

**To: CMP/RDS Review Committee**

**From: The Biochemical Society**

**Subject: Consultation on activities relating to animal research**

**Date: Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2008**

### Future priorities

Public reaction to the use of animals in research is often very emotional, fuelled by an energetic media who focus on extremist views. The main challenge that organisations such as CMP and RDS face is the difficult task of creating opportunities in which balanced arguments can be presented to the public and politicians who seek to represent them.

The Biochemical Society believes that it is important that the scientific community is not perceived as merely lending blind support to the use of animals in research. While we believe the use of animals is essential for biomedical research, we must be honest about the advantages and shortcomings of such research and supportive of efforts to find alternatives where possible.

A single, coherent organisation which is there for all media enquiries and up-to-date information would be invaluable. In particular, engaging school children in informed debate is key to helping them form their own views and, sometimes, influence those of their parents.

### Success and achievements

As mentioned above, (predominantly tabloid) newspaper coverage of the use of animals in research can be extremely difficult to counterbalance. The antagonism encountered by some who have defended animal research has led some scientists and public figures to distance themselves from the debate. However, events surrounding the opening of the animal-testing facility in Oxford, largely organised by “Pro-Test” – a student organisation, have shown that there is a “silent majority” in the community who are eager to be engaged in the defence of animal research. The Biochemical Society believes that the RDS and CMP (or a future single body) have an important role to play in the dissemination of information supporting the vital role of animal research in our society.

The key strengths of the CMP and RDS are to be found their diverse membership. As the CMP currently acts as an umbrella body to various organisations, while the RDS membership is focused at an individual level, a merged body could claim a substantial representative role.

## Organisation and resourcing

The Biochemical Society supports a merger of the two organisations and believes there is considerable efficiency and profile to be gained from a move to create one coherent voice in defence of animal research. It is notable that the current mission statements of both organisations are complementary.

Individuals outside the scientific community can find it difficult to identify sources of information and opinion on the use of animals in research. The role of the CMP, RDS or merged organisation should be clearly and publicly defined, as should their relationship to other organisations such as the Science Media Centre.

It seems logical to assume that a merger would provide some economies of scale. The Biochemical Society would be keen to see the new body take advantage of any freeing of resources to play a proactive campaigning role, with a particular focus on a younger audience.