

6 February 2014

Tom Barrett
Department for Transport,
Zone 1/32 Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Email: Advancedfuels.callforevidence@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Mr Barrett,

Re: Advanced fuels: call for evidence

The Society of Biology is a single unified voice, representing a diverse membership of individuals, learned societies and other organisations. We are committed to ensuring that we provide Government and other policy makers - including funders of biological education and research – with a distinct point of access to authoritative, independent, and evidence-based opinion, representative of the widest range of bioscience disciplines.

The skills, knowledge, and commitment of biological scientists will be vital if we are to develop a significant advanced fuels sector in the UK, and we ask the Department to consider how this can be best supported in future policy development.

The challenges associated with the development of advanced fuels are of interest to the Society and our members in three major areas:

- Developing new technologies. UK life scientists are improving technologies and processes that reduce risks associated with energy insecurity. It is important to ensure diverse approaches whilst advanced fuel technologies are under development; general approaches include the use of sustainable non-food biomass as feedstocks for microbial transformations, developing novel microbes for production of hydrocarbon feedstocks for the chemical industry, use of anaerobic digestion for the production of methane, and algal biofuels.¹
- Defining the scientific skills relevant to advanced fuels over the next decade, and training life scientists for roles in the sector.
- Enabling dialogue with the public on the societal opportunities and challenges of advanced fuels, to equip them to make informed decisions and offer critique on policy as it develops².

There are exciting opportunities to form new links between the engineering, transportation and life sciences sectors, and DfT is in the right position to act as a nucleus for this important work. Life scientists also have a vital role in the technology assessments needed for policymaking, and our community's knowledge could be readily tapped through an advisory panel. The Society of Biology would be happy to provide links with expert members and to have further discussions on this as is required.

¹ <https://www.societyofbiology.org/policy/policy-issues/environmental-sciences/biofuels>; <http://microb.io/1f8kE72>

² <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/society/dialogue/activities/bioenergy-dialogue/bioenergy-dialogue-index.aspx>

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Yours sincerely,



Dr Mark Downs CSci, FSB, FLS
Chief Executive