



House of Commons
Science and Technology
Committee

**The Medical Research
Council's Review of the
Future of the National
Institute for Medical
Research: Responses to
the Committee's
Fourth Report of
Session 2004–05**

Seventh Special Report of Session 2004–05

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The Science and Technology Committee

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Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are: Chris Shaw (Clerk); Emily Commander (Second Clerk); Alun Roberts (Committee Specialist); Hayaatun Sillem (Committee Specialist); Ana Ferreira (Committee Assistant); Robert Long (Senior Office Clerk); and Christine McGrane (Committee Secretary).

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Seventh Special Report

On 8 February 2005 the Science and Technology Committee published its Fourth Report of Session 2004–05, *The Medical Research Council's Review of the Future of the National Institute for Medical Research* as HC 6-I. On 14 March 2005 the Committee received a memorandum from the Government which contained a response to the Report. The memorandum is published without comment as an appendix to this Report.

The Committee also received a response from the Medical Research Council which is also published without comment as an appendix to this Report.

Appendix 1

Government Response

The Government welcomes the Committee's report on The Medical Research Council (MRC)'s Review of the Future of the National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR). The Committee's scrutiny of the way the MRC handled the review of the future of NIMR provides a valuable assessment of this process.

We welcome the positive comments that were made, for example that the Task Force's decision-making process was rational and coherent, that they gave due consideration to the benefits of NIMR remaining at Mill Hill and that they were open and transparent.

The Government endorses the MRC response to this report which is attached at annex 1 (printed as appendix 2).

On the issue of funding the OST will be updating the Large Facilities Roadmap in the summer. It will be for the MRC to make the case for inclusion of NIMR in the Road Map, and for any funding from the Large Facilities Capital Fund. Demand for the Large Facilities Capital Fund always exceeds available funds and priorities need to be agreed across all areas of the science base. The prioritization process for funds will be taking place in the latter part of this year.

March 2005

Appendix 2

Response from the Medical Research Council

MRC published a statement on its website on 7 February 2005 welcoming publication of the Committee's report.

For the Parliamentary record, that response is now repeated below and has been updated to take account of more recent developments in determining the future of the Institute.

MRC welcomes the Committee's recognition of the MRC's responsibility to carry out periodic reviews of its major institutes. The review of the future of NIMR has been unusually complex. As the early sections of the Committee's report imply, the complexities and difficulties in winning local management's co-operation with the review predate the Forward Investment Strategy (FIS). It should be noted for the record that MRC has never announced plans to 'close' or to 'break up' NIMR as suggested in the report.

MRC further welcomes the Committee's view that the review was fair and that 'any shortcomings were not so serious as to invalidate the outcome'. MRC will bear in mind the Committee's comments on the process to ensure that, as far as possible future strategic reviews are informed by them.

The Committee's report was published shortly before a meeting of the Council on 10 February 2005 when further consideration was given to the merits of proposals from two potential partners in developing the full business and scientific case for the renewal of NIMR. The decision that University College London (UCL) should be the preferred partner was announced by MRC and UCL on 11 February.

As the Committee observed, it is important to ensure that a Central London option for NIMR exceeds the current quality of the research facilities and environment at Mill Hill. MRC and UCL are now working actively to this end developing a full business and scientific case for the renewed NIMR at UCL. Scientific staff at Mill Hill who are likely to have a long-term commitment to the renewed institute are being encouraged to participate in this process. Future progress will continue to be reported on the MRC website. The next announcement is expected to be in May 2005 when the MRC Council and UCL's Council review the full business and scientific case.

The Committee raised the important issue of funding for the project. Discussions on funding will form part of the full business case development. While the exact details of funding have yet to be agreed it is likely that this will include contributions from UCL and MRC. In addition MRC will be making an application to OST for funding through the Large Facilities Capital Fund.

March 2005

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