



Pioneering research
and skills

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2nd December 2011

Our ref: 9490

Dear Robert and David,

Thanks for your letter dated 23rd November. I am pleased that our recent clarifications concerning research excellence have served to provide reassurance regarding our vision and strategy. I am also pleased to confirm that in EPSRC we agree with you about many of the criteria you indicate are needed for us to implement our shaping capability strategy.

We have previously agreed that our decisions need to be based on the best data available and we have regularly asked our stakeholders to provide us with data or alert us to new sources of information as requested at the Learned Societies meeting (5th October 2011) and the Physical Sciences Town Meeting (26th September 2011).

We also agree with the need for transparency and have sought to provide this by being clear about all decisions and publishing on our web site the rationale for those decisions. We also recognise the need to communicate our intentions more clearly - hence the letter to Nature - and we will certainly try even harder in this respect as we move forward with the strategy.

EPSRC has previously stated at the Physical Sciences town meeting that it is our intention to publish the remaining decisions for Physical Sciences together so hopefully this will address your point regarding further announcements for chemistry. However due to practicalities EPSRC will still publish the remaining shaping decisions in two phases.

As you know we have also accepted the need to engage further with you and with the research community before we make additional decisions and I thank you for your offer to both work with us yourselves and to provide us with names of individuals with whom you would recommend we strengthen our engagement. In this respect, I would like to suggest the following:

- RSC to provide Andrew Bourne with a list of appropriate individuals (*circa* 10-15



names) that EPSRC can approach **by Thursday 8th December**. We have published the Physical Sciences sub-themes on the website and it would be helpful if you could particularly identify individuals in those areas yet to be assigned a shaping category. <http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/ourportfolio/themes/physicalsciences/Pages/default.aspx>

- EPSRC will approach as many of the nominated individuals as possible within the timescales it is working to and will hold a structured discussion around some of the key issues that we have identified as part of our analysis and also invite further wider comment from them. EPSRC will make it clear to those nominated individuals that they have been approached on behalf of RSC and their names may have to be published as part of demonstrating our continued engagement.
- The RSC provide any further input that it itself would wish to make by Friday 16 December.
- The input, alongside others we have received, will be provided to the next Physical Sciences Strategic Advisory Team where advice will be reviewed in the context of the Physical Sciences theme. The next meeting is currently scheduled for 24 January 2012.

Your suggestions for longer term action or strategy are thoughtful and again we would agree with many of the points you make and I believe we are already working on some of these issues with Council. Rather than address each of your long term recommendations in this letter, I would suggest that they form one basis for the continued constructive dialogue that we in EPSRC would wish to see with the RSC.

Working together we will certainly be better able to develop strategies that will enhance the effectiveness of our research base and thereby make the case for additional government funding.

Best Wishes,



David Delpy