

Authority Paper

Committee:	Authority Meeting
Meeting Date:	9 May 2007
Agenda Item:	11
Paper Number:	HFEA (09/05/07) 375
Paper Title:	Hybrids and Chimera Embryos – Science & Technology Select Committee Report
Author:	Charles Lister
For Information or Decision?	Information
Resource Implications:	N/A
Implementation:	N/A
Communication:	N/A
Organisational Risk:	High. The Committee strongly criticises the Authority “for not taking a timely decision on processing the [research licence] applications”. This ups the ante slightly on ensuring a robust, defensible, consultation process to support the Authority’s decision-making in September.
Recommendation to the Committee:	To note the Select Committee’s key recommendations.
Evaluation:	N/A

Issue

1. The Science & Technology Select Committee’s report on “Government Proposals for the Regulation of Hybrid and Chimera Embryos” was published on 5th April 2007. This paper summarises the main recommendations and conclusions of the report, focussing particularly on areas of relevance to the Authority. The full report can be accessed at the Committee’s website [http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/science_and_technology_committee.cfm].
2. A copy of the Committee’s press notice is at Annex A. The Committee’s full recommendations are at Annex B.

Background

3. The Inquiry focussed on the appropriateness of the Government’s proposals for legislation of the creation of hybrid and chimera embryos for research and on the impact of these proposals upon stem cell research in the UK. It also looked at the policy position adopted by the Authority on 10th January 2007, including the decision to defer consideration of research licence applications to allow time for a public consultation. The Authority provided detailed written and oral evidence to the Inquiry (a full list of those who gave evidence is included in the press notice at Annex A). The contribution of the Authority is recognised in the report:

In particular, we would like to place on record our thanks to the secretariat of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority which has responded to our many requests for information efficiently and promptly.

UK Regulatory System

4. The Report notes that:

The UK is recognised as a good example of how to develop workable regulation in this area of research

It quotes Professor Anne McLaren and Professor Hui Sheng in support of this. Professor Sheng told the Inquiry that:

“The UK is “currently a world leader not only in embryological research and cloning, but also in policy making in this field” and that “UK policy has positively influenced the policy making in other countries, including China, Japan, USA.”

Ethical & Moral Points of View

5. The report summarises the various moral and ethical views on this issue, adding that:

We take the ethical and moral concerns with respect to work of this nature very seriously and we are in full agreement with Dr David Jones and colleagues of St Mary's University College London who told us that “in a democratic society, ethical and moral arguments both secular and religious should be considered” Indeed, we fundamentally believe that such views have an important role in the debate regarding whether or not the creation of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos should be allowed for research in the UK and that they must be taken into full account when drafting legislation, particularly in areas of research such as this.

However, the Committee cautioned that:

In certain cases, the serious ethical and moral objections to work of this nature have been clouded through the raising of what appear at first sight to be scientific arguments to support such opposition but which do not stand up to scrutiny.

6. In this context, the report draws attention to a previous recommendation of the Select Committee that there is a need for a new Parliamentary Standing Committee on Bioethics to undertake an annual scrutiny of RATE, make recommendations on the need for amended/new legislation and to scrutinise relevant draft legislation brought before Parliament.

Use of Hybrid and Chimera Embryos in Research

7. The Committee adopted the term cytoplasmic hybrid embryo to describe somatic cell nuclear transfer using enucleated animal eggs and the nucleus of a human cell - a term endorsed during the Inquiry by Sir David King and other experts.

8. The Committee concluded that:

We believe that the creation of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos, and specifically cytoplasmic hybrid embryos, is necessary, for example in the pursuit of knowledge about the genetic basis of disease and the direction of stem cells into future cell-based therapy. Furthermore, we recognise that stem cells produced through this methodology may be useful in drug discovery and that they may lead to the eventual reduction of animal use, for example in toxicity testing.

We are convinced of the need to use animal eggs in the creation of cytoplasmic hybrid embryos for the derivation of stem cells. We believe that use of animal eggs in the creation of cytoplasmic hybrid embryos will help to overcome the current shortage of human eggs available for research and that use of animal eggs is required to enable researchers to develop the practical techniques which may be required for eventual production of cell-based therapy through this method using human eggs.

9. In reaching this conclusion, the Committee also addressed potential problems with this research. This included concerns about the risk of creating new diseases, that hybrid and chimera embryos might be subject to a greater number of developmental problems or that the data produced would be of little use. With this in mind, they recommended that:

in the event that research using cytoplasmic hybrid embryos is authorised, we urge the Government to ensure that appropriate risk management procedures are established and implemented.

10. The Committee also looked specifically at claims that stem cell lines from cytoplasmic hybrid embryos might not be stable or might not yield anything useful, but concluded that:

research, by its very nature, is aimed at enhancing knowledge. Whilst we recognise scientific debate about the potential usefulness of cytoplasmic hybrid embryos in research, we do not believe that the existence of differing views of whether a methodology is workable before it has been sufficiently tested is reason enough to prohibit such research from taking place.

The HFEA and the Current Regulatory Framework

11. The Committee examined the decisions taken by the Authority in relation to the two research applications for the creation of cytoplasmic hybrid embryos submitted in November 2007 and agreed with the:

decision of the HFEA that these sorts of research would probably fall within the remit of the HFEA to regulate and license and would not be prohibited by current legislation.

In support of this, they conclude that cytoplasmic hybrid embryos contain a full human genome and that:

an embryo containing human nuclear DNA and mitochondria of animal origin should be regarded as a human embryo for the purposes of the 1990 Act.

12. However, the Committee took issue with the legal advice received by the Authority that a test for whether something was a live human embryo included the question of whether it could ever be viable. This was based on a recent judgement in the House of Lords in which one of the Law Lords (Lord Millett) attempted to define further what is meant by the term 'human embryo', stating that "in the case of a human embryo, it is a live human organism containing within its cell or cells a full set of 46 chromosomes with the normal potential to develop and, if planted in a woman, to become a foetus and eventually a human being". They concluded that:

We do not believe that it is appropriate to use viability as a mechanism for determining whether or not a creation is human, particularly since attempts to prove viability through implantation in a uterus would be unlawful. Furthermore, were the viability test to be failed,

this would mean that such research would be completely unregulated, which case law has found to be unsatisfactory.

13. The Committee were also critical of the Authority for deferring consideration of the two research applications, remarking that:

Past experience indicates a greater willingness on the part of the HFEA to fulfil this role than it perhaps displayed on this occasion

And concluding:

it is the role of HFEA to make judgements in areas considered within the spirit of the HFE Act where its legal advice indicates that it is reasonable to do so. Not to do so undermines the effectiveness of an independent regulator

Future Regulation of Research

14. There are a number of recommendations in the report addressing the proposals in the Government's White Paper and how legislation should be framed in future. Broadly, the Committee regarded the current Government proposals that include a ban on the creation of hybrid and chimera embryos subject to regulations, as "overly prohibitive" and that there should be regulation of this area by licensing. They also saw:

no benefit from allowing the development of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos past the 14 day stage in vitro and recommend that such practice is not licensed unless it is proved necessary

and recommended that:

legislation prohibit the implantation of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos in a woman.

15. The Committee also argued that:

A ban and the prospect of a ban in draft legislation on human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos would undermine the UK's leading position in stem cell research and the international reputation of science in the UK.

Public Engagement

16. The report contains some misunderstanding about the purpose of the Authority's public consultation, assuming that the main purpose was to clarify the legal questions regarding the HFEA's remit. They therefore questioned the value of this. The Committee had more sympathy with the objective of using the consultation to help develop a broader policy in this area but took the view that:

this exercise should have been undertaken when the HFEA first received information to indicate that applications for licensing the creation of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos could be expected.

17. The Committee also commented that it was:

the responsibility of the Government and HFEA to keep the public informed in respect of developments in legislation related to the creation of human-animal chimera and hybrid embryos for research.

18. They argued that the Government's consultation on the Review of the 1990 Act relied on a self selected sample, casting doubt on the whether the views opposed to this research were really representative of public opinion. They concluded that

Notwithstanding the accompanying delay in consideration of the King's College London and Newcastle University research applications, we welcome the HFEA proposed consultation on general principles and commend steps taken by the Authority to ensure appropriate drafting. We also commend the Government for allowing funding to be allocated toward education in this area.

The Government funded referred to is the grant to the HFEA from Sciencewise to support the public dialogue element of the consultation.

19. Subsequent to the report, the Select Committee have issued a press statement welcoming the publication of the HFEA consultation. This is attached at Annex C.

Conclusion

20. The overall conclusion of the Select Committee's report was:

Our inquiry has focused on the particular issue of the creation of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos for research purposes, using the specific example of cytoplasmic hybrid embryos to assess whether such research is desirable and necessary now. We have found the Government's published proposals for future regulation in this area to be unacceptable and potentially harmful to UK science. The Minister has strongly protested that the general interpretation of what the Government is seeking to do is mistaken, and also that she is prepared to revise the proposals for inclusion in the forthcoming draft Bill. We urge the Government to take our Report into consideration in preparation of the draft Bill.

ANNEX A**Select Committee on Science and Technology**

No. 28A of Session 2006-07 5 April 2007

PUBLICATION OF REPORT**GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS FOR THE REGULATION OF HYBRID AND CHIMERA EMBRYOS**

The Science and Technology Committee has found the Government's proposals to prohibit the creation of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos for research to be unacceptable and potentially harmful to UK science.

The Committee's conclusion comes in its report, published today, into the Government proposals for the regulation of hybrid and chimera embryos.

The Committee's inquiry was prompted by the coincidence of proposals by the Government for inclusion in its forthcoming draft Bill on the creation of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos for research purposes with recent applications by scientists to the Human and Embryology Authority (HFEA) for licences to create specific types of such embryos for use in the derivation of stem cells.

On the general issue, the Committee found that the Government's proposals as set out in a White Paper of December 2006 were too prohibitive and that the promise of future regulation was insufficient. Instead, the Committee calls for permissive legislation which would allow regulation of research using animal-human hybrid and chimera embryos through licensing. It should be made clear that existing research practices – essential tools in understanding diseases – will be allowed to continue. Future research proposals for novel techniques and creation should be subject to approval by Parliament.

The Committee maintains the view of the previous Science and Technology Select Committee that development of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos past the 14 day stage should be prohibited and that a prohibition should be put in place on the implantation of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos.

On the current applications, the Committee said that while it recognises the sincere ethical and moral concerns associated with research of this nature, it believes that the use of animal eggs in the creation of cytoplasmic hybrid embryos should be allowed under licence as long as the appropriate regulation was in place. The MPs felt it was a necessary step to overcome the shortage of human eggs available for research and to develop the practical techniques which may be required for eventual production of cell-based therapy.

The Committee strongly criticises the HFEA for not taking a timely decision on processing the applications, thereby delaying the start of this important research.

Greater public confidence in research using animal-human hybrid and chimera embryos is needed and the Committee called on the Government to ensure this is achieved through increased education and dialogue, particularly with respect to moral and ethical concerns.

Commenting on the report, the Chairman of the Science and Technology Committee Phil Willis MP said: "This is a test of the Government's commitment to science. Scientists, funders, the regulator and patient

interest groups, even the DTI and the Prime Minister, have spoken out against the Department of Health's proposals. We very much hope that the Department will listen and reflect the Committee's conclusions when the draft Tissue and Embryos Bill is published next month.

"We fully appreciate the concerns of those who oppose research into hybrid and chimera embryos – or indeed any human embryos – on moral and ethical grounds, but we feel that it is in the interests of science, the public and the UK that the current applications by King's College London and Newcastle University should be considered by the HFEA promptly and with due process."

For media inquiries please call Laura Kibby on 020 7219 0718. For any other information please call Ana Ferreira, on 020 7219 2793. Previous press notices and publications are available on our website.

Notes to editors:

- Under the terms of Standing Order No. 152 the Science and Technology Committee is empowered to examine the "expenditure, policy and administration of the Office of Science and Innovation and its associated public bodies". The Committee was appointed on 19 July 2005.
- The inquiry, into the Government's proposals for the regulation of the creation of animal/human hybrid and chimera embryos for research purposes, focused upon the appropriateness of the proposals for legislation in this area as set out in the Government's recent White Paper, Review of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act: Proposals for revised legislation (including establishment of the Regulatory Authority for Tissue and Embryos) (CM 6989) and on the impact of these proposals upon stem cell research in the UK.
- This inquiry was announced on 10 January 2007 in press notice [No 11 of Session 2006-07](#).
- Evidence sessions in this inquiry were held on: Wednesday 31 January when evidence was heard from **Dr Lyle Armstrong**, Institute of Human Genetics, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, **Professor Chris Shaw**, Professor of Neurology and Neurogenetics, Institute of Psychiatry, King's College, London, **Professor Austin Smith**, Director, Wellcome Trust Centre for Stem Cell Research, University of Cambridge, and the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority: Monday 5 February when evidence was heard from: **Dr David King**, Director, Human Genetics Alert, **Dr Calum MacKellar**, Director of Research, Scottish Council on Human Bioethics, **The Rt Revd Dr Lee Rayfield**, Bishop of Swindon, **Dr Simon Denegri**, Chief Executive, Association of Medical Research Charities, Emeritus **Professor Raanan Gillon**, former editor of Journal of Bioethics, **Professor Colin Blakemore**, Chief Executive, Medical Research Council, **Professor Martin Bobrow**, Deputy Chairman of the Wellcome Trust, and **David Macauley**, Chief Executive, UK Stem Cells Foundation: and on Wednesday 28 February when evidence was heard from: **Caroline Flint MP**, Minister for Public Health and **Professor Sir Liam Donaldson**, Chief Medical Officer for England, Department of Health

Membership of the Committee

Mr Phil Willis (Lib Dem, Harrogate and Knaresborough)(Chairman)
 Adam Afriyie (Con, Windsor)
 Mr Robert Ffello (Lab, Stoke-on-Trent South)
 Linda Gilroy (Lab/Co-op, Plymouth Sutton)
 Dr Evan Harris (Lib Dem, Oxford West & Abingdon)
 Dr Brian Iddon (Lab, Bolton South East)
 Chris Mole (Lab, Ipswich)

Mr Brooks Newmark (Con, Braintree)
Graham Stringer (Lab, Manchester, Blackley)
Bob Spink (Con, Castle Point)
Dr Desmond Turner (Lab, Brighton Kemptown)

ANNEX B**Select Committee on Science and Technology Fifth Report****Government Proposals for the Regulation of Hybrid & Chimera Embryos**

Conclusions and recommendations

Ethical and moral points of view

1. We regret that the Department of Health did not seek to specify more clearly in its consultation what views it was seeking, nor to evaluate fully the responses of the public consultation exercise. We recommend that in future a more systematic statistical or scientific approach is developed to quantify and qualify the results of public consultation. (Paragraph 41)
2. We recognise the sincere ethical and moral concerns associated with research of this nature and are therefore concerned that, to respond to these concerns, any regulatory framework associated with use of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos in research should be transparent and workable. (Paragraph 42)
3. We are of the opinion that ethical and moral concerns should be considered within the context in which they are made, and that inappropriate use of science to justify ethical and moral arguments is unhelpful. Inappropriate use of science should be identified and disregarded by Government and other policy-makers. (Paragraph 43)
4. In line with the recommendation of the previous Science and Technology Committee, we recommend the creation of a new Parliamentary standing Committee on Bioethics. (Paragraph 44)

Potential problems with this research

5. In the event that research using cytoplasmic hybrid embryos is authorised, we urge the Government to ensure that appropriate risk management procedures are established and implemented (Paragraph 54)
6. Research, by its very nature, is aimed at enhancing knowledge. Whilst we recognise scientific debate about the potential usefulness of cytoplasmic hybrid embryos in research, we do not believe that the existence of differing views of whether a methodology is workable before it has been sufficiently tested is reason enough to prohibit such research from taking place. (Paragraph 57)

Scientific opposition to research involving hybrid and chimera embryos

7. We recognise the scientific debate among experts about the potential usefulness of the research under discussion in this Report but we conclude that the scientific community as a whole is supportive of the work being licensable, even where there may be doubts about its likely success. (Paragraph 58)

Conclusions on the desirability and necessity of hybrid and chimera embryo research

8. We believe that the creation of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos, and specifically cytoplasmic hybrid embryos, is necessary, for example in the pursuit of knowledge about the genetic basis of disease and the direction of stem cells into future cell-based therapy. Furthermore, we recognise that stem cells produced through this methodology may be useful in drug discovery and that they may lead to the eventual reduction of animal use, for example in toxicity testing. (Paragraph 59)

9. We believe that use of animal eggs in the creation of cytoplasmic hybrid embryos will help to overcome the current shortage of human eggs available for research and that use of animal eggs is required to enable researchers to develop the practical techniques which may be required for eventual production of cell-based therapy through this method using human eggs. (Paragraph 60)

The role of the HFEA in regulating research

10. We agree with HFEA that the wider issue of whether human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos should be allowed for research should be decided by Parliament. However, it is the role of HFEA to make judgements in areas considered within the spirit of the HFE Act where its legal advice indicates that it is reasonable to do so. Not to do so undermines the effectiveness of an independent regulator. (Paragraph 64)

11. We support the decisions of the HFEA Science and Clinical Advances Group, Ethics and Law Committee and Horizon Scanning Group that an embryo containing human nuclear DNA and mitochondria of animal origin should be regarded as a human embryo for the purposes of the 1990 HFE Act. (Paragraph 68)

12. We understand that some form of viability test will have been subject to the legal advice sought by the HFEA on this issue. Nevertheless, we have grave scientific concerns about its validity. We do not believe that it is appropriate to use viability as a mechanism for determining whether or not a creation is human, particularly since attempts to prove viability through implantation in a uterus would be unlawful. Furthermore, were the viability test to be failed, this would mean that such research would be completely unregulated, which case law has found to be unsatisfactory. (Paragraph 71)

13. We support the decision of the HFEA that research involving the creation of cytoplasmic hybrid embryos would probably fall within the remit of the HFEA to regulate and license and would not be prohibited by current legislation. Although we have received submissions from those who do not believe that this is the case, the weight of

scientific and legal argument is in favour of treating these embryos as human. We accept that this decision might leave the HFEA open to legal challenge that it was acting ultra vires in considering the applications. However, given the accepted desirability for legal clarification in this area, we view legal challenge as highly likely but also potentially helpful in establishing the limits of the HFEA's remit. (Paragraph 72)

14. It would have aided transparency and public and parliamentary debate on this subject if the HFEA's legal advice had been published. (Paragraph 75)

15. We view public consultation in this area as valuable. However, we are of the opinion that this exercise should have been undertaken when the HFEA first received information to indicate that applications for licensing the creation of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos could be expected. (Paragraph 76)

Delay in assessment of the applications

16. While we agree with the HFEA that the general issues of hybrid and chimera embryos should be dealt with by Parliament, we consider that it is the role of the HFEA to deal with the applications for the creation of cytoplasmic hybrid embryos under current legislation with due speed and process. (Paragraph 77)

The parliamentary process

17. We agree that there is a need for revised legislation, decided by Parliament, to regulate for current developments in the creation of human-animal hybrid and chimera embryos and to provide a future framework under which regulatory authorities can operate. (Paragraph 78)

18. We support the Government's intention for pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Bill and encourage the Government to take advantage of all possible sources, including this Report and that of our predecessor Committee, to inform the debate. (Paragraph 79)

Definitions and terminology in the draft Bill

19. We are critical of the Government for not clearly setting out areas of research practice intended to fall under the proposed legislation. Much confusion has thus been caused. However, we accept that this lack of clarity may result from the lack of understanding more generally with regard to the potential for this area of research and what the term 'human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos' may cover. We welcome moves by the Academy of Medical Sciences to address this problem and we urge the Government to work with the Academy, HFEA and other stakeholders to ensure that the scope of research practice intended to be covered by legislation is clearly defined in the draft Bill. (Paragraph 85)

The proposed prohibition

20. We find the Government proposals in the White Paper unnecessarily prohibitive and recommend the Government ensure that its draft Bill reflects the liberal view it claims to be taking in opening the door to research using human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos. (Paragraph 88)

21. We believe that there is a need to allow research using some forms of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos, including but not exclusively cytoplasmic hybrid embryos, to proceed immediately. We recommend that the Government propose draft legislation which is immediately permissive, through regulation, to those areas of research it deems acceptable. (Paragraph 90)

Drawing the line: acceptable research practice

22. We believe that, in general, the creation of all types of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos should be allowed for research purposes, if appropriately regulated. However, in line with the recommendation of the previous Committee, we see no benefit from allowing the development of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos past the 14-day stage *in vitro* and recommend that such practice is not licensed unless it is proved necessary. (Paragraph 93)

23. In line with the recommendations of the previous Science and Technology Committee, we recommend that legislation prohibit the implantation of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos in a woman. (Paragraph 94)

24. We recommend that care be taken by the Government to ensure that the draft Bill does not prohibit research using human embryonic stem cell lines where such research is currently regulated through the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. (Paragraph 96)

25. We recommend that legislation allow for regulation of the implantation of human stem cells, whether created from human embryos or human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos, into animal blastocysts. (Paragraph 98)

Legislative and regulatory structure

26. We have made it clear that we regard the current Government proposals as overly prohibitive and that there should be regulation of this research area through licensing. The new legislative structure should permit the creation of animal-human hybrid and chimera embryos for research purposes, subject to regulation, and should aim to reduce the risk of litigation on borderline cases. (Paragraph 99)

27. We recommend that the Government proposals in the Bill for the regulation of the creation of animal-human chimera and hybrid embryos be based on the legislative structures outlined in paragraph 100 of this Report. (Paragraph 102)

Impact of the legislative structure on UK science

28. A ban and the prospect of a ban in draft legislation on human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos would undermine the UK's leading position in stem cell research and the international reputation of science in the UK. (Paragraph 104)

29. We are concerned that a ban or a proposed ban may not only encourage researchers to leave the UK in order to undertake their research in a more permissive regulatory regime, but it may also inhibit early stage researchers entering the field. Whilst we do not believe that UK competitiveness should dictate policy in a research area, we believe that the Government should consider this as a contributory factor and we recommend that the Government ensure that it is properly briefed on potential implications from future legislation in this area. (Paragraph 107)

Public confidence

30. Public awareness of the need for and benefits of research in this area should be encouraged, alongside an understanding of the reasons for the requirement to update legislation. We regard it as the responsibility of the Government and HFEA to keep the public informed in respect of developments in legislation related to the creation of human-animal chimera and hybrid embryos for research. (Paragraph 108)

31. We take criticisms of the Government's consultation seriously and we recommend that they be taken into consideration both in relation to the proposals for revised legislation in this area and in future consultation exercises. (Paragraph 111)

32. We find it unhelpful that witnesses on both sides of the argument have claimed to represent the public view, where supporting evidence for this is lacking. (Paragraph 113)

Public understanding

33. Accomplishing effective public engagement in this debate may be difficult, but significant effort must be made to this end. We believe that additional education is required to enhance public understanding of the techniques proposed by this area of research and its associated potential achievements and problems, including scientific, ethical and moral concerns. (Paragraph 114)

34. Notwithstanding the accompanying delay in consideration of the King's College London and Newcastle University research applications, we welcome the HFEA proposed consultation on general principles and commend steps taken by the Authority to ensure appropriate drafting. We also commend the Government for allowing funding to be allocated toward education in this area. (Paragraph 115)

ANNEX C

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE OFFICE, HOUSE OF COMMONS

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PRESS NOTICE

****EMBARGOED UNTIL THURSDAY 26 APRIL AT 0001 HOURS****

No. 34 of Session 2006-07

26 April 2007

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE WELCOMES
THE PUBLICATION OF THE HFEA CONSULTATION ON
HYBRID AND CHIMERA EMBRYOS**

Chairman of the Science and Technology Committee Phil Willis today (Thursday) welcomes the decision by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority to hold a public consultation into the regulation of hybrid and chimera embryos.

“We welcome this consultation in this important and difficult area as it raises many ethical and moral issues. We would like to see as much public involvement and engagement in this decision as possible,” he said.

In its recent report on Government proposals for the regulation of hybrid and chimera embryos, the Science and Technology Committee found the Government’s proposals to prohibit the creation of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos for research to be unacceptable and potentially harmful to UK science.

The Committee felt that in the interests of science, the public and the UK, the current applications by King’s College, London and Newcastle University should be considered by the HFEA promptly and with due process.

For media inquiries or interviews with the Chairman, please call Laura Kibby on 020 7219 0718.

The full text of the Science and Technology Committee report published on April 5 is available via the Committee’s website:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmsctech/272/272i.pdf>

Notes to editors:

- The Committee’s inquiry was prompted by the coincidence of proposals from the Government for inclusion in its forthcoming draft Bill on the creation of human-animal chimera or hybrid embryos for research purposes with recent

applications by scientists to the Human and Embryology Authority (HFEA) for licences to create specific types of such embryos for use in the derivation of stem cells.

- The inquiry into was announced on 10 January 2007 in press notice No 11 of session 2006-07.
http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/science_and_technology_committee/scitech100107b.cfm

Membership of the Committee

Mr Phil Willis (Lib Dem, Harrogate and Knaresborough)(Chairman) Chris Mole (Lab, Ipswich)
Adam Afriyie (Con, Windsor) Mr Brooks Newmark (Con, Braintree)
Mr Robert Ffello (Lab, Stoke-on-Trent South) Dr Bob Spink (Con, Castle Point)
Linda Gilroy (Lab/Co-op, Plymouth Sutton) Mr Graham Stringer (Lab, Manchester, Blackley)
Dr Evan Harris (Lib Dem, Oxford West & Abingdon) Dr Desmond Turner (Lab, Brighton Kemptown)
Dr Brian Iddon (Lab, Bolton South East)