



Department for
Science, Innovation
& Technology

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The Lord Mair CBE
Chair, House of Lords Science and Technology
Committee
(By e-mail)

14th March 2025

Dear Lord Mair,

Thank you for the Science and Technology Committee's recent report on engineering biology. I note the Committee's conclusions and recommendations and have set out the Government's thinking on these issues in the attached report response.

We agree with the committee that engineering biology (EB) offers the significant potential for economic growth and catalysing impact across multiple industries. We also recognise the need for urgency to strengthen the UK's position and how central the ability for companies to scale-up in the UK is for this.

Our industrial strategy will set out a decade-long plan for our economy, squarely focused on the eight sectors with the greatest growth potential and anchored in a positive and pragmatic vision of what Britain's future could look like. The Secretary of State for DSIT will be taking forward a dedicated plan for our digital and technologies sector.

Actions taken through the Industrial Strategy will reinforce and complement actions that we have already taken to support the sector. In February 2024 UKRI announced £100m of funding for EB Missions Hubs and Awards. To address regulatory issues, we announced the creation of the Regulatory Innovation Agency, with EB one of its four early priority areas. The Food Standards Agency has begun delivering a £1.6m sandbox on cell-cultivated products. Building on this, the government has also announced that the second round of the EB Sandbox Fund will open in April 2025, to help innovators understand and tackle regulatory barriers in transformative innovations. Furthermore, we are developing the next generation of academics and founders through new PhD studentships, and through a new Centre for Doctoral Training for EB and additional Doctoral Focal awards.

As noted in your report, to fully capitalise on the economic growth impacts of the sector, addressing safety and acceptability concerns is critical. In October 2024 we launched gene synthesis screening guidance to ensure that the UK secures the economic, health and wider societal benefits from advances in biosciences and biotechnologies whilst mitigating the risks.

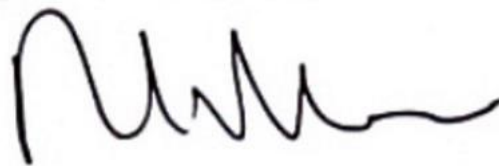
We are also ensuring that we engage with the sector effectively and receive the right expert advice. The EB Advisory Panel (EBAP) has brought together both the current and next generation of academic, start-up and industry leaders in EB across the UK. Additionally, the EB Responsible Innovation Advisory Panel (RIAP, formally the Biosecurity Leadership Council) has

now met five times to discuss issues of responsible innovation and to support our policy development.

But we recognise there is more to do. Infrastructure is a vital part of being able to address scale-up issues, and we are now working closely with the EB Advisory Panel to understand how different models for infrastructure have strengths and weaknesses in the UK's unique context. We are also addressing funding gaps, through the Mansion House Compact, reforms to the British Business Bank and creating the National Wealth Fund with £5.8 billion of additional funding, raising its total capitalisation to £27.8 billion.

The UK remains one of the global leaders in EB, particularly in research and development, higher education and responsible innovation. We have high ambitions to continue building-up the sector to deliver bio-based solutions for economic and wider societal benefit and look forward to working with the Committee to further the potential and impact of the UK's EB sector.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'N. Vallance', written in a cursive style.

The Lord Vallance of Balham KCB

Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation