

Response to the Foundation Debate on the Select Committee Report on Engineering held on 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2009 by The Rt Hon the Lord Drayson, Minister for Science and Innovation at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

Note on Government Response to the IUSS Select Committee report on engineering.

The Government welcomes the Committee's report and its support for the UK's world class engineering base. Our response shows that there is agreement with the committee's views – for example, our explicit acknowledgement that engineering advice is key to good policy and delivery in a huge range of areas from tidal power to medicine. We also value the focus provided by the Royal Academy of Engineering in acting as a conduit for advice to Government from the engineering community. I should also say how helpful it has been over recent years for the Engineering Institutions to work more closely together to produce coordinated and coherent advice - as what we need in Government is reliable and authoritative advice that we can use to make decisions.

I was very pleased to learn that overall the discussion during the Foundation's meeting was so positive and constructive. That said, we do need to guard against slipping back – the engineering community must continue to work together (and at times with the science community) to provide the coherent advice Government needs. In this context I remain convinced that it is more helpful to see science and engineering as a continuum of knowledge rather than separate worlds. It will also be important to focus the community's energies on providing advice on the key challenges we face nationally, and internationally, and to avoid being distracted by minor issues of process and structure.

In tackling the seemingly eternal problem of the perceived status of engineers in the UK I think it is important for the key players to focus on the contributions they can make. In particular for both academics and employers to redouble their efforts to dispel the negative mythology about engineering; we need to get the message out to young people making decisions about their futures that engineering is a singularly rewarding field that offers intellectual stimulation, challenge and hugely interesting and rewarding professional career prospects – which are suitable for both men and women. It is also important not to confuse the rising generations of potential engineers (and scientists) by arguing too strongly for one branch of engineering over another, or even for engineering over science. Most people who pursue careers in engineering (and science) will wind up working in multi-disciplinary teams where success will depend on the effective contributions of people from different disciplines. I believe that these approaches offer the best prospect of attracting more of the brightest and best in the country to pursue engineering qualifications and careers.

I look forward to reading the committee's next report on *Putting Science and Engineering at the heart of Government Policy* – and in due course to the Foundation's deliberations on the Government's response to it.