

16 August 2016

House of Commons Energy and Climate Change Committee inquiry into leaving the EU: implications for UK climate policy

1. The Royal Society is the UK's national academy of science. It is a self-governing Fellowship of many of the world's most distinguished scientists working in academia, charities, industry and public service. The Society draws on the expertise of its Fellowship to provide independent, authoritative advice to decision makers. This submission focuses on the role of UK science in informing and implementing UK and global climate policy.
2. The UK has played an influential role in the negotiation of the EU's position on climate change. That role has been based on scientific evidence. It is important that the UK continues to play an influential role in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations whatever the UK's future relationship with the EU.
3. The UK is acknowledged as a world leader in climate science and is the second largest contributor in number of authors and expert reviewers to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) process. For the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report on the physical science basis of climate change, 14% of authors and expert reviewers were from the UK¹. The IPCC provides the UNFCCC with the current state of knowledge on climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts. Decision making about climate policies must remain underpinned by the best available science. UK science has strength and depth in this area and its international contribution has been considerable. Our leadership should be maintained to retain influence, not least it would take considerable time to build elsewhere.
4. The UK's assets in research and innovation must be safeguarded to maintain the UK's scientific excellence and competitiveness. As the UK prepares to leave the EU, there are uncertainties about the possible impact on the overall level of funding for UK research and the level of participation in EU projects. In the short term, the government should seek to limit uncertainty for UK research and innovation. The UK government's recent commitment to underwrite the value of any European grants awarded to UK researchers for the full award period is very welcome². By removing the

¹ Calculated from the annex of author and expert reviewers in the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report. Total authors and reviewers = 1878, UK based authors and reviewers = 265.

² HM Treasury (13 August 2016) Chancellor Philip Hammond guarantees EU funding beyond date UK leaves the EU <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-philip-hammond-guarantees-eu-funding-beyond-date-uk-leaves-the-eu>

uncertainty in the funding status of UK-based researchers, this measure will ensure that UK researchers can continue to collaborate with European colleagues and participate fully in European research programmes. . Going forward it will also be important to give researchers from the EU who are already working in the UK, and their dependents, immediate concrete assurances that they will be able to live and work in the UK. Longer term it will be important to ensure that there is no decline in overall public funding for UK research and take steps to strengthen UK research and the ability of UK researchers to work with others around the world.

5. The transition to a zero carbon future will require deploying the full breadth of human talent and invention. There exists vast potential for innovation in the UK and in our partnership working with the EU and the rest of the world. Capturing this potential quickly and effectively will drive economic growth³ and should be part of the UK's new Industrial Strategy.

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³ Royal Society and UK's Professional and Learned Societies (2015) Climate communiqué <https://royalsociety.org/~media/policy/Publications/2015/21-07-15-climate-communique.PDF>