Strategic Plan
2017 – 2022

THE
ROYAL
SOCIETY

Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022

This Strategic Plan sets out the purpose and values of the Royal Society and then identifies three strategic priorities, which will form the core focus of the Society's activities over the next five years.

The Society remains committed to the purpose, values and principles set out in the 2012 – 2017 plan. This new Plan builds on the work undertaken to date and has been updated to reflect the changing scientific, political and social developments during the past five years, including the UK's decision to leave the European Union, and to strengthen the Society's response to future trends in science and emerging technologies.

Science, technology and innovation advance our economic, social and cultural well-being and our health. Many of today's most serious and urgent challenges are global ones and need to be tackled by nations working together and with outstanding research and researchers at the centre. Since its formation, the Royal Society has played a key role in promoting science and the value of science around the world and this Plan recognises that this role is as important now as it has ever been and sets out increased plans for international engagement.

Purpose

The Royal Society is a self-governing Fellowship of distinguished scientists drawn from all areas of science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine.

The Society's fundamental purpose, reflected in its founding charters of the 1660s, is to recognise, promote and support excellence in science and to encourage the development and use of science for the benefit of humanity.

The Society has played a part in some of the most fundamental, significant and life-changing discoveries in scientific history and Royal Society scientists continue to make outstanding contributions to science across the wide breadth of research areas.

Nature and values

The Royal Society is the National Academy of science in the UK.

It is a self-governing Fellowship of the UK's and the Commonwealth's most distinguished scientists and elects Fellows and Foreign Members from all over the world based on the excellence of their science. There are approximately 1450 Fellows and 170 Foreign Members from over 30 different countries. The Fellowship and Foreign Membership includes more than 80 Nobel Laureates.

It is from the eminence of its Fellowship and Foreign Membership and its independence of government, parliament and particular interests that the authority of the Society in scientific matters derives. Fellows and Foreign Members are invited to fulfil a range of responsibilities for the Society on a voluntary basis, and many are members of committees or working groups that oversee the work of the Society. The Society's work is supported by a dedicated staff based at the Society's offices in central London.

The Society undertakes a range of activities to achieve its mission. This includes supporting the work of outstanding scientists through its grants programmes, facilitating interaction and communication among scientists via its discussion meetings and disseminating scientific advances through its journals. Increasingly, the Society has developed its engagement and influence outside of the research community through its independent policy work, education programmes and interaction with the public and key pillars of society such as the judiciary.

The Society combines several roles:

- As a Fellowship of outstanding scientists embracing the entire scientific landscape, the Society recognises excellence and elects Fellows and Foreign Members from all over the world.
- As a National Academy, the Society represents the UK and collaborates with international partners to advocate for science and its benefits. It provides authoritative and independent advice on matters of science that support the public good, including policies that promote excellent science and scientific issues that inform public policy. It also organises scientific conferences and publishes scientific journals.
- As a Registered Charity, the Society undertakes a range of activities that provide public benefit either directly or indirectly. These include providing financial support for scientists at various stages of their careers and funding programmes that advance understanding of our world.

The work of the Society is based on some key principles

- The Society holds that scientific knowledge and ways of working are essential to understanding the world and our position in it. Such understanding must be subject to challenge, refinement and revision in light of reproducible and reliable evidence, analysis and argument.
- The Society promotes and upholds the highest ethical standards in, and in relation to, scientific work.
- The Society recognises that science, if properly developed and applied, is fundamental to health, well-being, and the quality of life and is essential for social and economic progress.
- The Society is committed to electing to its Fellowship and Foreign Membership and supporting through its funding schemes outstanding individuals who work in all areas of science including curiosity-driven, interdisciplinary and applied research and across the wide range of scientific disciplines.
- The Society is committed to involving its Fellows and Foreign Members and the wider scientific community including early career scientists in its activities and to working in collaboration with national and international academies, learned societies and other partners.
- The Society is concerned with excellent science wherever and by whomever it is done. This includes involving scientists from across the UK and internationally, from academia, industry, teaching and the public sector and scientists at different career stages.

  The Society is committed to increasing diversity among the scientific workforce and in the activities it undertakes itself. The Society will continue to encourage nominations to its Fellowship and applications to its grant programmes from under-represented groups and to publish annual diversity data on its website to show its progress.
- The Society believes that its independence as a self-governing Fellowship enables it to offer to the public and to policy makers access to the most reliable understanding that science can provide.
- The Society is committed to upholding high standards of governance and to use its resources effectively and efficiently to achieve its mission.
- The Society is committed to recruiting and developing a talented and motivated professional staff to support its work.

Strategic approach

Science has always been an international endeavour.

The UK's decision to leave the European Union and the implications for UK research in terms of funding, mobility and regulation means that the Society will place even greater emphasis during the period of this plan on the importance of promoting international research collaborations and ensuring that UK researchers remain preferred partners for scientists from all over the world.

During the lifetime of this Plan, long term trends as well as recent events, new ideas and emerging technologies will have significant impacts on the practice, use and communication of science, and on the way we live.

Science, research and innovation are at the heart of building a successful economy and the Society will continue to demonstrate the importance of investment in these vital areas and the resultant benefits to society. The Society will continue to advocate for the importance of a STEM education in order to develop the key skills needed to maximise the opportunities presented by new ideas and technologies.

Dramatic increases in data collection and the rise in computing power are already changing societies as are new developments in genetic and other technologies. Climate change and the implications of rising greenhouse gas levels in the Earth's atmosphere, increasing pressure on resources including food, water, land and energy and the impact of an expanding and ageing population in some countries, will continue to be major issues.

The Society will actively seek to identify some of these key scientific and technological trends and develop themed programmes across the organisation which will show that science, technology and innovation, if developed and implemented appropriately, are vital to improving health, wellbeing and quality of life.

At the same time the Society will continue to pursue its core activities including supporting outstanding researchers, publishing journals, public engagement and education, organising discussion meetings, providing science advice and preserving and promoting the Society's important historic collections.

Much of the Society's work involves collaborating with partners, use of its convening power and exercising leadership as appropriate.

Strategic priorities

The Society's three strategic priorities emphasise its commitment to scientific excellence, to the international nature of research and the role of science in our lives and the benefits it can bring to society. In delivering these priorities during this strategic period, which is expected to include the UK's departure from the EU, the Society will have particular regard to the need to work both nationally and internationally.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Promoting excellence in science

The Society's aim is to harness the expertise of its Fellowship to ensure that excellence in science is recognised and supported and that scientific work is of the highest quality.

The Society will therefore engage with academia, industry, government, parliament, educators and other bodies as appropriate to:

a) advocate for the conduct of excellent science and the establishment of the best environment for researchers in the UK and the Commonwealth. This includes considering the research landscape including culture, infrastructure, career development and funding:

I. Develop a deeper understanding of the future factors influencing career development and research opportunities, working with researchers at all stages of their career

II. Continue to advocate for the mobility of scientists between the UK and other countries, on which science crucially depends.

III. Work to ensure that the UK's research funding structures are supportive and effectively implemented

b) use evidence to demonstrate the economic and societal benefits of investment in research and innovation and work with partners to advocate strongly for a properly funded research system:

I. With other national bodies continue to advocate for UK science funding. This includes asking the government to invest 0.67% of GDP on R&D and to set an overall target of 3% of GDP for combined public and private R&D spending.

II. Ensure that UK scientists are able to participate fully in new and existing international funding regimes and have access to international infrastructure.

c) attract and retain talented researchers to UK science by providing funding to support individual scientists across and between disciplines and at different career stages, giving them freedom to follow their best research ideas including curiosity driven and applied research and provide them with training and other opportunities to help them develop their research careers. This includes the Society's flagship early career schemes such as the University Research Fellowship and the Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowship, the Industry Fellows programme and initiatives such as Policy Fellowships.

d) seek to engage with and listen to early career researchers, including those funded by the Society, to ensure that the Society's activities remain future focused and reflect the needs and wants of the next generation of scientists.

e) recognise outstanding contributions to science across the world in various ways, including through the election of exceptional scientists to the Fellowship and the presentation of medals and awards to researchers from academia, industry and civil society.

f) design new activities that encourage and support researchers to develop science and technology innovations that will benefit society and contribute to the UK economy. This will include supporting innovators and entrepreneurs to translate research ideas into commercial practice.

g) increase scientific understanding by publishing journals and harness technological and other publishing innovations to develop a sustainable open access publications business model.

h) preserve, disseminate and develop the Society's historical collections and use them to support high quality academic study of the history of science.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Supporting international scientific collaboration

Science is an inherently international activity. The Society's aim is to reinforce the importance of science to build partnerships between nations, promote international relations and science's role in culture and society.

The Society will engage with partners across the world to encourage collaborations and networks, improve scientific quality, support scientific capacity building and address global challenges. The Society will therefore work with its Fellowship and Foreign Membership with international connections and country-specific knowledge and with partner academies and institutions in the UK and internationally to:

a) take a lead in ensuring that the UK plays an influential role in international science through proactive engagement with international scientific organisations and networks and identifying opportunities for Royal Society Fellows and Foreign Members to contribute to international scientific decision-making.

I. Continue to support international science advisory mechanisms

II. Establish a regular programme of high level scientific meetings with a range of leading scientific nations.

b) work with partners to address global issues and challenges including those set out in the Sustainable Development Goals.

c) join work with partner academies and other Commonwealth institutions to foster scientific collaboration between Commonwealth countries.

d) work with UK and international partners to support developing countries especially in Africa and the Commonwealth to build their scientific capability through programmes that support individuals, build networks, and foster research excellence including the development, execution and assessment of research projects.

e) engage leading scientists and scientific nations in order to share knowledge and build understanding about emerging technologies and new scientific trends.

f) develop a world-leading series of Royal Society Discussion Meetings which bring outstanding international scientists together to advance scientific knowledge and generate new ideas.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Demonstrating the importance of science to everyone

Science is influenced by culture and other developments in society just as scientific thinking and innovation influence how people live their lives. It is important that the Society engages with different groups in society and with the public in general to find out about their experiences, listen to their views and to make science part of wider conversation.

This exchange of thinking and dialogue will help to shape the Society's work with the aim of maximising its relevance, accessibility and impact. The Society aims to:

a) take a lead in the provision of authoritative, accessible and independent scientific evidence to policy makers and other stakeholders on issues of public interest. It will:

I. develop evidence and positions to support the Society's full range of objectives in policy areas including funding, mobility and skills, infrastructure and regulation

II. identify and provide evidence on issues of scientific, economic and public importance such as the use of data, climate science and energy, and the deployment of genetic and other emerging technologies

III. carry out programmes further to embed science as part of policy making, including support to enhance and enrich the flow of evidence and movements of people between sectors.

IV. support initiatives with Parliament, Government and the public sector such as pairing, placement and recognition schemes

b) develop a programme of engagement with influential groups in society to ensure that science and scientific evidence is considered as part of wider debate. This includes parliamentarians, government, the judiciary, the City, business, industry, media, teaching and cultural organisations. It will:

I. consolidate and embed the Science and the Law programme

II. use existing and develop new ways to deploy the Society's convening power to connect people and to develop and exchange evidence, knowledge and ideas.

c) increase its programme of public dialogue to ensure that the views of the wider public are built into the development of its policy and other work. It will:

I. identify and carry out dialogue in specific areas where the science is moving fast and the implications for society are potentially significant but uncertain, including areas such as the implications of data sciences for the future of skills and work, and genetic technologies applied to humans, plants and animals

II. complement its public dialogue with public engagement programmes which start to build awareness of emerging topics and issues

d) invite people to engage with science and scientists through public events and activities and work in partnership with museums, galleries and other cultural organisations to reach new audiences.

e) use the Society's extraordinary collections to excite audiences about science and include history of science within the Society's public engagement programme.

f) continue to advocate for the importance of science and maths education in order to equip young people with the skills they need for the future, including through support for high quality teaching and technical assistance and by encouraging young people to take part in research projects.

g) be an authoritative resource and point of contact for media who wish to engage with science and scientific organisations.

h) promote the Society's work through appropriate media channels and increase the Society's engagement with relevant audiences through digital communications including social media.

Governance

The Society's constitution as an independent, self-governing Fellowship is fundamental in enabling it to achieve its purposes.

It is vital that the Fellowship and Foreign Membership be engaged in decisions about what the Society does and in its governance. A Council of 20-24 Fellows, headed by the President and four Officers, governs the Society supported by the Executive Director and the Society's permanent staff.

The Society will:

a) continue to elect Fellows and Foreign members of the highest scientific distinction

b) review the eligibility criteria for election to the Fellowship and Foreign Membership to reflect the Society's various roles in the UK, Commonwealth and internationally.

c) review the number and composition of Sectional Committees to ensure that all areas of science continue to be appropriately represented.

d) seek to involve more Fellows and Foreign Members in the Society's work, particularly those based overseas.

e) continue to hold regular meetings of Fellows and Foreign Members to discuss matters of significance and to organise opportunities for Fellows and Foreign Members to meet and engage with the Society and its work.

f) continue to ensure that it is governed effectively to meet its role as a Fellowship, National Academy and charitable institution.

g) continue to monitor the Society's risk registers on a regular basis and take action as appropriate.

Operation and resources

The operations of the Society must be organised and conducted to the highest standards and the resources of the Society managed efficiently and cost-effectively.

The Society will:

a) recruit talented and motivated people to work at the Society, provide development opportunities for them and consult with staff to ensure that the Royal Society is viewed as a desirable place to work.

b) continue to seek expert advice on the Carlton House Terrace lease and keep the potential of extending the lease under review.

c) consider the future use of Chicheley Hall.

d) continue to ensure that the Society's systems and processes are fit for purpose.

e) consider the Society's trading operations including potential changes to the current publishing model and the implications for the Society's finances.

f) develop a financial model which supports the Society in its decision making

g) develop a strong fundraising campaign to help support the Society in delivering its objectives.

Implementation

This Plan has been developed at a high level to provide an umbrella within which existing activities can be pursued and new initiatives started. It is supported by individual activity strategies which are overseen by relevant Society Committees and approved by the Society's Council.

In addition to a five-year financial plan, a detailed budget and implementation plan will be developed each year for consideration by the Society's Planning and Resources committee and approval by the Society's Council. New initiatives will sometimes require more detailed consideration and planning before implementation including, where appropriate, approval by Council.

The Society will continue to take advantage of appropriate new opportunities as they arise and if they support the mission and strategic objectives set out in this Strategic Plan.

All activities will need to operate within the financial limitations of the Society's budget.

The Royal Society is a self-governing Fellowship of many of the world's most distinguished scientists drawn from all areas of science, engineering, and medicine. The Society's fundamental purpose, as it has been since its foundation in 1660, is to recognise, promote, and support excellence in science and to encourage the development and use of science for the benefit of humanity.

The Society's strategic priorities emphasise its commitment to the highest quality science, to curiosity-driven research, and to the development and use of science for the benefit of society. These priorities are:

- Promoting excellence in science
- Supporting international scientific collaboration
- Demonstrating the importance of science to everyone

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