



NEW CHAIR OF SEAC ANNOUNCED

The appointment of Professor Chris Higgins as the new Chair for the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) was announced today by Margaret Beckett, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and John Reid, the Secretary of State for Health, on behalf of the Chairman of the Food Standards Agency and Ministers from the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Professor Higgins will take up this appointment when the current Chair steps down on 31 July 2004.

SEAC provides independent expert advice on all issues relating to Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) including BSE and CJD.

Professor Chris Higgins is Director of the MRC Clinical Sciences Centre and Head of Division at Imperial College London. He has a high international standing in the biological and medical sciences and has held previous positions at the Universities of Dundee, Oxford and the University of California, Berkeley. He is an elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, European Molecular Biology Organisation and Founder Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences. He has been a Member of Council of BBSRC, the Governing Council of the John Innes Centre, and Council of the Academy of Medical Sciences. He has received the Howard Hughes International Research Scholarship, Fleming Medal of the Society of General Microbiology and the CIBA Medal of the Biochemical Society. Professor Higgins has extensive experience of chairing both academic and research committees and has served as a scientific advisor to the House of Lords Select Committee on Stem Cells. He is experienced and accomplished at communicating scientifically challenging issues to the media and general public.

Professor Higgins has not carried out any political activity in the last five years and does not hold any other ministerial appointments.

Notes to Editors

The Chair of SEAC is unpaid but an attendance fee of £151 together with associated travel and subsistence costs may be claimed.