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THE PRIME MINISTER

27 November 2020

Dear Patrick & Nancy,

Thank you for your letter of 24 September, setting out your views on the role of science and technology in the levelling up agenda, following our discussion in March this year.

Your considered views on this topic are greatly appreciated and will be of immense value as we develop our recovery and growth plan for the 2020s, which the Business Secretary announced in his speech to the CBI on 2 November.

We know that research and innovation investment is key to firm productivity, and that innovative firms are higher growth, and create higher value, better paid jobs. We need more of this investment, and more of these firms and jobs across our country to achieve a genuine levelling up of opportunity.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is of course developing the UK Research and Development Place Strategy in support of our broader growth aims, with close support from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The Place Strategy will set out how the Government can build on existing initiatives (such as the Strength in Places Fund) to support research and innovation excellence, and build new centres of high-value economic activity outside of the South East. It is imperative that we look at R&D investment alongside investment in housing, transport, regeneration and culture to maximise the agglomeration benefits from Government and private sector investment. We also need to get the local governance and delivery structures right so that responsibility and accountability sit at the right level for delivering local growth priorities.

BEIS and UKRI will continue to engage widely with industry, the scientific community, and civic organisations from across the country to help develop a strategy that supports the priorities of areas and communities across the UK. The new Ministerial R&D Place Advisory Group, which had its inaugural meeting last month, will propose, challenge and test potential policy options. The recommendations you have set out in your letter and paper will be fully considered by BEIS as part of the Place Strategy development process.

Thank you, once again, for your considered and expert opinions.


