



**Media Information – 23/11/04**

**Investing in Scientific Talent**

**Scottish Science Advisory Committee Publishes New Report**

The Scottish Executive and its agencies should direct 'priority funding' to leading centres of scientific excellence to allow Scotland's scientists, engineers and technologists to achieve their full potential. A key objective for Scotland is that it must attract and retain the very best scientists, engineers and technologists to work in its universities and science-based research organisations and to act as stimuli for the growth of international scientific excellence. These individuals will be powerful attractors for inward investment by research intensive industries and a world-leading resource for innovation by established Scottish industries, all contributing to growing Scotland's economy.

These are the main messages contained in a new report, *Investing in Scientific Talent*, published today by the independent Scottish Science Advisory Committee.

The report highlights a number of key issues that should be addressed urgently, primarily by the Scottish Executive, but working with a range of stakeholders. Recommendations include:

- The creation of a number of high level specialist support packages for selected professorial level appointments in order to attract world-leading and inspirational scientists to Scotland;
- The maintenance of and, where possible, increased funding for research programmes that will enable more of the scientists in Scotland to become world leaders;
- The establishment of a prestigious and flexible fellowship scheme for outstanding young scientists who are demonstrating the potential to become the scientific leaders of the future;
- The introduction of a new fellowship scheme to promote exchanges between industry and academia; and
- Increased number of longer-term contracts for scientific support staff.

SSAC Chairman, Professor Wilson Sibbett said:

*"Scotland must build on secure foundations to enhance its international scientific profile where excellence should be regarded as an unambiguous benchmark across all of Scotland's scientific activities. This requires investment in the most able and productive scientists and the provision of state-of-the-art infrastructures. These talented scientists, engineers and technologists, working in supportive environments are the key to enhancing Scotland's scientific profile in an increasingly competitive global arena and to realising national aspirations for a Smart Successful Scotland."*

SSAC Working Group Chairman, Professor Peter Grant said:

*“We believe that there is an urgent need to attract international stars to Scotland to invigorate and stimulate our science base, but also to incentivise Scotland’s young and rising stars who will be the scientific leaders of the future. We believe that industry interactions with the science base could be considerably enhanced in Scotland through a new initiative to promote exchanges between industrial and research organisations. The SSAC is committed to ensuring that the science base can contribute more effectively to generating and supporting technology-based companies in Scotland.”*

Successful exploitation of research driven technological innovation is, increasingly, the engine of national economies and of much positive change within society. It is therefore vital that Scotland has an ambition to remain at the forefront of pioneering scientific research and that it recognises that talented individuals are the primary means of achieving this. In a number of the most important sectors the establishment and retention of a critical mass of activity is a vital component of international competitiveness. To be competitive by global standards, Scotland must be able to attract and retain a healthy proportion of the world’s best scientists, engineers and technologists and to ensure that there is adequate career opportunity and progression at all levels.

## **Notes for Editors:**

### **1. The Scottish Science Advisory Committee**

Scottish Science Advisory Committee (SSAC) is an independent Committee, established under the auspices of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) with funding from the Scottish Executive, to provide advice to Scottish Ministers on science strategy, science priorities and science policy to allow the Scottish Executive to make effective use of available scientific advice, knowledge and techniques in formulating and implementing policies to supporting the full range of its objectives.

### **2. Why Science Education Matters**

The SSAC published its first report, *Why Science Education Matters: Supporting and Improving Science Education in Scottish Schools*, in November 2003. The twenty-three recommendations in the report, aimed primarily at the Scottish Executive, called for:

- A comprehensive programme of curriculum change;
- Investment in state-of-the-art infrastructure;
- Recognition of the importance of technology and technical skills;
- The co-ordination and improved connectivity of science education support activities;
- Mechanisms to address the challenge of producing a cohort of high-quality science teachers for the future: and
- A directed programme of research in science education.

### **3. Science Matters**

The SSAC published its second report, *Science Matters: Making the Right Connections for Scotland*, in January 2004. The key recommendations in the report, aimed primarily at the Scottish Executive, highlighted the need for:

- An optimisation of the science base;
- Prioritised support for the outstanding talent in the science base;
- A significant reshaping of the Scottish science base; and
- An allocation of adequate resources to allow the simultaneous pursuit of excellence in research and the nurture of knowledge transfer activities.

#### **4. Knowledge Transfer: Science to Scottish Businesses**

The SSAC published its third report, ***Knowledge Transfer: Science to Scottish Businesses***, a position paper, in October 2004. The key issues highlighted in the report, aimed primarily at the Scottish Executive, included:

- A consideration of how the Lambert Review of Business-Industry Collaboration can be taken forward most effectively in Scotland;
- The creation of a framework to ensure that knowledge transfer funding is available to all sectors of the publicly-funded science base in Scotland;
- A new basis that guarantees that public funding covers adequately the real costs of knowledge transfer activities; and
- The creation of structures that are capable of supporting the range of initiatives and the fledgling companies that are envisaged by ITIScotland.

#### **5. Working Group Membership**

Professor Peter Grant (Chair) – University of Edinburgh  
Professor Geoffrey Boulton – University of Edinburgh  
Professor Jane Bower – Glasgow Caledonian University  
Professor Muffy Calder – University of Glasgow  
Professor John Coggins – University of Glasgow  
Professor Tariq Durrani – University of Strathclyde  
Professor Maggie Gill - The Macaulay Land Use Research Institute  
Dr John Nicholls – Photonic Materials  
Professor Andrea Nolan – University of Glasgow  
Professor Wilson Sibbett – University of St Andrews  
Mr Ian Ritchie – Coppertop

#### **6. Further Information**

Copies of *Investing in Scientific Talent* can be obtained from Avril Davidson on [adavidson@scottishscience.org.uk](mailto:adavidson@scottishscience.org.uk) or 0131 240 5014

Further details on the SSAC can be found at: [www.scottishscience.org.uk](http://www.scottishscience.org.uk)

~Ends~