

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Select Committee Announcement

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SCIENCE CUTS THREATEN ECONOMIC RECOVERY, WARN MPs

The Science and Technology Committee today issues a stark warning to Government: commit to an increase in investment in science now or risk devastating British science and the economy in years to come.

In a report published today, the Committee says that a failure to increase investment in science is inconsistent with the Government's policy ambition of growth in the sector and undermines its previous good record in this area. If the Government is truly committed to the principle of a knowledge-based economy, it should increase spending on science in Wednesday's Budget.

The Pre-Budget Report in December 2009 announced that £600 million would be cut from higher education and science and research budgets by 2012-13.

Phil Willis MP, Committee Chair, said: "The Government's policy ambitions are at odds with its actions. On the one hand it champions supporting business investment in research and development, while on the other it announces cuts which threaten the very science base that underpins such businesses. We hope that the Budget will contain good news for science funding. Anything less has potentially devastating consequences for science in the UK."

A perception that British science is suffering as a result of cuts is likely to make the UK a less attractive place for academics to work. Equally, science may become a less attractive option for students contemplating higher education.

The Committee warns that academia risks losing some of its brightest and best to the bright lights of industry and commerce; the life of a young research scientist should be made more attractive.

The high cost of running science departments remains a threat and the Committee recommends that the Higher Education Funding Council for England's allocation of teaching funding for STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and maths) should reflect this.

Scientists are under pressure to demonstrate the impact of their work and the Committee highlights concerns that challenges in quantifying the economic impact of investment in research could result in some areas being undervalued.

Ends.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Further details about this inquiry can be found at:

http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/science_technology/s_t_spending_cuts.cfm

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Committee Website: <http://www.parliament.uk/science>

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