

## **Ethics & the Engineering Profession**

Summary of main points arising from the meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February

Chaired by Sir Alec Broers, President of The Royal Academy of Engineering, the meeting heard from a number of speakers, including Fellows, senior representatives of several engineering institutions, EC(UK), and representatives of other professions including medicine. The focus of the meeting was the roles and responsibilities of engineering institutions, regulatory bodies and government, in relation to the ethical issues faced by engineering professionals.

The meeting heard a diversity of views on the topic, which underlined the need for it to be addressed as a leadership issue for the profession. A common thread that ran through the discussions was the issue of 'trust'. Several speakers advocated the need for more collaboration between the various bodies if the public at large were to develop a high level of trust and confidence in the profession. There was a need for The Academy to work with all the stakeholders involved to ensure that the ethics and engineering remains at the top of the professional agenda. Speakers specifically referred to the need for greater uniformity in institutional codes; for the usefulness of an advisory 'hot line' for engineers; on the need for transparency concerning human rights; on using ethics and sustainability in engineering courses to encourage greater recruitment into the engineering profession; on the possibility of 'licensing' engineers to practice; and on the need for an enforcement mechanism in relation to codes.

It was agreed that another similar meeting be held on 6/9 months time to review progress made by the parties involved. At that meeting The Academy, in association with EC(UK), should present for discussion proposals for closer alignment of Institution ethical codes, and practical mechanisms to help Institutions ensure their widespread adoption. It was regarded as useful in this respect if discussions could also be held with the medical profession and others to learn of their approaches and experience.

Those present at the meeting also heard of The Academy's plans for further activities and discussion on engineering ethics including the teaching of ethics in schools and universities; dialogues with the corporate sector; and assisting the individual engineer in the ethical issues, conflicts and dilemmas that they might encounter in their careers and their responsibilities as leaders.