

The Royal Society of Edinburgh

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European Commissioner for Science & Research Visits Scotland to discuss Knowledge for Growth

European Commissioner for Science and Research Dr Janez Potočnik will make his first official visit to Scotland tomorrow, Tuesday 31 May. Dr Potočnik will spend the day at The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) where he will meet leading figures in the science, business, and university communities and discuss the main issues of high level research in Scotland.

Researchers based in Scotland have been involved in research projects that have received approximately 600 million Euros (£413 million approx) under Framework Programme 6 (FP6) funding. The 7th Framework Programme (FP7) runs from 2007 to 2013 and budgetary negotiations are on going.

RSE President, Lord Sutherland of Houndwood said:

I am delighted to welcome the Commissioner to Scotland. Through the output of our leading universities and research base, Scotland is recognised internationally as an outstanding place for high quality research in Europe. The challenge for us, as for the rest of Europe, is how to use this knowledge to grow sustainable jobs and prosperity. This is an issue of great importance to the RSE.

Speaking ahead of his visit, Commissioner Potočnik said:

I hope to succeed in my task as EU Commissioner for Science and Research. For me to do so is in the interests of all European member states and their citizens. Science and research bring knowledge. Knowledge brings competitive advantage, economic growth and more and better jobs – for everybody.

Media Q&A Session

Members of the Media are cordially invited to a question and answer session at 1030 a.m on Tuesday 31 May with Commissioner Potočnik on science and research in Europe and other matters on which the European Commission has taken a view. This will take place at the RSE, 22-26 George Street, Edinburgh. To confirm your attendance please contact either Laura Close (European Commission 0131 255 2058) or Stuart Brown (RSE 0131 240 5016).

Dr Potočník will make a presentation on: *Creation of Knowledge Economy and Society in Scotland and Europe*. This will be followed by a discussion chaired Sir David Edward, KCMG, QC, FRSE, Chairman of the RSE's European Forum.

Presentations by Scottish experts to the Commissioner

During the morning session, chaired by the RSE's International Convener, Professor Rona MacKie CBE, FRSE, the following presentations will be made to the Commissioner, each of which will be followed by discussion:

Presentations by Scottish experts to the Commissioner

Science Matters: making the right connections for Scotland

Professor Wilson Sibbett CBE, FRS, FRSE, Chairman of the Scottish Science Advisory Committee and Bishop Wardlaw Professor of Physics and Director of Research, University of St Andrews.

Strengths and weaknesses of EU funding for Life Sciences in the University of Dundee

Professor Peter Downes OBE, FRSE, Department of Biochemistry, University of Dundee.

Innovation through the looking glass

Dr Ian Underwood FRSE, Operations Director, MicroEmissive Displays Ltd; and winner in 2004 of The Gannochy Trust Innovation Award of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (Scotland's highest accolade for individual achievement in innovation).

After his visit to the RSE, Commissioner Potočník is due to meet leading Scottish politicians, including Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise Jim Wallace MSP. The Commissioner will visit the Scottish Parliament where he will meet the Presiding Officer George Reid MSP and have informal discussions with members of the European and External Relations and Enterprise and Culture committees.

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Notes for Editors

1. Biographies

Dr Janez Potočnik, European Commissioner for Science and Research was, prior to joining the Commission, Minister for European Affairs for Slovenia from 2002-2004. From 1998 he was Head of the Negotiating Team for the Accession of Slovenia to the EU. He obtained his PhD in Economics at the University of Ljubljana in 1993. He was born in 1958 and is married with 2 sons. Also see:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/commission_barroso/potocnik/indexfl_en.htm

Professor Peter Downes OBE, FRSE is Dean of the Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Dundee. He is one of the most cited bio-scientists in the UK and has played a key role in developing Life Sciences at the University of Dundee to its current status as a global player. As a biochemist, Peter has made important contributions to understanding lithium, used to treat manic depression, insulin and growth factor signalling. Peter is co-director, with Sir Philip Cohen, of a unique consortium with six of the world's leading drug companies – the Division of Signal Transduction Therapy – which is making an important contribution to drug discovery. His outstanding contributions were recognized with an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List 2004.

Professor Wilson Sibbett CBE, FRS, FRSE: Chair of the Scottish Science Advisory Committee and Wardlaw Professor of Physics, University of St Andrews. Professor Sibbett is recognised as a pioneer and world authority in ultrafast lasers, nonlinear optics and optoelectronics/photonics and he has published over 300 scientific journal papers in these areas. His work has wide-ranging applications in the field of ultrafast science and technology, including optical communications and photobiology. He is presently the Co-Technical Director of the St Andrews Photonics Innovation Centre that promotes the linkage of academic research to applications in industry, Director of an EPSRC-funded Interdisciplinary Research Collaboration - Ultrafast Photonics Collaboration on ultrahigh speed data-communications and Co-Director of a SHEFC-funded Strategic Research Development Grant on the application of photonics to biology and medicine. He received the Rank Prize for Optoelectronics in 1997, the Mitutoyo - NPL Frontier Science and Measurement Award in 1998 and the Rumford Medal of the Royal Society for "Research into Ultrashort-Pulse Laser Science and Technology" in 2000. In 2002 he was awarded the Quantum Electronics Prize by the European Physical Society in recognition of the 'excellence and enduring impact' of his major research contributions.

Dr Ian Underwood FRSE, Director of Strategic Marketing, MicroEmissive Displays (MED). Ian co-founded, and later joined, MED. Prior to that he was at The University of Edinburgh where he carried out pioneering research and development in the field of liquid crystal microdisplays between 1983 and 1999. A Fulbright Fellow (1991), Photonics Spectra Circle of Excellence designer (1994), British Telecom Fellow (1997) and Ben Sturgeon Award winner (1999), he has presented invited papers on microdisplay technology and applications to research, development and commercialisation conferences in the UK, Europe, USA and Asia over the past few years and is recognised worldwide as an authority on microdisplay technology and applications. Ian was recently elected to Fellowship of The Royal Society of

Edinburgh and in 2004 was awarded the Gannochy Trust Innovation Award of The Royal Society of Edinburgh as 'Scotland's Top Innovator'. In 2003 Ian and Jeff Wright, above, were jointly named 'Scottish Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year' by Ernst & Young.

2. The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE)

The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) is Scotland's National Academy of Science & Letters. An independent body with charitable status, its multidisciplinary fellowship of 1400 men and women of international standing represents a knowledge resource for the people of Scotland. Committed to its Royal Charter of 1783 for the “advancement of learning and useful knowledge” the Society recognises the important role it can play in today's Scotland. Working as part of the UK and within a global context, the RSE seeks to provide public benefit by:

- organising conferences and lectures for the specialist and for the general public on topics of national and international importance
- providing independent, expert advice to key decision-makers in Scotland
- awarding over £1.5 million annually to Scotland's top young academics to promote research and knowledge transfer in Scotland
- enabling leading Scottish-based researchers to collaborate with the best of their international counterparts
- inspiring school children in classrooms from the Borders to the Northern Isles and promoting their interest in science, society and culture
- producing academic journals of international standing

www.royalsoced.org.uk

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