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Our ref: LF

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Dr Andrew Steele  
[statto@andrewsteele.co.uk](mailto:statto@andrewsteele.co.uk)

Dear Andrew,

**AUDITING SCIENCE FUNDING**

Thank you for your letter of 2 April about auditing of research funding by research area.

Government already takes strategic objectives and key national and international challenges into account in prioritising research funding. The Research Councils run a number of strategic programmes and cross Council challenges which address societal problems such as energy, aging and cyber security, and " impact" is taken into account through a range of other funding mechanisms including 'pathways to impact'. The current Research Excellence Framework exercise administered by HEFCE will also mean that, for the first time, the impact of university research will be taken into account in future block grant funding allocations for research in universities.

Government is also committed to supporting blue skies research. As you rightly point out in your paper, many of the key advances have come from research driven by curiosity and often applications are serendipitous and unexpected. This means it cannot be easily mapped to future outcomes where these are unpredictable and may be some years into the future.

On the Gateway to Research (GtR), as you point out, this does not cover all publicly funded research. This is because it has first been established as a tool for accessing research funded by the seven Research Councils and the Technology Strategy Board. Research Councils UK would welcome its being extended to include other funders as well, such as the Higher Education Funding Councils. The opportunity to participate is open to other funders and we expect that as the GtR develops they will want to seriously consider doing so.

In relation to your concerns about the lack of tagging, the decision was taken to use free text search rather than being constrained by a fixed taxonomy. This was also the preference expressed by SMEs consulted about how they might most effectively use the GtR. However, the Research Councils are now proposing to include some classification of the research projects in the foreseeable future. This should be helpful to you whilst retaining the flexibility preferred by SMEs and users for free text searching using their key words.

To us sincerely  
David Willetts

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