



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

ELIZABETH HOUSE, YORK ROAD, LONDON SE1 7PH

TELEPHONE 01-928 9222

FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

T Flesher Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

10 March 1983

*Prime Minister*

*Content to extend Sir  
Robert Williams' appointment  
while consultations take place  
on proposals to replace the GMAG  
with an Advisory Committee to the  
Health and Safety  
Commission?*

*The extension would be  
until the end of October.*

*Dear Sir,*

GENETIC MANIPULATION ADVISORY GROUP (GMAG)

We propose to extend the period of office of the present Chairman of GMAG, Sir Robert Williams, until 31 October this year so as to allow time for public consultations on official proposals to replace the existing Group with an Advisory Committee to the Health and Safety Commission (HSC).

This proposed reconstitution of GMAG was foreshadowed in a minute from the then Secretary of State for Education and Science to the Prime Minister of 28 January 1981 when the appointment of Sir Robert Williams as Chairman was being proposed. Since then, officials of the DES and the Health and Safety Executive have reviewed the role and constitution of GMAG and have prepared a report to Ministers dealing with various options for the future, in consultation with other Departments which have an interest in the work of the Group. The favoured option of reconstitution as an HSC Advisory Committee has the support of all Departments, and the HSC itself has recently given its formal consent to the establishment of the new Advisory Committee subject to the outcome of consultations with outside organisations, including the TUC and the CBI, who also have an interest in the Group's work. With the agreement of Ministers at DHSS, DOE, DEmp, DOI, Scottish Office, Welsh Office and Northern Ireland Office we intend to initiate a 2 month period of consultation commencing on 1 April with a view to reaching a decision on firm proposals by the summer which the Secretary of State might put to the Prime Minister. It will be important to allow time thereafter for new arrangements to be put in place, hence the proposal to extend the present Chairman's term until 31 October.

Sir Robert Williams (whose 2 year term of office expired on 28 February) is willing to serve for a short additional period and it would clearly be desirable to offer him the extension



formally as soon as possible since, although no further meetings of the Group are at present planned, business continues to arise which requires decisions from the Chairman. The terms of office of other members of the Group were extended to 31 October at the end of last year.

I should be grateful if you would let me know as soon as possible if the Prime Minister has any objections to the proposed temporary extension of Sir Robert Williams' appointment. I am copying this letter to Richard Hatfield.

*Yours ever,*

*Inogen Wilde*

MRS I WILDE  
Private Secretary

Social Services Dec 80  
Genetic Manipulation



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Social Services  
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14 March 1983

Genetic Manipulation Advisory Group (GMAG)

Thank you for your letter of 10 March to Tim Flesher. The Prime Minister is content for your Secretary of State to extend the appointment of Sir Robert Williams until 31 October of this year. She notes that your Secretary of State will be putting proposals to her in the summer on the future of the GMAG.

I am copying this to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

W F S RICKETT

Mrs. I. Wilde,  
Department of Education and Science.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE  
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TELEPHONE 01-928 9222  
FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Tim Flesher Esq  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON SW1

20 October 1983

Prime Minister

Agree to an extension  
for Sir Robert Williams  
to 29 February 1984?

(Sir Robert Armstrong  
is contact)

Sub  
21/10

Yes

Dear Tim

GENETIC MANIPULATION ADVISORY GROUP (GMAG)

In March this year we sought the Prime Minister's approval to extend Sir Robert Williams' term of office as Chairman of GMAG until 31 October 1983. This was to allow sufficient time for consultations on the future of the Group to take place. At that time, it was hoped that these could be completed by the summer and that any agreed new arrangements could be in operation by the autumn.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to keep to this timetable, mainly because of the very late arrival of comments from one or two important respondents. As a result we and the Health and Safety Executive are only now in a position to make the necessary approaches to Ministers and to the Health and Safety Commission.

Although no further meetings of the Group are planned, business arises from time to time requiring decisions from the Chairman and scientific work which must be notified to GMAG goes on. We therefore propose to extend Sir Robert's term of office to 29 February 1984. The other members of the Group are being consulted on whether they would also be willing to have their terms extended to the same date. Sir Robert has already indicated his willingness to continue to serve.

My Secretary of State will be making a full submission to the Prime Minister in due course, when the views of his colleagues and of the Health and Safety Commission on the outcome of the consultative round is known.

I am copying this letter to Richard Hatfield.

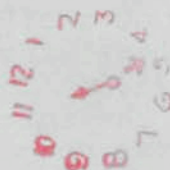
Yours Sincerely  
J F Bird

J F BIRD  
Private Secretary



Social Services  
Dec 80  
GMAG

20 OCT 1983





10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary\**

24 October, 1983

Genetic Manipulation Advisory Group (GMAG)

Thank you for your letter of 20 October to Tim Flesher about the chairmanship of the Genetic Manipulation Advisory Group.

The Prime Minister is content for Sir Robert Williams' term of office as Chairman of GMAG to be extended until 29 February, 1984.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

DAVID BARCLAY

J. F. Bird, Esq.,  
Department of Education and Science

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'J.F. Bird', written in a cursive style.