

## Engaging in Science Policy

Following the 'Engaging in Science Policy' session at Annual Conference 2018, our speakers share some top tips for members who want to get involved in informing and influencing policy concerning microbiology.



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### What is Parliament and how can it use my research?

Sarah Bunn, Senior Scientific Advisor at the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST)



“A common misconception is that Parliament and Government are the same, when they are in fact separate institutions with distinct functions. The Government runs the country, develops and implements policy, and is formed by the party holding the most seats after a general election. Parliament comprises MPs and Peers from all

political parties. Its main functions are to check and challenge the Government's work, to make and change laws, to approve budgets and tax, and to act as a forum for topical debate.

“Few politicians have scientific or research backgrounds, but they are faced with making policy decisions with widespread societal implications, for example, tackling antimicrobial resistance. Politicians need to be well briefed on many topics, and to be able to communicate their ideas about them in and outside Parliament.

“Scientists can play their part by ensuring that accurate information about their work is effectively communicated so

that politicians can make informed decisions when faced with a call for action from a constituent, pressed for action by a lobby group, or before voting in Parliament.

“You can engage with Parliament directly or through the Microbiology Society, including contributing evidence to a Select Committee inquiry and writing to your MP or meeting them face-to-face. Scientists also contribute to POST's work briefing parliamentarians.”

#### Top tips for communicating with policy-makers:

- **Be objective** – let the research speak for itself.
- **Keep it simple** – avoid jargon and don't assume too much knowledge.
- **Think about the wider context** – how does your research fit into the bigger picture?
- **Be brief** – can you summarise your research into five simple points?
- **Be clear about the action or recommendations you are proposing** – what are you asking the politician to do?

## How can you help influence government science policy?

James Tooze, Policy Officer, Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE)



“Key to engaging with policy is being clear in communicating your priorities and concerns to a non-scientific audience. Your ability to talk about the ways your research impacts the wider world, and what is needed to enable you to effectively conduct and translate research, is important in informing

government policies for research and innovation.

“Membership organisations such as the Microbiology Society can enable you to help inform and influence Government and Parliament. At CaSE, we represent the views of the science sector in meetings with Ministers, MPs

and Peers, and government officials. We represent issues affecting scientists in areas such as Brexit, funding and immigration; positions that are informed through consultation with our membership. This includes the Microbiology Society who represent the views of you as a member and your microbiology community.

“Importantly, we don't expect you to be a policy expert! Your knowledge of what helps and hinders the research you do and how it can benefit society are the fuel for our organisations to effectively communicate and represent the views of scientists to policy-makers. Your personal contributions will ultimately help add weight to our ability to influence science policy.”

## How can I engage in policy through the Society?

Paul Richards, Policy Manager, Microbiology Society



“The changing research environment and global challenges mean it is more important than ever to champion the value of microbiology,

ensure it is supported, and inform policy with microbiologists' expertise. Our Policy Team are here to support you in communicating and connecting with policy-makers, and to enhance the influence of your research.

“Responding to calls to inform our responses to government consultations and parliamentary inquiries is a key way you can support us in representing microbiologists' views to policy-makers. Recently, we communicated your concerns and recommendations for Brexit and science at a summit, and in writing to the House

of Commons Science and Technology Committee.

“Our Microbiome Policy Project illustrates how we also proactively publish resources and organise meetings to champion microbiology and connect members with a range of science policy stakeholders. Workshops brought together representatives from research, regulation, industry, government and funders. A report and briefings then communicated recommendations about the key research, innovation and societal opportunities and challenges for this emerging area of microbiology to policy audiences.

“We want to get more members engaged in our policy work. Our impact depends on your input. Make sure we know about your interest in policy and your areas of expertise via the Mi Society online area. Contact the Policy Team to tell us about your interest, or if there is

an issue or opportunity you think we should know about. And if you want to help guide our policy work, why not consider nominating yourself for our Policy Committee?”

### Further information:

Campaign for Science and Engineering

[www.sciencecampaign.org.uk](http://www.sciencecampaign.org.uk)

Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology

[www.parliament.uk/post](http://www.parliament.uk/post)

Policy at the Microbiology Society  
[microbiologysociety.org/policy](http://microbiologysociety.org/policy)

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