

Mr Adrian Bailey MP
Chair, Business, Innovation and Skills Committee
7 Millbank
House of Commons
London
SW1P 3JA

From the Physical Secretary and Vice-President Professor John Pethica FRS

4 February 2013
Our ref: SciB/CD/OA/0213

Dear Adrian

BIS Select Committee Inquiry into the Government's Open Access policy

The Royal Society welcomes this opportunity to respond to the BIS committee's inquiry on Open Access. We also recently submitted a response¹ to the House of Lord's Science and Technology Committee's inquiry on similar issues. The Royal Society strongly supports the principle of open access and welcomes the findings of the Finch Group.

The Finch Group recommended the gold open access route as the preferred mode of implementing open access for publicly funded research in the UK and Government policy follows this recommendation. However, we are concerned that failure to fully implement Government policy, specifically the recommendations of the length of green route embargoes, may threaten the sustainability of academic journals. We are also concerned that rigid insistence on short embargoes in the absence of available funding for APCs may restrict the freedom of authors to choose the journal in which they wish to publish. This will be a critical issue in smaller fields where there are fewer journals to choose from.

We are concerned about the continued differences between Government policy, RCUK policy and their guidance as published to date. RCUK's verbal evidence to the recent House of Lords inquiry and the most recent statements from RCUK officials in charge of implementation appears to indicate that:

- That there is an expectation that cases where there was no available funding for APCs would be rare, due to sources of funding other than the RCUK block grants. It is unclear whether this is a reference to QR funding.
- In such unfunded cases, authors would be expected to publish in a journal with an embargo period of no more than six months (12 months for the humanities and social sciences). If the author's preferred journal did not offer this option, the author would need to find a journal that did.

¹ <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/science-technology/Openaccess/OpenAccessEvidence.pdf>



This position does not conform to the Publisher's Association decision tree², which was endorsed by David Willetts MP during his evidence session at the House of Lord's Science and Technology Committee's Open Access Inquiry on the 29 January 2013. If RCUK policy does, in fact, allow authors to publish in a journal with a longer embargo when APC funding is unavailable, this needs to be clarified, as the current guidance is unclear.

The Royal Society continues to be interested in Open Access and await the outcomes of the committee's inquiry. If the committee has any questions regarding this submission, please contact Stuart Taylor, Commercial Director, who will be able to assist you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Pethica', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Pethica FRS

² http://www.publishers.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2299:finch-willetts-rcuk-green-oa-and-embargoes&catid=503:pa-press-releases-and-comments&Itemid=1618