

Business Innovation Forum (BIF) Meeting 3 – 19/12/2022

Introduction

1. The Minister for Science Research and Innovation welcomed attendees, thanked them for their work over the summer and re-affirmed Government's commitment to optimising the conditions for innovation across the UK as evidenced by, for example, the reinstatement of the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) and the Autumn Statement.
2. As part of its ongoing work to improve data accuracy, the [ONS has published updated R&D statistics](#) that suggest the UK has now exceeded the target to invest 2.4% of GDP in R&D. This indicates businesses across the UK are investing more in R&D than we previously thought. This is positive, but the Minister is keen we should continue to take action to maximise our potential to deliver growth through R&D.
3. The Minister urged the group to focus on levers which can catalyse innovation in addition to the Innovation Strategy. He encouraged members to see themselves as a powerful body to drive change.

Priority areas

4. Members were invited by the Minister to share reflections on priorities for innovation regulation. Innovating at speed and talent were key themes. Members also discussed the following:
 - The link between R&D and productivity is pivotal to ensure that public R&D investment converts into the business activity that drives productivity.
 - Permeability between business and academia is crucial for skills development.
 - The Business Innovation Forum could focus on areas where the group has a depth of knowledge and most probability of success, ensuring there is appropriate success criteria.
 - There is an opportunity to capitalise on the Innovation Accelerator pilots as a blueprint for cluster management.
 - Reviewing roadmaps of past success/failure from innovative start-ups to identify lessons learnt will be useful.
 - Graduates should be encouraged to stay in the UK to drive start-up culture.
 - Infrastructure challenges in some areas slowing progress, e.g. transport and broadband connectivity.

The New Innovation Programme (name tbc)

5. Preference remains association to EU programmes, and Government continues to do everything we can to secure this, but we are prepared if this is not possible.
 - The Minister outlined the context for seeking member feedback on the proposed Innovation Programme that would be part of any wider UK programme if the UK were not able to associate to Horizon. Slides were shared in confidence in advance of the meeting.
 - In the event that the UK does not associate to Horizon, the UK will have a comprehensive alternative that incorporates Talent, Industry and Innovation.

Review of regulation of innovation

6. Sir Patrick Vallance joined to present on his review of regulation of innovation announced in the Autumn Statement: “The government will also task the Government Chief Scientific Adviser and National Technology Officer, Sir Patrick Vallance, to bring together the best minds to advise how the UK can better regulate emerging technologies, enabling their rapid and safe introduction.” The intended output of this review is a series of targeted, sector-specific recommendations for regulatory reform, as well as recommendations on regulator behaviour and cross-cutting issues, with a delivery timeline.
7. The project will focus on growth sectors that the Chancellor identified in the Autumn Statement. This will include digital technology, life sciences and green industries. Further work, building on that led by Sir Patrick Vallance, will follow on advanced manufacturing and creative industries. Sir Patrick Vallance’s team will be seeking to:
 - Make regulation more anticipatory of change.
 - Review regulation that industry and Government know is an innovation blocker.
 - Consider regulation behaviour as an innovation facilitator.
8. Members were enthusiastic about the review and offered to be a sounding board, as required. In particular, they welcomed:
 - A commitment to review advanced manufacturing regulation as the sector is critical to next generation of medicines.
 - The emphasis on green tech.
 - A time-bounded approach.
 - The envisioned clarity of reporting (current situation, desired state, impact of change).

Innovation Strategy Implementation

9. The Deputy Director for innovation updated on delivery of the UK Innovation Strategy and the forward look for the next three months, including how the team had responded to feedback from a previous BIF meeting. Members fed back that the progress update was useful and reflected positively on progress made despite political uncertainty over the summer.

Closing remarks

10. Minister thanked members for attending and indicated the fourth meeting of the BIF will be held in the next quarter.