

Report on the Presentation of the Provisional Recommendations of NanoJury UK 21 September 2005

This report focuses on the event at which jurors from the West Yorkshire Community Jury reported their preliminary recommendations for discussion by a range of groups representing a broad range of interests in the UK and beyond.

Four jurors were able to find time to come to London for the event. Each chose one of their provisional recommendations to present to the meeting. The four chosen were:

- health technologies without discrimination,
- effective communication,
- technology that brought jobs,
- the importance of proper regulation of nanoparticles.

The full report of the jury findings can be found at www.greenpeace.org.uk under 'scientific research' or on www.nanojury.org.

The discussion dealt largely with the process of the jury hearings. Some questions related to the possible tensions between, and attitudes of, the jurors when discussing nano-technology. Following a further question, the jurors emphasised that they had not become more negative about nano, the more they knew about it. Some were positively enthusiastic.

Responses from invited guests focused on exploring the jury methodology, the challenges it laid down for government and business, the government policy and structures for nanotechnology and their commitment to respond to NanoJury UK, and the need for balance in implementing any changes.

Many of those who observed the jury in action emphasized the excellence of this particular deliberative process. Other comments supported it as an example of participatory democracy.

Post-lunch a further set of feedback from the jurors present focused on the need for further mechanisms by which those in power were called to account, such as citizens' juries, at crucial moments in technology development, and seeking a commitment from government to specifying a time when this would happen. The government representative was not able to give a specific time but stressed that there was a mechanism, the Nanotechnologies Engagement Group, where these considerations could be fed into policy.

The working groups on the next steps and implications for NanoJury fed back that there seems to be no specific place where the broad issues raised by NanoJury (e.g. transparency, directions of research spend, directions of technology deployment) could be addressed. This gap appeared to be caused by no agency or part of government considering it was their mandate or responsibility to take a lead in this area.