

# Cross-Party Group on STEMM – Meeting Minutes

Date: 7 October 2025

Time: 17:25 – 20:20

Location: Virtual Meeting (Online)

Chair: David Rees MS

Secretariat: Niall Sommerville (Royal Society of Chemistry)

Attendees: Paul Bulmer, Rhobert Lewis, Helen Taylor, Rob Beynon, Faron Molelr, Hywel Edwards, Rhian Kendall, Benjamin Lloyd, Keith Jones, Lewis Dean, Andrew Bellamy, Elaine Crooks, Robert Hoyle, Peter Bannister, George Baldwin, Peter Arnold, Louise Bright, Wendy Sadler, Jas Pal Badyal, Tom Addison, Emma Yhnel, Geertje Van Keulen.

## 1. Welcome and Apologies

Chair David Rees MS welcomed attendees and noted his recent absence at previous meetings due to chair commitments.

Apologies received from: Mark Isherwood MS (travelling to Cardiff), Dayna Mason, Fiona Dakin, Kadun Rees

## 2. Approval of Previous Minutes and Matters Arising

Minutes from the previous meeting were circulated in advance.

No objections raised; minutes approved.

Technocamps funding concerns: Niall Sommerville to follow up with Faron Moller regarding funding issues.

Written Update: Robert Hoyle provided a written update, circulated to members.

HE Funding Advocacy: Members were encouraged to write to their MSs and the Welsh Government regarding concerns over higher education (HE) funding.

## 4. Presentation: Wales Women in STEM Initiative

Speaker: Professor Louise Bright, University of South Wales

Overview of the initiative originating from the 2016 “Talented Women for a Successful Wales” report. Key activities include annual conferences, networking, focus on imposter syndrome, media confidence, role modelling, and a digital and tech sector roadmap.

Challenges include lack of funding and coordination, need for better communication and marketing, and desire for sponsorship and institutional support.

Discussion Points: Peter Bannister offered to connect Louise with WISE; Lewis Dean asked about support from networks; Wendy Sadler raised concerns about the disbanding of the Welsh Government's Equity in STEM Board; Robert Hoyle cited resource constraints and ministerial changes; Geertje Van Keulen raised concerns about women leaving academia post-COVID; Robert Hoyle confirmed integrated impact assessments are conducted for major funding decisions.

## 5. Science GCSE Reform

Speakers: Niall Sommerville (RSC) and George Baldwin (IOP)

Speakers gave an update on recently announced changes to the Science GCSE going forward. Qualifications Wales has paused elements of the reforms and will maintain single sciences with further consultation until 2028. Concerns raised about complexity, delays, inequity in access to triple science, and lack of transparency in the decision-making processes.

Action: Members encouraged to raise concerns with education spokespeople and committees.

## 6. Higher Education in Wales

Speaker: Geertje Van Keulen (Swansea University)

Geertje highlighted that Swansea University is facing £30 million in savings, with £3 million cuts to STEM subjects. Concerns over staff reductions, closure of building floors, and impact on STEM education and research.

Action: David Rees MS to raise concerns as a constituency member.

## 7. Technocamps Update

Speaker: Faron Moller, Technocamps

Faron highlighted the long-standing success of Technocamps' in supporting digital education across Wales, however they are now being faced with an acute funding crisis despite high demand and demonstrable impact. It was noted that despite an additional £1.4m funding from the Welsh Government into digital education being announced this is all being directed towards York University based STEM Learning. Some members raised concerns that Welsh Government money was being spent outwith Wales rather than on Welsh-based, successful programmes such as Technocamps.

Action: Members encouraged to raise concerns with MSs and education spokespeople. David Rees MS agreed to write to the Minister as Chair of the CPG

## 8. Welsh Government Office for Science Update

Speakers: Robert Hoyle and Prof. Jas Pal Badyal

Robert and Jas Pal highlighted several key areas, including:

UKRI Changes: Anticipated reforms under new CEO Sir Ian Chapman.

Exercise Pegasus: National emergency preparedness exercise involving scientific advice.

Cluster Analysis: Exploring potential for a Welsh cluster in circular economy and critical materials.

## 9. Professional Bodies Updates

Members were invited to share oral updates and send written updates to Niall Sommerville for circulation.

## 10. Election Planning and Collaboration

Members discussed plans for the upcoming 2026 Senedd election. RSC preparing policy briefings and campaign materials. The importance of coordination across professional bodies, sharing messaging and resources, was highlighted.

Action: Members to share plans and materials with Niall Sommerville for coordination.

## 11. AOB and Future Meetings

Public Attitudes to Science Survey: New UK data expected in November; suggestion to invite a speaker to a future meeting.

Next Meeting: Date to be confirmed. Two meetings planned before the Senedd election (dissolution on 27 March 2026).

Meeting Closed at: 20:20