

November 2023

Royal Society recommendations ahead of the King's Speech (2023)

As the King prepares to open the final session of this Parliament, we review the progress made to date by the Government in supporting science policy and outline the outstanding commitments and recommendations which could be delivered in the time remaining before the next general election.

Overall, we welcome the clear commitment demonstrated by this Government towards science, technology and innovation. In particular, we welcome achievements in:

- Preserving the UK's participation in Horizon Europe and Copernicus. These programmes allow our researchers and innovators to access world-class grants, fellowships and international facilities which have taken decades to develop, influence technical standards and access data sets unavailable in the UK alone. Global collaborations are vital to ensuring the UK is at the forefront of science and innovation.
- Creating the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), which was a clear signal that research and innovation are at the heart of the Prime Minister's agenda for government.
- Upholding the pledged increase in public R&D funding to £20 billion per year by 2024/25
- Passing of the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023, which sought to reduce regulatory barriers to genetic innovation for agriculture, and introduced a new framework in England for regulating crops that were gene edited.
- Recognising the opportunities and risks associated with artificial intelligence, by promoting international collaboration through the Global AI Safety Summit and announcing the creation of the AI Safety Institute.

Now, in order to maximise the remaining time in the final parliamentary session, we encourage the Government to prioritise delivery of the following commitments and recommendations:

- Publish a Land Use Framework for England as promised by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) before the end of 2023. The Society's [Multifunctional Landscapes](#) report advises on the use of science to create landscapes which meet society's many needs efficiently and sustainably.
- Fully deliver the recommendations made within the Skidmore Review, most notably the creation of an evidence-led UK net zero technology roadmap to send clear signals to global investors.
- Implement an evidence-led and proportionate regulatory approach for genetically modified (GM) crops, which would help the UK lead on the technology's benefits for human health, agriculture and the environment. The Society's [briefing](#) explores how the regulatory framework for GM crops applied by the EU and now transposed into UK law has been disproportionate to the known risks of these crops ascertained from 30 years of data.
- Pursue an alternative to the current narrow A-level examinations. This would ensure that young people experience a more expansive education equivalent to that experienced by their counterparts in other high-performing economies, including an opportunity to combine technical education and academic options for some.

As the UK's national academy of science, dedicated to promoting excellence in science for the benefit of humanity, the Royal Society stands ready to support the Government with our advice and expertise to put these recommendations into practice.

For more information contact public.affairs@royalsociety.org