



HOUSE OF LORDS

Science and
Technology
Committee

The House of Lords is an essential part of the UK Parliament. Its committees investigate public policy, proposed laws and government activity. The remit of the Science and Technology Committee is ‘to consider science and technology.’

Background and role

Why it was set up

The committee was set up in 1979 to look at science and technology issues and, where problems have been identified, to report to the House of Lords with recommendations for government action.

What it does

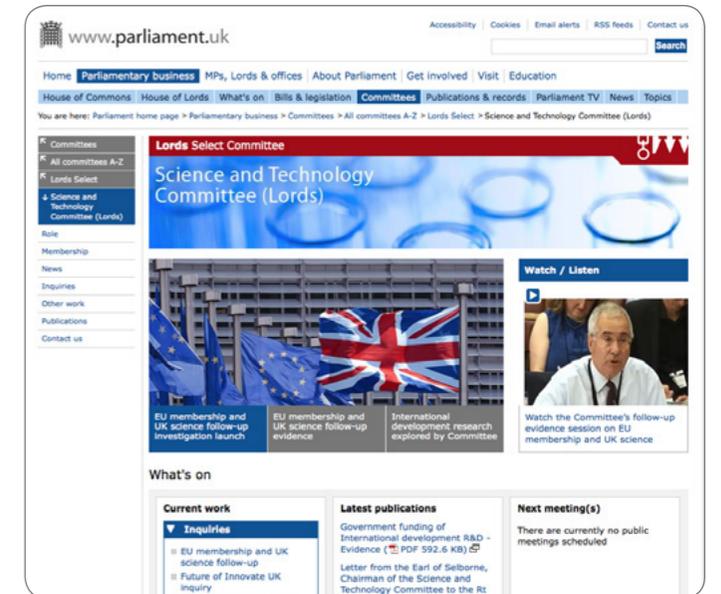
It investigates:

- public policy areas which are, or ought to be, informed by scientific research
- technological challenges and opportunities
- public policy towards science itself.

How it does its work

Investigations are carried out by the select committee. Additional members are sometimes ‘co-opted’ if they have a particular interest in the subject matter of the inquiry or relevant knowledge or experience.

The committee publishes about two or three reports a year, including some shorter ‘follow-up’ reports which address developments since the original report was published.



Find out about the committee's latest work at www.parliament.uk/hlscience

 Follow @LordsSTCom

Contents

Background and role	1
Membership	2
Investigations and reports	3

Membership

The committee has 14 members, including scientists as well as other professionals with relevant experience in industry, politics and academia.

Members

Earl of Selborne (chairman)

Agriculturalist

Lord Borwick

Trustee of the British Lung Foundation

Lord Cameron of Dillington

Former chairman of the Countryside Agency

Lord Fox

Former engineer

Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield

Historian and academic

Lord Hunt of Chesterton

Climate expert and former chief executive of the Met Office

Lord Mair

Geotechnical engineer

Lord Maxton

Former MP

Baroness Morgan of Huyton

Former chair of Ofsted

Baroness Neville-Jones

Former chair, Joint Intelligence Committee

Lord Oxburgh

Geologist and geophysicist

Viscount Ridley

Science writer and journalist

Lord Vallance of Tummel

Businessman

Baroness Young of Old Scone

Former chief executive of Diabetes UK

Investigations and reports

EU membership and UK science

Key findings in the committee's April 2016 report on the influence of EU membership on UK science include:

Funding

The committee heard that:

- the UK is one of the EU's top performers in securing funding and it bestows significant value to UK science
- nearly 18.3 per cent the UK's funding from the EU goes on scientific research and development.

Business funding

The committee raised concern over the poor level of engagement by large businesses in securing EU funding. The UK is below the EU average and lagging behind competitors such as Germany and France in this areas and given that 64% of UK research and development is conducted by business, this is a serious failing.

Collaboration

During its investigation the committee heard that collaborative opportunities are perhaps the most significant benefit that EU membership affords UK science and research but noted that the US and Australia are two of the UK's top five collaborative partners.



Freedom of movement

The committee heard of the advantage free movement of researchers and scientists between the UK and the rest of the EU brings to UK science. The report argued every effort should be made to preserve this key benefit.

Brexit

The committee looked at alternatives to EU membership, for example becoming an Associated Country still involved with EU projects and receiving EU funds, but said the UK may no longer have the same level of influence. It concludes that further investigation on how Brexit will impact UK science is needed and since the referendum result it has engaged in follow-up activity to continue its work on the subject.

Genetically modified insects

The committee's report called on the government to launch a field trial of genetically modified insects, and make the most of the UK's status as world leader in this area of research. It argued that the science, EU regulatory environment and policies on GM insects need to be tested because of the enormous potential to save lives worldwide and generate economic benefits for the UK.

Control disease

The committee concluded GM insects have considerable potential to control insect-borne disease and agricultural pests and the UK government has a moral duty to test the potential of the technology, for the long-term benefit of people in countries where diseases like dengue and malaria are indiscriminate killers.

The report acknowledged that the science may not be a silver bullet in the fight against fatal disease and threats to food security, but argued it could prove to be an invaluable addition to ways to tackle them.

Economic benefits for UK

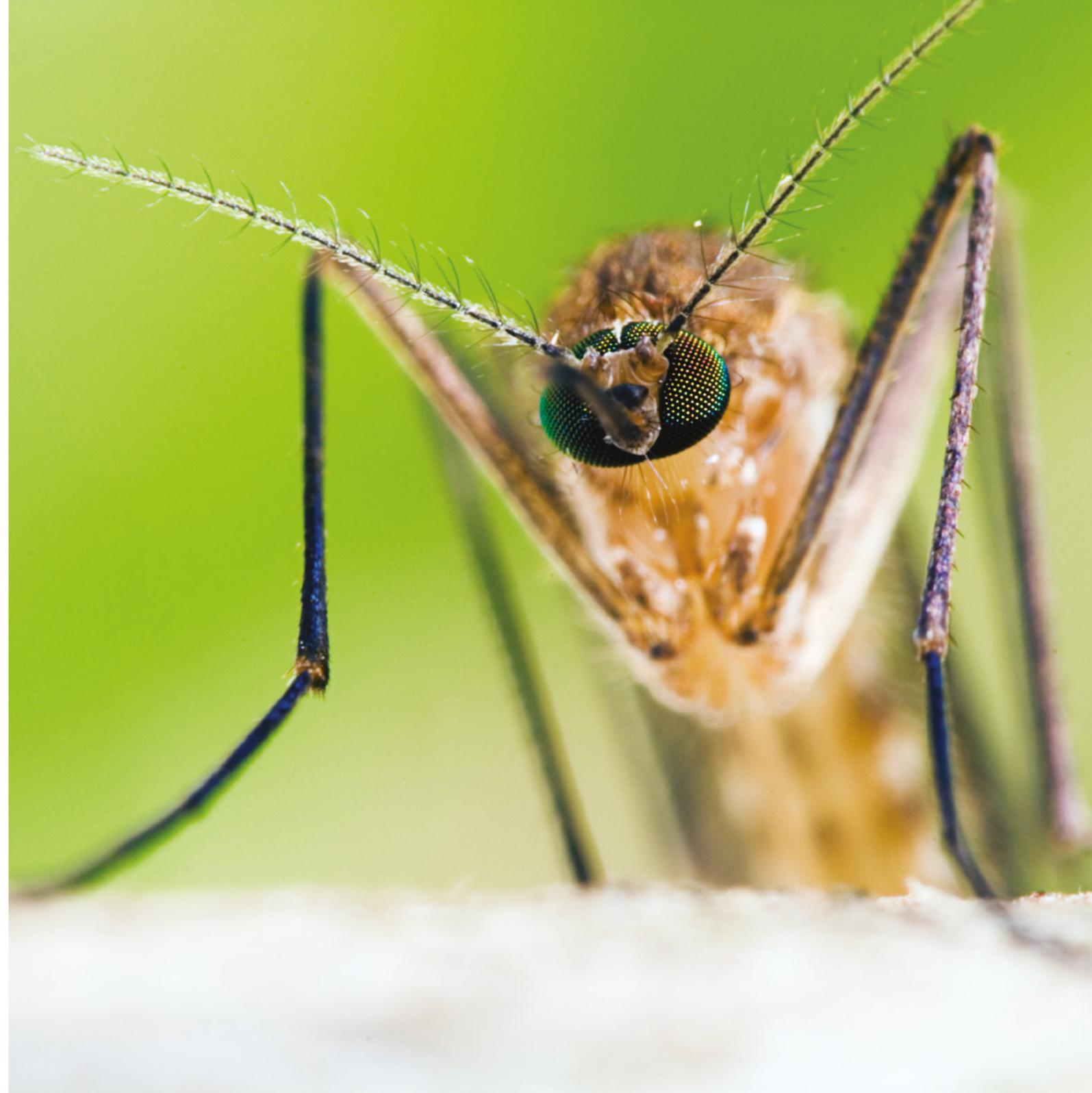
The committee called on the government, through Innovate UK in partnership with the Research Councils, to support the commercialisation of UK based GM insect research and highlighted that the UK, as a world leader in this research area, could reap potentially significant economic benefits.

Regulation

The committee expressed concern that the development of GM insect technologies has come to a halt because of an inadequate EU regulatory system. The committee called on the government to act to make the current regulatory system work properly, and work with the EU to address how it could be improved.

“The House of Lords Science and Technology Committee recommended that greater attention be paid to these new approaches as additional tools in the fight against infectious diseases such as Zika. The report placed particular emphasis on the “biosafety” and ethical questions such approaches raise.”

Financial Times



Find out more

Contact us or go online for information about business, membership and outreach activities.

Call or email us to request this publication in an alternative format.

House of Lords External Communications

 0800 223 0855 (freephone) or 020 7219 3107
Textphone 18001 020 7219 3107

 hlinfo@parliament.uk

 House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW

 www.parliament.uk/lords

 [@ukhouseoflords](https://twitter.com/ukhouseoflords)

 facebook.com/ukhouseoflords

 flickr.com/ukhouseoflords

 youtube.com/ukhouseoflords

For video and audio coverage go to:
www.parliamentlive.tv

Contact the Science and Technology Committee

 020 7219 5750

 hlsience@parliament.uk

 [@LordsSTCom](https://twitter.com/LordsSTCom)