

Representation for Budget July 2015

● Submission to HM Treasury by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

••• The Society

The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) is the UK's learned society and professional body for geography and geographers. Founded in 1830, it is the largest geographical society in Europe and one of the largest and most active in the world, with more than 16,000 Fellows and members. The Society plays a vitally important role in: supporting research; enhancing geographical and environmental education; championing fieldwork and scientific expeditions; accrediting professional standards; influencing policy and in raising public understanding. As a charity, the Society's work currently reaches more than three million people per year.

Comments

1. A real terms increase in the Science Budget is required to enable the UK to remain at the forefront of research and innovation. UK R&D spending is below the EU average. As proposed by the Academy of Social Sciences' 'Business of People' report, the Science Budget should be ring-fenced and increased in real terms by 10 percent over the life of the 2010-2015 Parliament.¹
2. The Government's 2015 manifesto rightly recognises the enormous practical benefits yielded by investment in science, including driving technological innovation and informing public policy. Government must recognise that social science is an integral part of *science*, with the Science Budget encompassing research across the breadth of disciplines in the sciences, social sciences and humanities. Investment must include adequate support for research and training in social science and humanities alongside STEM, and the maintenance of dual support. This would serve to enhance the contribution of social science to the UK economy: estimated at £25 billion per annum.² Many UK universities are recognised as world-leading in social science, with UK human geography research, as a discipline, ranked number one in the world.³
3. The combined insights of research in social science and in STEM are critical to tackling many of the challenges facing the UK and the world in the 21st century: from climate change to infectious disease control; from food security to future energy mix; and from urban pollution to flooding management. Geographers have a key role to play, spanning the social and environmental sciences and as the spatial discipline. Social science provides invaluable understanding of place, economy, society and behaviour. Investment in social science research and skills strengthens the link between innovation, implementation and evaluation. Social science also underpins scrutiny of Government policies, with Departments relying upon those with social science research skills to advise on evaluation and cost-effectiveness of Government decisions.

¹ Campaign for Social Science, 2015. *The Business of People* [pdf] Available at: <http://campaignforsocialscience.org.uk/businessofpeople/> [Accessed 4 June 2015].

² *Ibid.*

³ ESRC, RGS-IBG and AHRC, 2013. *International Benchmarking Review of UK Human Geography* [pdf]. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1APIUu5> [Accessed 4 June 2015].



4. The Campaign for Science and Engineering has demonstrated widespread cuts to research spending in recent years by Government Departments, with over half of Departments reducing expenditure by 20 percent between 2009/10 and 2011/12.⁴ Departmental spending on R&D is an important part of public investment in science and evidence, commissioning new research and policy evaluation, in which social science plays a vital role. Alongside a real-terms increase in the Science Budget, Government should protect and enhance investment in social science research, analysis (including spatial analysis) and data within Departments through the Summer Budget and 2015 Comprehensive Spending Review.
5. Investment in both disciplinary and interdisciplinary research is required, as is investment in skills and training for early-career researchers, nurturing and encouraging the next generation of researchers, specifically including those working at the interface of environment and society.

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⁴ Campaign for Science and Engineering, 2014. *Analysis of departmental R&D spend 2011/12* [pdf] Available at: <http://sciencecampaign.org.uk/documents/2014/DepartmentalR&Dexpenditure2011-12.pdf> [Accessed 4 June 2015].