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AIRTO welcomes government's pledge to protect science and research post-Brexit

AIRTO (the Association for Innovation, Research and Technology Organisations) welcomes [the recent pledge by the Prime Minister](#) to protect world-leading research in the UK following Brexit.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson used a visit on 8 August 2019 to AIRTO member [UKAEA's Culham Science Centre](#) to make his first major science policy announcement since taking office.



Prime Minister Boris Johnson at the MAST Upgrade fusion experiment with UKAEA staff (left to right): Nanna Heiberg, Stephanie Hall and Matthew Carr.

We welcome the government's commitment to provide additional funding for research and innovation to support UK research proposals to Horizon 2020, the EU's collaborative funding programme for research and innovation. The UK's capacity to engage in international collaborations is a fundamental factor in ensuring the UK's success as a world-leader in science and innovation. The ability to continue playing a central role in EU programmes is a vital part of this.

Ensuring that the UK remains an attractive place for young talent in STEM is also crucial to ensuring our future pipeline of scientist and engineers flourishes. We advocate a fast-track visa policy for outstanding overseas talent that spans the full spectrum of scientific and engineering researchers as well as technicians and younger talent needed to support and

exploit the outcomes of research and development (R&D) for the benefit of the UK's economy and society.

AIRTO has consistently offered support for the UK's Industrial Strategy as a means to stimulate the economy beyond Brexit and we recently issued a [position statement pinpointing six critical levers for government](#) to deploy to raise levels of both public and private investment in R&D. We realise that the government has a complex task ahead, requiring difficult decisions and compromises. Furthermore, we are calling for investment in R&D and innovation to be executed in a much smarter way, to keep pace with competitor nations. We have identified three key and interrelated recommendations of immediate importance which aim to:

- i). Rebalance the research and applied development mix being undertaken to include more development activity at higher Technology Readiness Levels, (TRLs);
- ii). Improve access to private finance for industry to undertake R&D, particularly in the most challenging fields;
- iii). Exploit the export of UK R&D services and knowledge assets by the Innovation, Research and Technology (IRT) sector to international markets (facilitated by a strong and diverse STEM workforce).

Commenting on the Prime Minister's speech, AIRTO's President, Professor Richard Brook OBE FREng, and AIRTO's Chair, Dr Paul Howarth FREng, called on the government to go a step further:

"We should like to see the government leverage the Innovation, Research and Technology sector even further to boost our capacity to deliver R&D services for international industry, thereby stimulating private investment and creating jobs for UKplc."

About AIRTO

AIRTO is the representative body for the innovation sector in the UK. Its membership comprises sixty of the principle organisations operating in the UK's Innovation, Research and Technology (IRT) Sector. The IRT sector has a combined turnover of £6.9 billion per annum, employing over 57,000 scientific and technical staff. The sector contributes £34 billion to UK GDP per annum¹. AIRTO's Members interface with industry and academia, working for both private and public sector clients. Members include not-for-profit and private sector Research and Technology Organisations (including Catapult Centres), government laboratories and some university enterprise offices. Members are an essential part of the UK's infrastructure for innovation, accelerating research outcomes and the exploitation of new products and services, and training significant numbers of staff at a wide range of educational levels.