



Letter to the Times

7th October 2010

Nobel prize-winners in science have been enriching and enhancing British science and society for decades

Sir,

The UK has long had a reputation as a global centre of research excellence. It is not only our world-class institutions, but also our inclusive culture which has attracted the world's best scientists to come and work here.

Nobel prize-winners in science — from America's James Watson and Germany's Hans Krebs in years past, to India's Venki Ramakrishnan and Russia's Andre Geim (a signatory to this letter) in the past twelve months — have been enriching and enhancing British science and society for decades. They add to our store of knowledge, and inspire countless young researchers to follow in their footsteps.

These benefits are jeopardised by the Government's plan to cap migration to the UK. It would damage our ability to recruit the brightest young talent, as well as distinguished scientists, into our universities and industries. International collaborations underlie 40 per cent of the UK's scientific output, but would become far more difficult if we were to constrict our borders. The UK produces nearly 10 per cent of the world's scientific output with only 1 per cent of its population; we punch above our weight because we can engage with excellence wherever it occurs.

The UK must not isolate itself from the increasingly globalised world of research — British science depends on it. The Government has seen fit to introduce an exception to the rules for Premier League footballers. It is a sad reflection of our priorities as a nation if we cannot afford the same recognition for elite scientists and engineers.

Sir Paul Nurse
Nobel Prize for Medicine, 2001

Sir Harry Kroto
Nobel Prize for Chemistry, 1996

Sir Martin Evans
Nobel Prize for Medicine, 2007

Konstantin Novoselov
Nobel Prize for Physics, 2010

Andre Geim
Nobel Prize for Physics, 2010

Sir John Sulston
Nobel Prize for Medicine, 2002

Sir Tim Hunt
Nobel Prize for Medicine, 2001

Sir John Walker
Nobel Prize for Chemistry, 1997