

Cuts to Government Social Research Projects since May 2010: Increasing the Evidence Deficit?

Simon Tanner
Research as Evidence Ltd

2011 Radical Statistics
Annual Conference
26th February 2011

Overview

1. What sparked the interest?
2. Freedom of Information (FOI) Request
3. Overall Findings
 - a) Departmental Breakdowns
4. Issues Arising
5. Agenda for Action

The Spark – School Sport



© Steve Bell 2010 (reproduced with permission)

Freedom of Information Request

Since 12 May 2010 please identify the total number, contracted cost and project title of:

- 1) All planned and ongoing (projects that started prior to May 2010) research projects that have been cancelled.
- 2) All planned and ongoing (projects that started prior to May 2010) statistical data collections that have been cancelled
- 3) All ongoing (projects that started prior to May 2010) research projects that have been stopped before the **full contracted research design** was completed

For the curtailed projects in 3) above:

- 4) Identify the total difference in £s between the original contracted research costs and the total paid to contractors to the point of cancellation

Research Spend 2008-2010

Department	Research Spend 2008/09 (£m)	Research Spend 2009/10 (£m)
Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)	1.3	3.3
Communities and Local Government (DCLG)	23.1	30.6
Education (DfE)	11.6	13.3
Work and Pensions (DWP)	14.5	18.9
All 4 Depts	50.5	66.1

Source: FOI Responses Dec 2010 – Feb 2011.

Thanks



Cuts and Curtailments

Department	No. Projects Cancelled (Stats and Research)	No. of Projects Curtailed (Research)
Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)	0	3
Communities and Local Government (DCLG)	17	3
Education (DfE)	20	14
Work and Pensions (DWP)	7	6
All 4 Depts	44	26

Source: FOI Responses Dec 2010 – Feb 2011.

Cancelled and Curtailed Research

Department	Cancelled Value (£m)	Value of Curtailed Spend (£m)
Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)	0	0.2
Communities and Local Government (DCLG)	Not specified	0.2
Education (DfE)	7.5	0
Work and Pensions (DWP)	0.3	0.7
All 4 Depts	7.8	1.1

Source: FOI Responses Dec 2010 – Feb 2011.

All Research Spend Cut

Department	Total Value (£m)	% of 2009/10 Research Spend
Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS)	0.2	5.8
Communities and Local Government (DCLG)	0.2	0.6
Education (DfE)	7.5	56.5
Work and Pensions (DWP)	1.1	5.5
All 4 Depts	8.9	13.5

Note: Rounding errors may mean totals don't add.

Source: FOI Responses Dec 2010 – Feb 2011.

What have they cancelled/curtailed?

BIS

- **Cancelled:** None
- **Curtailed:** 3 projects (2 legal advice, 1 on Muslim students in HE due to poor response rate)
- **Total Cut:** £192,500

What have they cancelled/curtailed?

DCLG

- **Cancelled:** Evaluation of HIPs, Review of Gypsies and Travellers Accommodation Guidance, and Expert Panels for Housing, Planning and Regeneration
- No Value Given
- **Curtailed:** Fire Service and Resilience research and Housing Option Trailblazers
- **Total Cut:** £177,373

What have they cancelled/curtailed?

Education

- **Cancelled:** 20 including Evaluation of Academies (£400k), TELLUS survey (£1.3 million), and Survey of Disabled Children's Services indicator (£2.8m) Total = £7.5 million
- **Curtailed:** 14 projects including evaluation of trust schools, secondary school admissions, and a systematic review of conduct of serious case reviews @ no cost!
- **Total Cut:** £7.5 million

What have they cancelled/curtailed?

Work and Pensions

- **Cancelled:** 6 including Progress2Work Link Up Evaluation, and DWP Tell Us Once Programme
Total = £321,400
- **Curtailed:** 6 projects Lone Parent Policy Evaluation, Local Employment Provision Evaluation, and JobCentre Plus Mystery Shopping
Total = £728,962
- **Total Cut:** £1.1 million

The Key Issues

Cancelled Research

- Are cancelled research funds being recycled into alternative research projects?
- Current Spend Figures (May – Dec 2010)
 - BIS - £0.9 million (27% of 2009/10 research and dev spend)
 - DCLG - £13.2 million (43% of 2009/10)
 - DfE - £10.4 million (78% of 2009/10)
 - DWP - £2.3 million (12% of 2009/10) underreported?
 - All 4 Depts - £26.9 million (40% of 2009/10)
- Is Evidence Deficit Growing?

Curtailment = Waste?



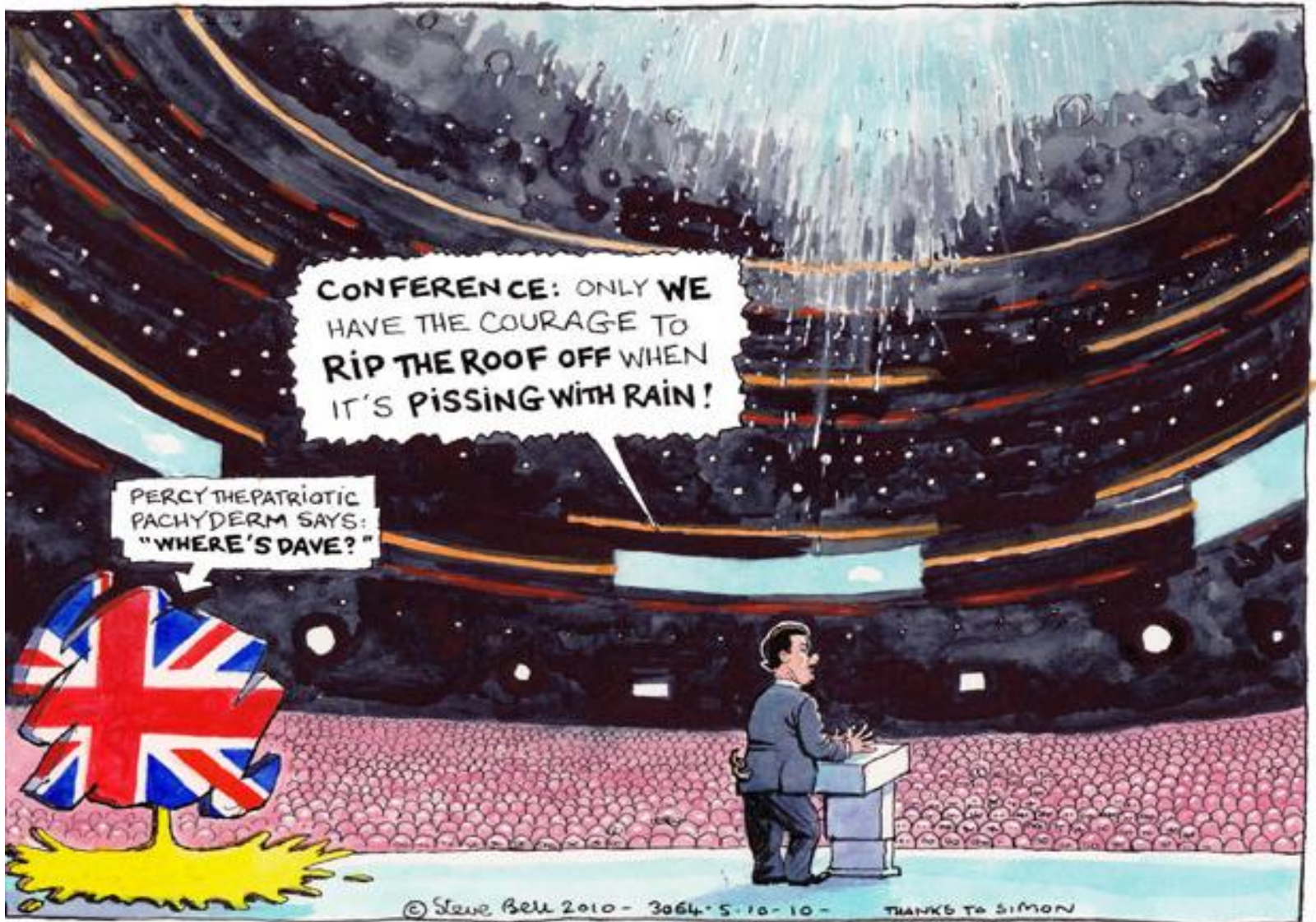
© Steve Bell 2010 (reproduced with permission)

The Key Issues

Curtailed Research: A More Serious Issue

- Total Spend on Incomplete Work £715k
- DfE Curtailed 14 projects at no cost!
- £1.1 million could have been spent – impact on the contractors?
- Long term surveys/time series curtailed:
 - DCLG Citizenship
 - DfE/DWP TellUs Survey
 - DfE PE and School Sport Survey
- Reasons for Curtailment Critical

Transparency Myth



The Key Issues

Transparency

- Departmental Spend Figures Released Monthly
- Inconsistent Definitions (Spend Category and Level)
- No information on specifics of project
- More Opaque than previous research contract lists

Agenda for Action

- Further monitoring of cancellations, curtailments, and consultations – (RadStats?)
- Pressure to publish consultation responses
- Improve research / statistics contract information
- FOI – reasons for cancellation and curtailment
- Others??????

Simon Tanner

simon@research-as-evidence.co.uk

[**www.research-as-evidence.co.uk**](http://www.research-as-evidence.co.uk)