STRENGTHENING POLICY MAKING
Public policy at the British Academy
March 2014

THE BRITISH ACADEMY

The British Academy is the UK’s independent national academy representing the humanities and social sciences. For over a century it has supported and celebrated the best in UK and international research and helped connect the expertise of those working in these disciplines with the wider public.

The Academy supports innovative research and outstanding people, influences policy and seeks to raise the level of public understanding of some of the biggest issues of our time, through policy reports, publications and public events.

The Academy represents the UK’s research excellence worldwide in a fast changing global environment. It promotes UK research in international arenas, fosters a global approach across UK research, and provides leadership in developing global links and expertise.
STRENGTHENING POLICY MAKING

OUR OBJECTIVE: to provide independent contributions to public policy development, enhancing the policy making process.

The British Academy will aim to:

• Bring the expertise of its Fellows and others to bear on public policy issues, ranging from economic growth to constitutional change, international relations to the environment, cultural heritage to social well-being.
• Convene policy makers, Fellows and other experts under the Academy’s auspices to provide focused advice on current policy issues and initiatives.
• Provide a national space for discussions on major public policy issues, which research and expertise can help to illuminate.
• Promote the importance of academic rigour in evidence relevant to policy, and promote informed public debate about it.

British Academy Strategic Framework 2013–2018

PUBLIC POLICY AT THE BRITISH ACADEMY

The British Academy oversees a programme of activity aimed at stimulating dialogue and engagement between leading researchers, parliamentarians and policymakers in the UK and abroad. It aims to shed light on matters of public interest and concern, drawing on insights derived from the best available research in the humanities and social sciences.

It does this through:

• Reports;
• Discussion forums;
• Public events, and;
• Consultation responses, briefings and opinion pieces.

Priority areas
The Academy’s public policy activities are currently focused on five priority areas:

1. Economy & Public Spending
2. Environment & Sustainability
3. Constitution of the UK
4. Social Cohesion & Equality
5. Culture & Heritage
PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE

The Public Policy Committee’s primary purpose is to advise on, and help to shape, the British Academy’s programme of public policy activities. It is chaired by the Vice-President for Public Policy – currently Professor Iain McLean FBA, University of Oxford – and is composed of Fellows and relevant external stakeholders who each advise on a strategic priority area:

- **Professor Iain McLean FBA**, University of Oxford (CHAIR)
- **Professor Steve Machin FBA**, University College London and London School of Economics and Political Science (Economy & Public Spending)
- **Mr Robert Chote**, Office for Budgetary Responsibility (Economy & Public Spending)
- **Professor Tim O’Riordan FBA**, University of East Anglia (Environment & Sustainability)
- **Dr Gemma Harper**, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Environment & Sustainability)
- **Professor Neil Walker FBA**, University of Edinburgh (Constitution of the UK)
- **Mr Guy Lodge**, Institute for Public Policy Research (Constitution of the UK)
- **Professor Anthony Heath FBA**, University of Oxford and University of Manchester (Social Cohesion & Equality)
- **Dr Sharon Witherspoon**, Nuffield Foundation (Social Cohesion & Equality)
- **Professor Dame Fiona Reynolds Hon FBA**, University of Cambridge (Culture & Heritage)
- **Ms Deborah Lamb**, English Heritage (Culture & Heritage)

“Thanks to a tiny but dedicated staff and enormous amounts of Pro Bono Publico work by Fellows, the Academy has had a substantial impact on public policy making over the last few years. It has built and maintained a reputation for authority and reliability.”

*Professor Iain McLean, BA Vice-President, Public Policy (April 2013)*
“The Government welcomes the publication from the British Academy ‘If you could do one thing – Nine local actions to reduce health inequalities’ as an interesting contribution to the debate on reducing health inequalities at a local level.”

Jane Ellison, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health (March 2014)
Discussing the British Academy report ‘If you could do one thing – Nine local actions to reduce health inequalities’, published in January 2014

“Everyone across the country should know more about how the rights many take for granted are protected by our Human Rights Act. The executive summary of the British Academy’s ‘Human rights and the UK constitution’ should be essential reading for those learning about human rights in the UK.”

Sadiq Khan, Shadow Lord Chancellor and Shadow Secretary of State for Justice (November 2012)

“The British Academy conference ‘Welsh Devolution in Perspective’, which Paul Silk (Chair of the Commission on Devolution in Wales) participated in, helped the Commission develop its thinking toward its final report.”

Commission on Devolution in Wales
Discussing a conference held in May 2013
Maximising the Humanities and Social Sciences in a World of Change:
The world we live in, our society and the economy are changing fast – faster than ever before. The old ways of measuring progress and judging success are increasingly being challenged, and will need to be reinvented within the next decade.

If the future is a place where as a society we want everyone to have the chance to live rich and rewarding lives, within the goal of social, economic and environmental sustainability, we need to reconsider what we value and why, what we measure and why, and what indicators we rely on to judge performance.

Over the next year or so the Academy will draw on the best available research in the humanities and social sciences to consider what attributes contribute to society’s wellbeing, alongside the more traditional issues of wealth, health and education, and consider how can these be provided and recognised in public policy.

The Academy will also be considering the relationship between evidence, expertise and policy making.

For examples of our work and further information on the Academy’s public policy activities visit: [www.britac.ac.uk/policy/Public_Policy.cfm](http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy/Public_Policy.cfm) or email policy@britac.ac.uk
OTHER AREAS OF POLICY ACTIVITY WITHIN THE BRITISH ACADEMY

In 2011, the Academy launched the Languages and Quantitative Skills Programme to target deficits in languages and quantitative skills. Through the programme, the Academy funds research and relevant initiatives, and seeks to influence policy in these areas. For more information visit [www.britac.ac.uk/policy/Languages_and_Quantitative_Skills.cfm](http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy/Languages_and_Quantitative_Skills.cfm)

The Academy takes a lead in representing the humanities and social sciences, promoting their interests and vigorously upholding their value to government, policymakers, opinion formers and the media. For more information on the Academy’s work on research and higher education policy visit [www.britac.ac.uk/policy](http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy)

Another core objective of the Academy is to promote UK research in international arenas, to foster a global approach across UK research and to provide leadership in developing global research links and expertise. For more information on the Academy’s international activities visit [www.britac.ac.uk/intl/index.cfm](http://www.britac.ac.uk/intl/index.cfm)

THE BRITISH ACADEMY DEBATES

In early 2014 the British Academy launched ‘The British Academy Debates’, a new series of high profile public events, held around the UK. Promoting cutting edge research, the debates will be aimed at stimulating public discussion and understanding on some of the greatest challenges facing our society, starting with a series on Ageing. More information is available on the Academy’s website [www.britac.ac.uk/debates](http://www.britac.ac.uk/debates)

For regular updates on the British Academy’s activities you can join our mailing list at [www.britac.ac.uk/news](http://www.britac.ac.uk/news) Or follow us on Twitter [@britac_news](https://twitter.com/britac_news)