11 - Do you believe that an annual providers' conference should take place?	44	40	91	4	9
Q12 - Do you believe that OST should consider supporting networking proposals?	41	36	88	5	12
Q13 - Do you think that this frequency of consultation provides enough opportunity for external input?	41	37	90	4	10
Q14 - Do you agree with the above themes for the OST grant scheme?	44	38	86	6	14

² Questions 1-3 focused on information about the respondent

³ The majority of responses were 'maybe'

Annex 3

List of Respondents

African-Caribbean Network for Science & Technology	
AlphaGalileo Foundation	
Association for Science Education	
Association of Medical Research Charities	
Ball	Johnny
Bauer	Martin
Beaumont	Paul
BRE	
Briggs	Peter
British Council	
British Geological Survey	
Clifton Scientific Trust	
Department of Enterprise, Trade & Investment, NI	
Economic & Social Research Council	
Economic & Social Research Council (Said Business School)	
ECSITE UK	
Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council	
Engineering & Technology Board	
Equal Opportunities Commission	
Forestry Commission	
Healey	Peter
Health & Safety Executive	
Home Office	
Imperial College	
Institute of Electrical Engineers	
Institute of Food Research	
Institute of Physics	
Jones	Sarah
Kesten	Tony

Mesure	Steve
National Endowment for Science Technology & the Arts	
National Museum of Science & Industry	
Natural Environment Research Council	
North West Science Alliance	
Novartis Foundation	
Nuffield Curriculum Centre	
Oxford Trust	
Pfizer Ltd	
Royal Academy of Engineering	
Royal Geographical Society	
Royal Society	
Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce	
Royal Society of Chemistry	
Save British Science	
Science Communication Conference	
Science Council	
Selkirk	Fiona
Simpson	Yvonne
Singh	Simon
Southampton Oceanography Centre	
UK Nirex Ltd	
UMIST	
Wellcome Trust	
Young Science Communicators Network	

Annex 4

Summary of the Cabinet Office Consultation Code of Practice

1. Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.
2. It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.
3. A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.
4. Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others) and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.
5. Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.
6. Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and the reasons for decisions finally taken.
7. Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation co-ordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.
8. The complete code is available on the Cabinet Office's web site, address www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm.

dti

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We champion UK business at home and abroad. We invest heavily in world-class science and technology. We protect the rights of working people and consumers. And we stand up for fair and open markets in the UK, Europe and the world.