

The UK's Approach to Setting Priorities and New Directions for Science at NPL

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Abstract

Since 1995 the National Physical Laboratory (NPL), the UK's National Metrology Institute responsible for physical standards, has been operated on behalf of UK Government by NPL Management Limited. A tried and tested private sector strategic planning process was adopted to address the issues facing NPL – a government mission, the need for supplementary commercial income, the requirement to cover an ever-increasing scope of activity and the imperative to protect the quality of science being carried out. The paper discusses the choices to be made and how priorities have been set. In particular, it outlines the range of scientific topics (new and existing) under consideration, and describes what criteria – economic, scientific, social – were taken into account to identify the priority areas for investment in new science programmes.