

Nano Jury UK

Our provisional recommendations

As the jurors in the West Yorkshire Community Jury we commend the following provisional recommendations and look forward to seeing action taken, both on this subject area and the other area we discussed, which is documented separately.

Key



Provisional recommendation



Explanation in support of provisional recommendation

“Weak support” Only a minority supported this recommendation with others unsure or against it.

GENERAL 1

If public money is being spent, then members of the public and invited representatives of a wide range of organisations (including different social groups and faiths) should form committee that decides at what stage(s) of research public juries should be set up (according to General 6). This committee needs to be open to groups in society other than just experts (for details see below).

If private money is being spent, public juries should have a roll at the outset of the research to look at the ethical and possible social/environmental impacts of the potential end products.

This type of jury process would ensure that particular technologies met human and environmental needs - outlined elsewhere - and were not just to make short-term profits.

Supported.

GENERAL 2

There should be less ethical controls and government red tape.

Such controls lead to the strangulation of inventiveness and reduce job creation, allowing other countries to steal a march on us. Development of new technologies create jobs through the trickle down of wealth created.

Weak support with some uncertain.

GENERAL 3

There should be more openness on where public money is spent on nanotechnology research.


Supported.

GENERAL 4

Poor people should be able to decide the prices of new technologies (e.g. new information and communication technologies) that are put onto the market.


Weak support.


GENERAL 5

 Nanotechnologies should only be allowed if they develop wealth for everyone.

Weak support with some uncertain.


GENERAL 6


 At key stages of the development of any new technology, there should be public juries (like this one).


 More consultation with the public using plain English - those developing the technology meeting the public to inform us.

Support, but with some uncertain.

GENERAL 7


 Government should support those nanotechnologies that bring jobs to the UK by investment in education, training and research.

 Without such action, nanotechnologies could lead to greater imports, bringing greater unemployment to the UK.

 We need to avoid being held hostage by other countries by making sure we invest at the beginning (e.g. Microsoft, Cisco Systems, AOL).


Supported.


GENERAL 8

 Nanotechnologies will only be good if they can enable us to have more quality leisure time including time for families and time for us personally.

Supported, but with some uncertain.


GENERAL 9

 If public money is to be spent, then it should go on those technologies that contribute towards the solving of longer term issues, such as health and environmental problems. This should be combined with the use of incentives and strings-attached for the private sector.

 The Government should set up partnerships with nations leading in those technologies that can improve health.



Supported.

GENERAL 10

 The advertising standards authorities should be made aware of nanotechnology products where there is uncertainty about health and safety in order that they can prevent misleading adverts.




Weak support with some uncertain.

HEALTH 1

-  All manufactured nano-particles should be labelled in plain English, classified and tested for safety as if they were a new substance.
-  Manufactured nano particles should be tested in controlled environments before they are let into the environment.

Supported.



HEALTH 2

-  Any new nano-medicines proven to be safe and effective must be available on the NHS without discrimination.
-  Nano drug delivery might enable us to spend less time in hospital.
-  One mechanism might be for a university or private company to be given a licence to research and develop cheaper drug delivery methods in exchange for providing the NHS drugs at discounted rates.

Supported, but with some uncertain.




ICT = INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

ICT 1

-  Certain ICTs, such as search engines, maps, language translators and educational sites should be made free to people in serious debt and in poverty.
-  Relevance to nano: It is vital that nanotechnologies relating to education should be free to poor people so that they have the opportunity to learn about new subjects and reduce inequalities.


Weak support with some uncertain.

ICT 2

-  ICT companies everywhere should ration the amount people are able to use their ICTs. When they over-use their communication time (as at present on some mobile phone tariffs) the ICT should cut out.
-  Having heard the witness working with poor communities in Uganda we believe rationing is fairer than raising prices, and that it may prevent individuals getting into deeper debt and poverty where exercised responsibly.
-  Relevance to nano: If this recommendation is not followed there is a danger that nanotech, like mobile phones in rural Uganda, could lead to poor people becoming poorer.

Weak support with some uncertain.


ICT 3

 Normal citizens – people like us – should decide when nanotech starts getting used in ICTs.
(See also General 6)

Weak support with some uncertain.

ICT 4


 Radiation and other health hazards associated with ICTs should be kept low enough so that children can use phones and other ICTs safely.

 Relevance to nano: nanotechnologies has the potential to be safer because it is more up to date. It could be used to make ICTs safer for kids to use.

Weak support with some uncertain.


ENERGY 1


 Government grants for those pioneering the development, manufacture and use of better solar technologies.

 Nanotechnologies that allow printed solar cells could have a significant impact on energy generation.

Supported, but with some uncertain.


ENERGY 2

 More wind turbines should be put at sea so that we are producing greener energy but are not spoiling the landscape.

 Relevance to nano: If nanotechnology doesn't produce sustainable energy, then we'll need wind turbines.

Weak support with some uncertain.


ENERGY 3

 Nanotechnologies should be used to run electricity cables more efficiently and underground (landscape would look better without big pylons).

Weak support with some uncertain.


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COMMUNICATION & THE NEXT GENERATION


 Scientists should improve their communication skills, including going into schools to encourage science as a career path to all children.

Supported.

(Following a postal request for feedback a minority of the jury replied opting equally for each of the following options):

 A: Give no explanation for this recommendation.

 B: Some of the witnesses who put themselves forward as experts on nanotech contradicted the evidence we heard from other witnesses, which made it difficult to make sense of them. Some witnesses were easy to understand, but others need to stop using long words and acronyms so we can understand them. Then we won't poison ourselves by using new technologies wrongly because we'll know what they are talking about and can make informed decisions.

 C: (in addition to text in B) Some of us felt patronised by some of the witnesses, compared to the witnesses in the earlier jury about young people's issues who had generally talked to us as equals.