

Title: UK Science – the Dialogue with Government and Public

Abstract:

Governments fund science for a variety of reasons – to support economic prosperity, to future proof and protect society, to be agile with regard to opportunities and to enhance reputation. While the public may agree with such an overall set of priorities, when the detail of any one issue is considered the public often see things differently – though of course there is no one public that has a single view. Indeed, even individuals will see the same issue through different lenses depending upon how the issue is raised. Different parts of government also have their own priorities. In the UK Diplomatic Service we are concerned with developing ideas around science diplomacy; where science can inform diplomatic effort, diplomats can aid scientists and sometimes scientists can directly help to build diplomatic relations. Scientists on the other hand are driven by curiosity and perhaps a concern for their own careers! So clear, open and transparent communication is crucial – scientists must practice explaining complex issues appropriately and demonstrate independence. This is more easily written than achieved. How the UK has been trying to make progress will be discussed, especially regarding the network of Chief Scientists, our wish to address emergency response and funding processes especially between academia and industry. Always though a key is to preserve excellence and to explain to policy makers why this matters.