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## Spotlight on Scotland at MRC's Open Council Meeting

23 December 2009

Research in Scotland was at the heart of discussions at the Medical Research Council's (MRC) Open Council meeting this week, hosted in Edinburgh. In 2008/09 the MRC invested more than £65 million to support medical and health research in Scotland and committed a further £28million to create a new Centre for Virology Research in Glasgow. The economic, social and scientific benefits created by this investment were the focus of much of the discussion throughout the Council's visit.

MRC Chairman Sir John Chisholm and Chief Executive Sir Leszek Borysiewicz led Council's meeting with a packed audience of Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs), journalists, university academics, and research staff from MRC Units and Centres.

Many in the audience took the opportunity to ask questions directly to Sir Leszek and other Council members on a wide variety of issues. Topics ranged from current and future funding models, methods of participation with industry, the MRC's new information evaluation system E-Val, and MRC support for clinical research fellowships.

Speaking at the Open meeting, Sir Leszek stressed the importance of working in partnership with universities and devolved administrations to tackle future health challenges, particularly those related to the ageing UK population:

*"Population demographics show that the one to one worker to elderly population ratio that will exist in Japan in the 2020's will soon become a reality for the UK too. It is essential that we deliver on our investment in ageing research and in health throughout the life course."*

When asked about the future of medical research in the current economic climate, Sir Leszek reaffirmed that the MRC and the research community was in a position of strength:

*"from the MRC's point of view, now is a time of unprecedented opportunity for bioscience research."*

The meeting was held on 15 December at the MacDonald Holyrood Hotel in Edinburgh. In addition to hosting the MRC Open Council meeting, Council members met with biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry leaders, Scottish Government Cabinet Secretaries and the Chief Scientist Office. The Council also held a routine business meeting.

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