

UK ELECTION 2015

# UKIP answers questions from *Nature*

Responses from Julia Reid, UKIP's spokesperson on science.

## How would your party ensure that UK science maintains its current position in the world?

UKIP is committed to encouraging more students to study science subjects by removing tuition fees for STEMM [science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine] subjects. This will help to rebuild the pipeline of new UK scientists which is vital to our maintaining our position in the scientific world, and our superb research institutions.

## How do you view the state of UK science compared with five years ago?

I personally think the state of UK science has deteriorated over the past five years. The loss of research positions, in academia and in industry, is worrying.

## Will your party be making any commitment to the science budget, either to ring-fence it, or to increase or decrease funding?

We do not have a specific manifesto commitment in this regard but our attitude can be determined in the answer to Q1 above.

## Is government-controlled science spending going to the right areas? Where would you change it?

In conjunction with research grants being targeted in certain areas, I would also like to see a return to research for research sake. So often in the past we have made enormous leaps, in our understanding of science, from researchers studying obscure aspects of science. Serendipity does happen.

## How should infrastructure funding (that is, capital spending) for science be allocated?

This is too detailed a question to answer without in-depth study of current allocation policies and trends.

## How high would policies on science and research come in your priorities in the scenario of negotiating any post-election coalition agreement?

We will not be seeking a coalition agreement, but a confidence-and-supply arrangement based on one or two key commitments.

## Would you want to change visa rules for international scientists and students?

We intend to introduce an Australian-style points-based system, once we have regained control of our borders. This would prioritize highly skilled workers from anywhere in the world. Equally, we value the contribution of genuine overseas students and would be open to their continuing participation in our scientific excellence.

## Does your party support research on genetically modified (GM) crops, and the cultivation of such crops?

We do support research on GM crops, and will support a free vote on cultivation in Parliament.

## Does your party support research on embryonic and adult stem cells? Are there areas of this work that you feel should be off limits?

We are in favour of scientific research but also respect people's moral or religious objections. Our MPs voted in favour of the recent change regarding mitochondrial disease, on a free vote.

## What is your party's position on climate change and the measures needed to combat it?

We believe that climate change is a very real phenomenon (and always has been), are sceptical about the degree to which anthropomorphic climate change has been demonstrated (i.e. we believe that ideologically influenced modelling and conjecture has been over-emphasized in the debate to date, watering down the normal requirements for scientific scepticism), and believe that investment to mitigate the effects of climate change would be more sensible than efforts to try and prevent it.

## What is your view of the future energy needs of the UK, and the balance of fossil fuel, nuclear and renewable energy?

We believe that the failure to create a strategic energy policy for the country a decade ago was a dereliction of the government's duty; that the sell-off of our nuclear industry was a catastrophic error; that we must invest in nuclear energy and re-establish ourselves as a leader

in research into cleaner nuclear energy; that we must exploit shale-based gas and oil in the shorter term to provide the economic platform for development of new clean-energy sources; and that reliable renewable energy such as tidal generation, and small-scale localized intermittent renewables designed to reduce grid demand are the way to go.

## What is your position on university tuition fees? Should they be allowed to rise be capped or be cut, and how will you account for any resulting changes to university income?

We will remove tuition fees from science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine subjects.

## Would you support free movement of European researchers?

We would consider it in the design of the new immigration regime.

## Would you support the UK's contributions to international science projects, such as CERN and the European Space Agency?

Yes.

## Has your party increased its focus on science policy over the past five years?

Yes, we see it as a vital part of the UK's re-establishing and maintaining its position as a global trading nation and a source of innovation. ■

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