

Response to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee inquiry into the Future of the Science Museum Group

It is a point of welcome cross party agreement that science and innovation are a key element for any long-term, sustainable economic growth. This is not just recognised by the UK but by most of our competitor economies who continue to invest heavily in science.

Science is one of the things the UK does best. Historical figures such as Newton, Darwin and Faraday and many contemporary scientists are well known and recognised the world over for their achievements. We also have companies such as Rolls Royce, Glaxo Smithkline and ARM (whose chips are in 97% of the world's mobile phones).

One of the factors that had kept us among the scientific superpowers is that we are a very pro-science population (for further information see [here](#)). When presented with sound evidence we usually make rational decisions. However, that is not something we can take for granted. While science is currently enjoying a higher profile in the media and more young people are choosing to take science subjects, it is still not central to our culture in the way it should be. Understanding and celebrating the contribution of science to our lives is essential.

That is the reason why the Science Museum Group is so important. They are among the best organisations at bringing science to new audiences in fun but informative ways. They celebrate not only our great scientific and engineering achievements but also the best of our cutting edge research. They do that in London, Manchester, York and Bradford. Could we imagine the UK, a country shaped by railways, not having a national railway museum, the home of the BBC not having a national media museum, or the cradle of the industrial revolution not having a museum of science and industry?

Over 5 million people a year visit the Science Museum Group sites with over 1 million children in that number (400,000 in school groups). A further 100,000 children are involved through the Science Museum's outreach programme. At the National Media Museum 44% of visitors are from lower socio-economic backgrounds and it is over 50% at the Museum of Science and Industry. There are also an increasing number of younger adults drawn in by innovative schemes such as the *Lates*.

The Science Museum Group is a vital part of the science and engineering ecosystem that can take our children and produce a scientifically literate population, equipped for making decisions on some of the big problems that we are facing and produce the great innovators that the economy needs.