

Interview Alun Evans



Alun, you have just started as Chief Executive of the British Academy, the national academy for the humanities and social sciences. What was your own field of study as a student?

I studied Politics, or what was then called Government, at Essex University as an undergraduate. I then went to Birmingham to do a postgraduate MPhil in Russian and Russian History, in which I studied the relationship between the Soviet Union, the Communist International and the British Labour movement between the wars. I then took a decision in the early 1980s that the study of Russian politics was not going to go anywhere and nothing was going to change in the Soviet Union, and that I would therefore do something else – so I joined the Civil Service.

Did you come from a particularly political family? Did you have ambitions of your own to become a politician?

My father was very political. And I did have ambitions to go into politics, but that didn't really work out. Once one joins the Civil Service one has to put aside political ambition in order to serve the Government of the day – which I think I did reasonably well, originally serving a Conservative Government, then a Labour Government, and then under the Coalition a Lib Dem Secretary of State.

Were there any academics who particularly influenced you?

The best lecturer I had as an undergraduate was Professor Anthony King, now a Fellow of the British Academy.¹ I was then very fortunate to become a research assistant working for him part time for three years upon finishing

my undergraduate course. I have kept in touch ever since and have done occasional pieces of work for him, and sometimes read through something he has produced and offered one or two off-the-wall suggestions for how it might be improved. He is still producing books galore.

Five years ago, having been prodded by my friend Professor Peter Hennessy,² I started to think about doing a PhD. I had become very interested in the way in which private offices in the Civil Service work – the relationship between Ministers and their civil servants, and the changing pressures on private offices. Peter and I realised no one had really studied this in any way. I have been working on that part time through the last five years.

What has it been like looking at Ministers' private offices from an academic perspective when you yourself had been principal private secretary to three Secretaries of State?

I enjoyed enormously my time as principal private secretary. I realised all the time that I was very close to where events were going on and history was being made. But I also got thinking about how the process could be run better, or how it could be done differently. Twenty years ago it was almost a completely different world compared with now. It was at the time when the role of the Civil Service as the only source of advice – or gateway for advice – to Ministers was declining. The role of special advisers was growing, as was the role of the internet and 24/7 media. Ministers now have access to vast amounts of information and analysis – some of it good, some of it bad, some of it in-between – and the challenge of assimilating that information into the best possible source of advice for Ministers is a very big challenge for the private offices. Some do it well now, but too many of them don't.

1. Professor Anthony King was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2010.

2. Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2003.

Was that the transition from *Yes Minister* to *The Thick of It*?

Yes, I think it is part of that. In *Yes Minister*, the source of advice to Hacker was either his permanent secretary or his department, filtered by Bernard, his principal private secretary. In *The Thick of It*, one sees the absolute dominance of modern communications, and the eclipse of the traditional form of learned, thoughtful policy advice from civil servants. All that was represented in a quite light-hearted way, but it is not a bad comparison.

Has your own experience helped your research by providing you with insights, or have you felt you've had to acquire a distance from the subject?

My own experience gave me insights and a context. But I don't think I could have studied it at the time I was doing the work. It is now 15 years since I left the private office, so I can do it with a certain detachment. Also, I have to be careful not to assume that what I saw as a principal private secretary in private office was necessarily the standard model. I have tried very much to interview people who have worked for different Ministers and different Prime Ministers over time, so that I can get quite a big spread of opinions on the ways of working. For example, I have had interviews with one of the private secretaries to Harold Wilson in the mid '60s, and with the current principal private secretary to David Cameron. That gives me a range of views of how the job has changed, how the context has changed, how the media has changed.

Presumably your own background has made it easier to get those interviews.

Yes, undoubtedly!

You have also acted as secretary to a number of Government inquiries: Foot and Mouth Disease 2001, Foot and Mouth Disease 2007, and the Detainee Inquiry. How does that kind of investigation differ from academic research?

Yes, I did three reviews. One was a really major one into the first outbreak of foot and mouth disease in 2001. The second was a smaller one just to see how the Government had handled the smaller outbreak of foot and mouth disease in 2007. I'll come back to the Detainee Inquiry.

If we take the first of those, we were very much looking for analysis of what happened. What went wrong? What were the lessons learnt? And how could we in a relatively quick amount of time – a year – produce a report with recommendations that could be implemented by Government? I think we did quite a good job. And I remember being very pleased when I heard that the American Government had used our report to inform their crisis-management work in the States: that was quite impressive.

So there was the academic pursuit of analysis, questioning the evidence, and asking for reports and comments from a range of players and people who had been affected. But then there was the discipline of bringing it into lessons learnt for Government. I think that was where there was a slight difference from what you would get in the academic world. We had a very tight

deadline of a year. You don't want a completely open-ended inquiry, because then you get into the Chilcot area – where it is now over 10 years since the Iraq war and there is still no end in sight for a review started in 2009. Somehow you have to get the balance between, on the one hand, the rigour and depth of analysis of trying to look at everything in detail, and, on the other, short, sharp lessons learnt that can be applied. It is often difficult to get it somewhere in between.

The Detainee Inquiry was an unusual event, in that we were asked to inquire into the treatment of detainees in Guantanamo and elsewhere. We started on that work, but in the end the inquiry was put on hold because of police investigations of possible criminal activity – which are still ongoing, I understand. At some stage in the future, the Government will no doubt, possibly under pressure, restart the Detainee Inquiry. But it is a very, very difficult area to work in.

That was obviously a more sensitive inquiry.

It was very sensitive. Firstly, most of the material one was dealing with was very severely classified. Secondly, you were dealing with the security services, who have to operate if not in the dark, not totally in the light. Thirdly, there was an international dimension with the Americans and their views on Guantanamo, which had to be handled extremely sensitively. For all those reasons it was an unusual but fascinating period of my life.

You were Head of Strategy at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Between 2009 and 2011 you attended three British Academy Forums on different aspects of Government: on anticipating what might go wrong;³ on reacting when things go wrong;⁴ and on who to blame when it has all gone wrong.⁵ How valuable do policy-makers find these exchanges with academics?

I think they are very useful and helpful. I remember those seminars, and I remember enjoying them. I remember the quality of the people who attended them, and the fact that the outputs were pretty useful in helping to understand why, for example, people did not predict the banking crisis and financial crash of 2008.

But not enough of that goes on. I have asked myself: 'Is that the fault of Government through not being open and welcoming enough to outside challenge and outside perspective? Or is it the fault of the British Academy and the other national academies for not shaping the offer that they can make to Government in an attractive and sympathetic way which addresses the concerns of Government?' I suspect, as ever, it is a bit of both.

On the whole, the senior echelons of the Civil Service don't generally say, 'We don't have the answers; we must go outside and find the answers elsewhere'. I suppose that, if you look at where we are at the moment – at the start of a new Government with a clear policy agenda

3. December 2009, 'Financial and Economic Horizon-scanning'. See *British Academy Review*, 15 (March 2010), 12-14.

4. March 2010, 'Political/ministerial decision-making during a crisis'. See *British Academy Review*, 16 (October 2010), 9-12.

5. April 2011, 'Malfunctioning in British government: people or systems?'



Professor Tim Besley FBA and Professor Peter Hennessy FBA convened the British Academy Forum held in December 2009 to consider better ways of conducting 'Financial and Economic Horizon-scanning'. One fruit of the forum was a letter sent to the Queen, to help address her famous question as to why nobody had noticed that a financial crash would happen.

shaped by their manifesto – Ministers perhaps aren't going to be saying, 'Let's have some external challenge to that.' But I think it is a sign of confidence when you *are* willing to ask other people in to challenge you. And it is quite a refreshing thing to do.

But I do also think there is a task for the national academies to be creative in saying, 'What could we do that might be of help to Government?' I think the British Academy should be using what I call its convening power to bring the vast expertise of its Fellowship to bear on issues of concern to Government. When you do that, as recently we have done with some seminars for the Government on issues such as productivity, it can be a very powerful process.

Can academics learn from the process too?

When I was in Government, I was often struck by how little some people who are remarkably knowledgeable about their subject know about the way in which Government itself operates. Unless you have been within it, or unless you have been an academic who has specifically studied the hidden wiring of the machinery of Government, you don't necessarily have any idea of how Government works – why should you? And if you don't know how it works, you don't know either how you can influence it. So it can be useful when a Minister wants to share his experiences of how he dealt with a particular problem – as Charles Clarke did in the British Academy Forum on crisis management, when he talked about 7/7.

The third British Academy Forum you attended helped gather information which led to a book, *The Blunders of Our Governments*.⁶

That is a favourite book of mine, because it is so painfully direct to read. If you look at one area which I was involved in tangentially – the public-private partnership for London Underground – you realise just how much money was wasted as a result of a Government desire not to go down the traditional route of throwing more money at a public-sector organisation. There had been the difficult experience of building the Jubilee Line, when Government had been forced to spend a lot of money to

6. Anthony King and Ivor Crewe, *The Blunders of our Governments* (2013).

get it built in time for the millennium; and there had been the politics of dealing with Ken Livingstone, when he and Government had held completely different views. Those political drivers determined a model under which the Underground should be part-privatised – which turned out to be a complete money loser. Tony King and Ivor Crewe write it up in an extremely attractive way. There are many more examples like that as well, but they are painful to read.

You joined the British Academy from serving as Director of the Scotland Office. You certainly held that post during interesting times. Working together with the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the British Academy did a lot of work on the UK constitution, and put into the public domain a lot of analysis on possible outcomes that might flow from different results in the independence referendum. Were you aware of that? Did you think that was a useful contribution?

I was very aware of that, and very impressed by the contribution. The piece of work that the British Academy and the Royal Society of Edinburgh did on *Enlightening the Constitutional Debate* was measured, detailed and independent.⁷ It was everything that was needed in a debate that became increasingly polarised and increasingly difficult both for policy-makers at the centre of Government and for members of the public to understand. Having that type of analysis and evidence was very good for getting a more balanced assessment of where the two sides were. Working for the UK Government, which wanted to see a 'no' vote and the Union remain together, I was struck by how much the analysis we put out was always open to challenge from the Scottish Government. For example, on the issue of currency, there was never real agreement. It became extremely heated and extremely political. And in the Civil Service, both in the UK Government and in the Scottish Government, it was very difficult to see where the political argument finished and evidence and analysis started. The things that the British Academy and the Royal Society of Edinburgh produced gave a detachment that was actually really useful, both to us and to the public and concerned opinion formers.

Did you predict the referendum result?

I predicted the outcome, but I didn't predict the exact numbers. I predicted a victory for 'no' by 52:48 per cent, whereas in fact it was 55:45 per cent. So I predicted a 4 per cent gap,



7. Between January 2013 and March 2014, the British Academy and the Royal Society of Edinburgh held 11 events that examined the issues affecting Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom leading up to the Referendum on Scottish independence. In April 2014, they published a volume, *Enlightening the Constitutional Debate*, which summarised the evidence. See www.britishacademy.ac.uk/scotland

and it was actually a 10 per cent gap.

I was in Scotland during the final weeks of the campaign, and it was fascinating how raw and emotional everything was – particularly when finally the ‘no’ side began to get its act together, perhaps personified by some of Gordon Brown’s final speeches. It was striking how the referendum really did engage the whole of Scotland. Civic Scotland was engaged in debates at all levels, from sixth formers to old-age pensioners. There was an 85 per cent turnout – I think the highest voting turnout since 1945. I was surprised that it wasn’t even a 90 per cent turnout.

It is clear from the various contributions in *Enlightening the Constitutional Debate* just how much would be left unresolved by the referendum and how much would depend on the haggling that would follow – which you could say is ongoing now.

It is one of the ‘what ifs’ of history – if there had been a ‘yes’ vote, what on earth would the negotiation from hell, as I have called it, have been like? There would have been a rightly triumphant Scottish Government who were determined to have a heads of agreement on independence by March 2016. On the other side, there would have been a Government of the UK – whose existence as a nation would have been in question – having to negotiate a practical settlement to a timetable that they thought was totally impossible. All I would say is that I think the Civil Service would have then really come into its own, because that is what the Civil Service does and does well. But it would have been very strange days. As it happened we had the Smith Commission, which was done to an extraordinary tight deadline, and we will see where that ends up with the new Scotland Bill.

You are planning an event at the British Academy on 16 September 2015, one year on from the referendum, entitled ‘Getting ahead of the curve: how to stop playing catch up on Scotland’.

Yes, I hope to give something of an inaugural lecture. As a civil servant, one cannot speak publically on one’s own views. I would like to give some reflections on what has happened in the year since then and what a way ahead might be.⁸

From your experience of that referendum, do you think there are any lessons for the EU referendum, or are they completely different?

I think the most important thing I learnt from the Scottish referendum is that you do need as impartial and as detached an assessment as possible of the pros and cons of either side in discussion. When you have frenetic, party-political attitudes and differences, and very personal attacks going on, it is very difficult to get that. You don’t get it from the media. The print media were very pro the ‘no’ campaign in the Scottish referendum. And you didn’t get it, although you should have done, from the BBC, because the poor old BBC was accused of bias whichever way it went, and I suspect will

be again.

Specifically in terms of research and innovation, the British Academy can play a role in providing an assessment of the impact of EU membership.

More generally, how do you see the British Academy and the disciplines it represents continuing to play a role in informing policy-making?

I tend to focus on the disciplines with which I am slightly more familiar – politics, economics, the social sciences more generally. I would like to hear what the Fellows of the British Academy think as to how we can use *all* the disciplines that the Academy represents to inform public policy in the widest possible sense. What is the information that we can bring into play in policy areas across the field – from climate change to tackling obesity, and from Ebola to tackling productivity?

What does ancient history teach us? I remember when I was at university studying Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War* in the 5th century BC. You look at the Athenian adventure to Syracuse in Sicily, and how they over-reached themselves. Since then you can still see nations over-reaching themselves: from Napoleon’s France in Russia, to Hitler’s Germany in Russia, and to America in Vietnam. And so there are lessons from any discipline, it seems to me, that can be used.

It goes without saying that, in the academic disciplines that the Academy represents, there is value in learning as an end in itself. Studying an area just to understand how it works seems to me to be intrinsically valuable. But one of the challenges is how you bring those disciplines to life in a way that people can relate to and see their inherent value.

At one point you were Head of Strategic Communications at Number 10. What lessons did you learn there about presenting messages effectively?

Those were the heady days of New Labour, before they got into some difficulties around Iraq and elsewhere. One of the things I learnt is that it is not good enough to have arguments and analysis on your side; you have to think of the way you present and communicate them. I think there is something here that the British Academy can learn from the people who communicate best. It is not about the art of modern spin-doctoring. It is about explaining and bringing alive what you do, and using all of the communication tools now available to society. We need to look at our traditional forms of communication and at how we are embracing new media. How well in particular do we use our own Fellows to communicate? They are the core of British Academy, and they are its greatest asset. The richness, the breadth and depth of knowledge, and the recognition and respect that Fellows have – both in the academic community and more widely – are a massive communication plus, and we need to use that to its maximum advantage.

What perception did you have of the British Academy before you took up this post?

When I was at BIS, I was responsible for the funding of the science and research budget – which included the

8. Further information can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/events/2015

British Academy and the other national academies. It was striking that a lot of people asked, 'What are the national academies for? How do they add value in their own sense?' It is good that there is an academy that covers all the humanities and social sciences, whose responsibility it is to promote those disciplines, to help ensure the health of those disciplines, and then to make clear to everybody from Government downwards what those academic studies can offer. I think the British Academy does that pretty well, but we could do it better. There are too many people who still say to me, 'What is the British Academy for?' And that is going to be one of my big challenges as Chief Executive: to make sure people know what it is for.

In which circles does the British Academy need to be known better?

Among the people who have an interest in the areas in which we work. Obviously Government. The academic and education world. The international community with whom we deal. Opinion formers. Others, be it in the City, be it in science, be it in the third sector, or in policy areas that we have been interested in, such as housing.⁹ The key movers and shakers, so that they know that the British Academy can talk to them and contribute things that are valuable.

We have a number of really strong positives which some people would die for. We have the Fellowship – 1,000 of the nation's greatest thinkers across the humanities and social sciences. We have what I have described as our convening power: via our President, Lord Stern, and other Fellows, we can bring groups of people together, so that we can put our disciplines at the service of those who can benefit from what they can offer. We have in 10-11 Carlton House Terrace an extremely attractive location in which to run seminars and events.

We need to reach out to the communities I have listed. We need to engage with the media – the BBC and other broadcast media, and all forms of print media, particularly the specialist media who are interested in our subjects. And we do also need to think about how we can attract a wider, more popular audience via the website, social media and less traditional forms of communication.

These are challenging times financially. How do you want the Academy to go about making the case for funding research in the humanities and social sciences?

Unless we get a good settlement we have difficulties, so getting money is fundamental. It is a complex question with a quite multifaceted answer.

We have to engage with Government. Eighty per cent of our money comes from Government via BIS. We need to explain to them – and I think we are doing it quite well, to the Chancellor, to Sajid Javid, to Jo Johnson – what the Academy has to offer in terms of informing policy-making.

9. *UK Housing: Setting out the Challenge. Output of a joint ESRC/British Academy Conference, 29 October 2014* can be downloaded via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/uk-housing



The British Academy's multimedia publication *Prospering Wisely* combines a carefully argued text and video interviews with leading academics, such as Professor Mary Beard FBA, to explain how the humanities and social sciences enrich our lives.

We have to show that we are open to working in partnership with others. It is the British Academy saying, 'In relevant policy areas, where there is a challenge, we will go in and work with whoever wants to talk to us, so that we can bring something to the party.' We recently had a discussion with the Chief Medical Officer about what the Academy can do to help look at the problems of obesity. We do believe we bring something in terms of behavioural economics and issues like that.

So we need to be creative in saying, 'How can we apply our skills and knowledge, learnt in perhaps a fairly academic environment, to the practical problems faced by the nation as a whole?' Things will come along which we cannot predict, and we will need to see what we can do to bring our expertise to bear. We have to be available, pragmatic and flexible, willing to work in partnership and willing to turn the expertise of the Fellowship to the issues that face us in the modern world.

In February 2014, the British Academy launched *Prospering Wisely: How the humanities and social sciences enrich our lives*,¹⁰ which talked about the need for a new national conversation in which the strengths of the humanities and social sciences could be brought to bear on the major challenges of our times. And following that up, we have started the series of British Academy Debates. Are these good ways in which to tell our story?

Absolutely. I thought *Prospering Wisely* was a brilliant piece of work. It illustrated the quality of the Fellowship in such a wide range of areas. But in terms of communication – coming back to what we were talking about earlier – it brought the subject alive, because of the attractive, interactive way in which it was presented, rather than just being a dull document.

The British Academy Debates again are a good example of what the convening power of the Academy can do.¹¹ Looking ahead, we are bringing together the best people to tackle issues around 'Energy and the environment' (autumn 2015), 'Faith' (spring 2016), and

10. www.britishacademy.ac.uk/prosperingwisely; also *British Academy Review*, issue 23 (February 2014), which contained 'Eleven perspectives on how the humanities and social sciences enrich our lives'.

11. More information about the British Academy Debates can be found at www.britishacademy.ac.uk/debates

'Inequalities' (autumn 2016). But you do it in such a way that you don't just get 200 people in a room and have a good discussion. You then use the wider forms of communication to get that debate rolling further. In that way, other people come up with new solutions. The process is one of developing ideas, developing policy, and raising the overall profile of the subject everywhere.

Does the case also rely on the role of research and innovation in generating growth?

One of the striking problems – a conundrum, if you like – is that Britain, for all its expertise and skills and the quality of its academic disciplines, is still not as effective as it should be in innovation and driving new ideas. It cannot be right to reduce investment in research and innovation. We have to make the argument for maintaining that investment, and hopefully the case for raising it, by showing that, in terms of the spin-off effects, investment in this area is one of the most cost-effective ways of generating ideas and generating growth.¹²

Do we have to make the case to the private sector as well as just Government?

The private sector has a lot to answer for. If you look at where growth comes from, it comes in large part from the private sector investing. That is a challenge to all aspects of the private sector, not just the big areas like pharmaceuticals where one knows that investment in innovation can drive long-term gains. One of the problems – which may be a slightly peculiar British problem – is that people are not often willing to invest in things with long-term pay-offs. There is too much looking at where money will come in the short term. In terms of some of the things Government and, particularly, the private sector need to invest in, some of these big gains will only come five, 10 or 20 years down the track. That needs some quite thoughtful investing and a willingness to invest for the long term.

Prospering Wisely argued that not all the benefits to be derived from the humanities and social sciences should be measured in terms of material wealth and growth.

In his Presidential Address to the British Academy's Annual General Meeting on 16 July 2015, Lord Stern stressed that 'prosperity has many dimensions, not all of them easily measurable ... This is not just about economic growth, important as that is – it's about quality of life and community and the full range of human flourishing – the things that the humanities and social sciences care about.' I would very much echo those sentiments.

And a civilised society is one that does study things for their own sake. A society that recognises the value of investigation and enquiry for their own sake is a good society. Not everything has to have some monetary value attached to it.

12. In February 2015, the British Academy, together with the other national academies – the Royal Society, the Royal Academy of Engineering, and the Academy of Medical Sciences – issued a joint statement, 'Building a stronger future: Research, innovation and growth'. The statement may be found at www.raeng.org.uk/resandinov

You talked about the particular strength that the British Academy has in the form of its own Fellowship. How do you think the Fellowship can be better engaged and mobilised by the Academy?

One of the things I want to do is ask the Fellows themselves how they can help and contribute to the work of the British Academy. From my very unscientific analysis of discussions I have had with a number of Fellows, it seems to me that there are people who wish they could do more and would like to be more involved but, for whatever reasons, haven't yet become engaged with the work of the Academy. I think there is also an issue about how we engage those Fellows who have less time to give because they are active in their universities. I think we need to come up with some creative ideas. And it will be important to attract some of the new Fellows who have been elected this year to become involved and to look at the way in which we do things.¹³

Do we operate too much from London and assume people can come down to London? Are there more interactive things that we could do around the country to engage people? We have seen a bit of that with the British Academy Debates held in different parts of the country. I think we need to do more of that to make it not so London-centric. And we need to be creative and flexible in the way in which we learn and the way in which we share our expertise. I don't have all the answers. I will be looking for views from the Fellowship on what they can do and what they would like to do to help.

The British Academy also acts a funding body, supporting individuals and research across the humanities and social sciences.

I do want to stress one point in respect of that. If we look at where we disburse our funds – particularly through the Small Research Grants and Postdoctoral Fellowships – do we do enough to tap into the excellence and the goodwill which are associated with that? At a dinner I attended at Queen Mary University of London soon after I had been appointed, I was struck by the fact that around the table over half of the people there – 20 or 30 of them – had at some stage in their career got a grant from the British Academy. It might have been a small one, but it made a difference to them. That is a big source of both expertise and goodwill in universities and other institutions up and down the country which we should make use of. We can be more creative in using that source of support for the British Academy, both in terms of what those people can contribute, and in terms of how they can get out more widely the message about the value we bring through the funds we award.

The Research Councils tend to give out very large grants for bigger, long-term projects. The British Academy is distinctive in that it supports individual researchers on a very specific area of work, for example to help them go and look at an archive. The outcome of that can be fantastically efficient and disproportionately valuable for the amount of money we have put in. And the recognition

13. A list of the Fellows elected to the British Academy in July 2015 can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/fellowship

that comes with receiving a grant from the Academy can further unlock doors for the individual researcher. Once you start bringing together and explaining those little stories, you have a very effective and powerful form of communication on our behalf. And it is one that I think Government listens to, because they see the value of the investment and the disproportionate leverage for a relatively small amount of money.

What is your most immediate task as the new Chief Executive?

We face what will be one of the toughest Spending Reviews. I have seen lots of Spending Reviews and I am always told that they are going to be tough. The next one is going to be even tougher. The Government needs to find savings. Previously there has been a commitment to maintain the level of expenditure on science and research. I hope that the Government continues that. I think it is a very efficient form of funding. I think that the Chancellor gets it and sees the importance of it.

It is incumbent on all of us – the President of the British Academy, the Fellowship, myself, all the staff – to argue the case for the level of funding we get, because of the wider benefits that that investment across all of the disciplines brings to society. I think we have a fantastic story to tell. Perhaps we have not told it quite as loudly and vigorously as we could have done in the past. That is one of the things I want to do.

If you don't have money, you can't do anything. So we must, in the first instance, put a comprehensive, cogent and compelling case for our funding to Government and others over the forthcoming months and years.



On 12 May 2015, the British Academy held a reception at which researchers who had been supported through the Academy's various funding schemes were able to explain their work. Professor Tim Whitmarsh, pictured here at that reception, has written about his British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship in an article in this issue (see page 54).

What will the British Academy be like in five years' time?

All being well, it will be an even more powerful voice than it is at the moment. It will go, I hope, from strength to strength. And it will be an organisation that people turn to more because they have heard of it, and because they realise the value that it can bring in terms of promoting the humanities and social sciences, and all that those disciplines can deliver.

Thank you very much.