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19<sup>th</sup> January 2005

## **OST REVIEW OF SCIENCE IN DEFRA**

The Science Review team in the Office of Science and Technology (OST) is starting a review of science in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The purpose of this note is to invite your views on the quality, management and use of science in Defra, with particular regard to some or all of the 10 review criteria identified below.

The accompanying notes set out:

- the terms of reference for the review;
- advice on how to send in evidence;
- background information about the review; and
- a list of those we are consulting.

Both we and Defra are seeking to carry out a constructive review which will lead to improvements in performance and benefit those who have dealings with Defra. Therefore, while I appreciate that responding to such requests is demanding of your time and resources, I hope you will be able to respond. You may wish to consider making a joint submission with another organisation.

Having read the enclosed notes, if you wish to send in your views, please note that the deadline for submissions is Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2005. However, if possible it would be helpful to have at least your initial thoughts before then, to ensure that your contribution can be drawn to the attention of our review Steering Panel's first meeting.

I look forward to hearing from you.

## SCIENCE REVIEW TERMS OF REFERENCE

OST is seeking views and information that will help us to carry out the review of science in Defra against the following 10 criteria, relating to how effectively the department:

1. has developed a clear, overall science strategy;
2. 'horizon scans' to identify future science-related issues;<sup>1</sup>
3. reviews and harnesses existing research and identifies gaps and opportunities for future research;
4. commissions and manages new research;
5. ensures the quality and relevance of the work it carries out and sponsors;
6. uses the research and scientific advice, for example in formulating policy;
7. publishes results and debates their implications openly;
8. shares, transfers and manages knowledge;<sup>2</sup>
9. has implemented the guidance contained in Guidelines 2000 and the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees; and
10. uses, maintains and develops scientific expertise (including both capacity and capacity building).

These ten criteria will be used to identify both areas of good practice, especially those that could be adopted elsewhere, as well as areas for improvement.

Please note that, for the purposes of the Science Review, the term 'science' includes physical, natural and social sciences, research and data collection (monitoring and surveillance) activities.

## HOW TO SEND IN EVIDENCE

The purpose of consulting you is to help obtain an overview of current thinking about the above issues, and to gather information to feed into the review. Opinions offered should be supported with arguments or evidence. **You do not need to address all ten criteria listed above; indeed, you may feel that you can provide useful evidence on only one or two.**

Responses to this letter should be sent to the address above, preferably in electronic format, by Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2005. However, responses received by mid-March would be welcome and be fed in to the review Steering Panel's first meeting. If you would like to discuss your submission beforehand, please get in touch.

It would be helpful if the main text of your response does not exceed 2,000 words. If you feel that detailed supporting material is necessary, references to (preferably electronic) sources of relevant information accompanied by a brief summary of what these sources contain are, in general, more helpful to us than reproducing the basic information in your response. **Unless you indicate otherwise, we will assume that you have no objection to the disclosure of your response**, most probably as an excerpt or reference in our final report or placement on the OST website.

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<sup>1</sup> Horizon scanning is defined as the systematic examination of potential threats, opportunities and likely future developments, which are at the margins of current thinking and planning. It may explore novel and unexpected issues, as well as persistent problems or trends.

<sup>2</sup> Including exploitation of intellectual property where appropriate.

## BACKGROUND TO THE SCIENCE REVIEWS

Each year, UK Government spends around £1.5 billion on civil R&D to support delivery of departments' objectives.<sup>3</sup> Sir David King, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA), has set up a rolling programme of reviews of Government science to assess its quality and use.<sup>4</sup>

Building on the work of the Government's published strategy for science, engineering and technology, "Investing in Innovation" (July 2002),<sup>5</sup> OST is reviewing the way Government departments identify their science requirements and commission, quality assure and use science and scientific advice. The intention is to review all of the main science-using departments over the next 3-4 years.

The overall aims of the review programme are to:

1. **Maintain and improve the quality and use of science in government;**
2. **Review existing departmental systems** for assuring the quality, management and use of their science;
3. **Disseminate examples of best practice** from within the UK and abroad;
4. **Inform and support the Government's CSA** in his role of "advising the PM and the Cabinet on the overall health of science and scientific research funded by Government departments".

### Defra Review

OST has decided to undertake, as its third study, a review of the quality, management and use of science in the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).<sup>6</sup>

This invitation to submit evidence is being addressed to around 350 organisations that are likely to have useful experience of working with Defra (see the list below). If you think that we have missed an organisation that should contribute, please feel free either to contact me or to draw this note to their attention.

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<sup>3</sup> This does not include routine scientific testing and surveillance, nor funding via the Research Councils.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ost.gov.uk/policy/sciencereview/background.htm>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending\\_review/spend\\_sr02/spend\\_sr02\\_science.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_review/spend_sr02/spend_sr02_science.cfm)

<sup>6</sup> The first review, of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, was published in October 2004: <http://www.ost.gov.uk/policy/sciencereview/reviews.htm>. The second study, currently underway, is of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).