Public Affairs

The Institution of Engineering and Technology

2010 **Political** Engagement

Summarising the work and achievements of the IET's Policy Panels

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The Institution of Engineering & Technology

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Houses of Parliament

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1. Background

This document summarises the work and achievements of the IET's Policy Panels since 1 January 2010.

At 1 November 2010 the panels and groups were as follows:

Energy Policy Panel	Innovation and Emerging Technologies Policy Panel
Transport Policy Panel	Engineering Policy Group Northern Ireland
Information Technology Policy Panel	Engineering Policy Group Scotland
Communications Policy Panel	Health and Safety Policy Panel
Manufacturing Policy Panel	Biological Effects Policy Panel
Education and Skills Policy Panel	EMC and Functional Safety Policy Panel

2. Consultations

Despite the work of the UK Government and its departments being curtailed by the General Election in May, the IET, through the support of the Policy Panels, still responded to 25 consultations from 14 different bodies during the year. This included offering evidence to select committees and making submissions to regulators, government departments and the European Commission.

The Office of the Rail Regulator requested further information in response to the IET's submission on enforcement powers. As a result of submissions on smart metering the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and the Office of the Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem), the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (DBIS) and the Office of Communications (Ofcom) requested meetings with IET experts.

The IET continued its collaboration on submissions with other engineering institutions, the Royal Academy of Engineering, Engineering UK and the Engineering Council under the banner *Engineering the Future*. This work included submissions to the Energy and Climate Change Select Committee and the Department for Energy and Climate Change. In addition, the IET's responses to the Government's smart metering prospectus were supported by the Royal Academy of Engineering.

3. Publications

The Policy Panels were instrumental in the publication of a number of policy related IET reports. These included the fifth annual IET Skills Survey which indicated a growth in skills shortages and was launched at an event chaired by Ms. Chi Onwurah MP, who is also a member of the IET. The publication of a study into the unintended consequences of transport policy by the Transport Policy Panel won the best paper prize at the 2010 Road Transport Information and Control Conference.

The IET also published briefings and position papers on manufacturing, road user charging and smart grids, which were produced for use at IET and Engineering the Future events.

The IET, through the Biological Effects Policy Panel, published an updated position statement on the possible harmful effects of low level electromagnetic fields. The statement was based on a review of over 800 scientific papers published since the publication of the last statement in 2008. The position statement received recognition from around the world, including from the UK Mobile Phone Operators Association.

The Transport Policy Panel contributed to the publication and media launch of the Royal Academy of Engineering's *Electric Vehicles: Charge with Potential* report to Government in May 2010.

4. Parliamentary and Government Interaction

The Policy Panels undertook a number of proactive activities in Parliament to raise the profile of the IET. The Education Policy Panel held a parliamentary exhibition in support of the engineering diploma, which included exhibitions of work by students from 5 schools from around the country. The Manufacturing Policy Panel ran a post election MP briefing event with *Manufacturing Insight*, which attracted over 20 newly elected MPs, to hear presentations from leading industrialists on the needs of manufacturing industry in the UK. The Communications Policy Panel held their second parliamentary briefing in the House of Lords on *Key Communication Issues for Tomorrow*, hosted by Lord Broers.

The Panels and Groups met with government officials throughout the year. The Innovation and Emerging Technologies Policy Panel met with Professor Adrian Smith, Director of Research at DBIS, to discuss research funding. The Transport Policy Panel met with Professor Brian Collins, Chief Scientific Advisor for the Department for Transport (DfT) to discuss transport policy and with senior Civil Servants from DfT to discuss infrastructure adaptation to climate change. The IT Policy Panel sent representatives to an Information Security workshop organised by the Cabinet Office and had a representative appointed

to the UK government's expert group on privacy.

Throughout the year, the Energy, Communication and IT Policy Panels have been working together to encourage the Government to adopt a sound engineering approach to plans for the introduction of smart meters and smart grids into the UK. This has involved detailed meeting with officials from DECC, Ofgem, DBIS and Ofcom as well as comprehensive submissions of evidence. The number of conflicting objectives, interested stakeholders and a tight EU deadline make this a complex area of policy but there were indications that the IET's independent input was valued.

A letter was written to Dr Vince Cable, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, urging him not to cut engineering research in the Comprehensive Spending Review. The Policy Panels also made nominations to DBIS for Panel Chairs and Panel Members for the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework.

The Communications Policy Panel provided advice regarding complaints of poor digital TV reception in the Thanet Parliamentary Constituency.

The expertise of the Energy Policy Panel membership has enabled the IET to develop relationships as a trusted advisor to bodies including the Select Committee on Climate Change, the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, and the influential Committee on Climate Change. In addition, Dr Simon Harrison, Chair of the Energy Panel, was re-elected to the Executive Council of the Parliamentary Group for Energy Studies.

5. Scotland

The Engineering Policy Group Scotland (EPGS) has been developing its links with the Scottish Government and strengthening its links to the major engineering institutions in Scotland. The Policy Group now includes representatives of the IoP, IMechE, IChemE, ICE and IESIS (Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders in Scotland). The authority and influence of the Group has been enhanced by the pan-institutional membership.

The EPGS was invited by the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) to give input into courses for the new National 4 and 5 qualifications. They were subsequently invited to nominate an active contributor to the new curriculum Qualification Design Team.

The SQA also invited the EPGS to nominate representatives to help it to develop practical electronics courses.

The EPGS organised three Holyrood briefing events for member of the Scottish Parliament on energy efficiency solutions for the built environment, controlling transport emissions and the future of oil and gas. All three events successfully brought together MSPs, industrialists and academics to discuss some of the most pressing engineering issues facing Scotland.

6. Northern Ireland

The Engineering Policy Group Northern Ireland (EPGNI) has focused on education and skills issues, building upon the success of previous work with the Northern Ireland Assembly's Employment and Learning, Education, Enterprise Trade and Investment Committees.

The EPGNI has met with representatives from the Assembly Committee for Employment and Learning to discuss the impact on the NI economy of too few graduates. A further meeting dealt with the business impact of the proposed NI STEM strategy. The Committee regards the EPGNI as a key STEM stakeholder and has invited EPGNI to run a joint STEM event at Stormont in 2011.

7. 2010 General Election

The outcome of the UK 2010 General election resulted in a seismic shift in the UK political scene bringing with it new challenges and new opportunities. In addition, during the run up to the election, the IET sought to build links and influence key individuals across all major parties.

The Energy Policy Panel met with Charles Hendry MP (now Energy Minister) to discuss all aspects of UK energy policy. After the election, the Panel followed this up with a detailed briefing to the Minister on the actions that needed to be taken within the first 100 days of the new government.

The Education Policy Panel met with the Chief of Staff to John Hayes MP (now Skills Minister) to discuss the engineering diploma and skills shortages.

The IET joined with the Engineering the Future alliance to produce an Engineering Election Manifesto, outlining five main key issues: skills, low carbon technology, the value of UK research, harnessing the power of public spending (authored by the Innovation and Emerging Technology Policy Panel) and making greater use of engineering advice in government.

The IET contributed to a special election feature on energy policy that appeared on the ePolitix website and ran a policy advert in the *House Magazine's* post election listing of elected MPs. The House of Commons library was also contacted to make sure that they were aware of all the IET's factfiles and briefing documents in preparation for the new Parliament.

8. Press and media relations

The Policy department and Policy Panels worked with the Communications Department to supply expert comment on current affairs and promote the IET's policy positions. A number of Panel members have been trained in media handling skills.

Press release topics included Digital Britain, the future of the UK electricity network, university tuition fees, smart metering and grids and comment on the 2010 Budget.

Media coverage of the 2010 Skills Survey included the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Engineer* and several trade journals. The document continues to be referenced and quoted in various parts of the media

The Policy Panels set up a media briefing on Smart Grids at the Science Media Centre. Organisations attending included *Channel 4 News*, *New Scientist*, *The FT* and *The Guardian*.

The publication by the Transport Policy Panel of a report, *Rebound, the unintended consequences of transport policy* attracted media coverage both within transport trade journals and more broadly in the national media, including the *Times*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Independent*. The Chair of the Panel, Professor Phil Blythe, was interviewed on the Radio 4 *Today* programme and on BBC local radio.

The Communication Policy Panel Chairman, Professor Will Stewart was interviewed by *The Sun* and by BBC West Midlands on the subject of 3D television.

9. Factfiles

The IET's suite of health and safety briefings maintained by the Health and Safety Policy Panel continued to attract over 166,000 web hits, an 8% increase over 2009. Two new briefings on safe equipment operation and maintenance were published in support of the EU's *Safe Maintenance Campaign*.

10. Engineering the Future

The Policy Panels continued to support the joint institutional policy work under the *Education for Engineering* (E4E) and *Engineering the Future* (EtF) banners.

The Transport and Communications Policy Panels led their respective sectors in the joint major government project looking into adapting UK infrastructure to climate change. The project work included compiling sector briefing documents, running sector workshops and compiling the final reports that were submitted to the Government's Infrastructure and Adaptation Programme.

The Energy Policy Panel led the EtF work on smart grids and smart meters, including liaison with DECC and Ofgem. They also supported the EtF study and subsequent report *Nuclear Lessons Learnt*, which looked into the lessons that could be transferred from past nuclear construction projects to future nuclear builds.

11. Additional Activity

Policy staff and expert volunteers have contributed to the development of the IET's strategic programmes for both Global Agendas and Community Engagement Sectors.

The Policy Panels were key players in proposing a number of future IET publications and income streams. These included:

- A request from the Infrastructure Planning Commission for an independent and authoritative report on the practicality and cost of underground and sub sea power cables (Energy Panel).
- Proposal to cite the IET's EMC guidance in an ISO medical standard (EMC and Functional Safety Policy Panel).
- A proposal for guidance on safe maintenance of high voltage installations (H&S Panel)

The Health and Safety PAG continued to support of the Inter-Institutional Group on Health and Safety and the Hazards Forum.

The Education Policy Panel supported the Baker Dearing Educational Trust seminar on University Technology Colleges, which is being led by Lord Baker.

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