

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Question 1: Do the 2011-2016 strategic priorities remain robust and relevant for the period 2016-2021?

Scottish Water welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Research Strategy for 2016-2021. We suggest that the strategic priorities for this period should be reworded so that they read as being drivers for policy and innovation rather than simply supporting them. We would also suggest that the science should inform policy and practice, and stimulate innovation. A key principle of the research agenda should be to challenge current thinking and promote new innovative approaches.

Question 2: Do these 'enabling principles' set the right context or should additional principles be adopted?

We suggest that the knowledge exchange principle should be changed to reflect that we want knowledge that translates into action. Creating and exchanging knowledge is a good principle but this should result in beneficial change through modifying current approaches or innovating to create new value. Scottish Water believes this should be a core principle of this strategy.

Question 3: Are the high level outcomes sufficiently clear, if not, what changes would you propose?

Scottish Water agrees with the proposed systems approach: this should create an environment to allowing the consideration of cross-cutting themes more effectively. We note that water is implicit in all of the outcomes however we consider that protection of water quality, in particular the protection of drinking water quality, should be made a more explicit outcome.

Question 4: Are the three broad themes identified an appropriate way of structuring our work? If not, what alternatives should be considered?

We agree with the systems approach to drive the appropriate challenges to existing policy positions. However we would like to see a stronger drive to considering value from waste opportunities across all systems, and how policy and regulation encourages or prevents this.

Question 5: How can the SG maximise the benefits of on-going investment in the MRPs to build and benefit from connectivity with the wider science base?

We believe that the provision of a greater role to the CoEs, with appropriate funding to encourage HEIs involvement would drive greater connectivity. Providing them with a role to collaborate more widely than the Scottish HEIs would also ensure that the best scientific evidence is brought for consideration. We believe consideration of these measures would help maximise the benefits of on-going investment.

Question 6: What are your views of the performance and operation of the CoEs to date, are there any additional areas that would benefit from such support?

Scottish Water believes that CoE for Waters has brought positive benefit to the knowledge base. It has allowed for greater connections within MRP, industry, government and HEIs to ensure broader thinking.

Question 7: Do you agree with the SG's proposal to end support for SPs and to explore alternative mechanisms to strengthen engagement between its investment in research and the business sectors it aims to support?

As we have not had direct experience of this area, we believe we are not in a position to express a view on this point.

Question 8: Do you have any proposals for how the research portfolio can better link to the business community to deliver the desired outcome?

We note that one of the key principles of the programme is to support and stimulate innovation. We believe a clearer steer and link to the enterprise community would be beneficial. This may require additional resources or refocusing of resources to focus on spin out opportunities. We believe there is also a relatively strong venture investment community around clean technologies and energy in Scotland. Stronger ties to this area could reap greater benefits from the programme in supporting new entries into the market.

Question 9: Is the purpose and value of underpinning capacity sufficiently clear, if not how can it be improved?

Yes, we agree that this aspect of the strategy is sufficiently clear.

Question 10: Do you have any views regarding the performance and use of the Contract Research Fund including how it could be improved?

We have no comments to offer in this particular area.

Question 11: Could the overall delivery model be further simplified in a way which still enables SG to meet its strategic priorities for the portfolio, if so how?

We have no comments to offer in this particular area.

Question 12: Do you have specific suggestions as to how the RESAS research strategy can contribute to the delivery of the objectives of the CAMERAS partnership?

We have no comments to offer in this particular area.

Question 13: Do you have any suggestions for developing the partnership with other research funders?

We believe that development of partnerships could be achieved with a greater consideration of the opportunities in EU funding programmes (e.g. Horizon 2020) and the UK government programmes. For example, TSB could leverage investment and encourage collaboration. We believe the effort in accessing this is currently significant and refocusing existing resources, for example Scotland Europa, may bring better linkages and a more streamlined process. We believe it is also important to ensure that Scottish Funding Council is effectively tied in to the Research Councils UK to maximise cross programme opportunities.

Question 14: Do you have any particular suggestions as to how greater engagement with the HEI sector might be achieved?

We believe that HEIs engagement could be enhanced either through alignment of RESAS portfolio and SFC priorities to ensure funding streams are available, and / or ensure that success criteria for HEIs recognises societal benefit through supporting and contributing to policy and action.

Question 15: Are the research outputs from the RESAS portfolio of research readily accessible or can this be further improved, if so how?

We believe that greater awareness of the dissemination routes is needed. For example, Scottish Water only became aware of a particular channel through reading the consultation paper. A regular summary update publication would be useful to be in circulation.

Question 16: Is the current performance management approach fit for purpose or can it be improved, if so how?

We have no comments to offer in this particular area.