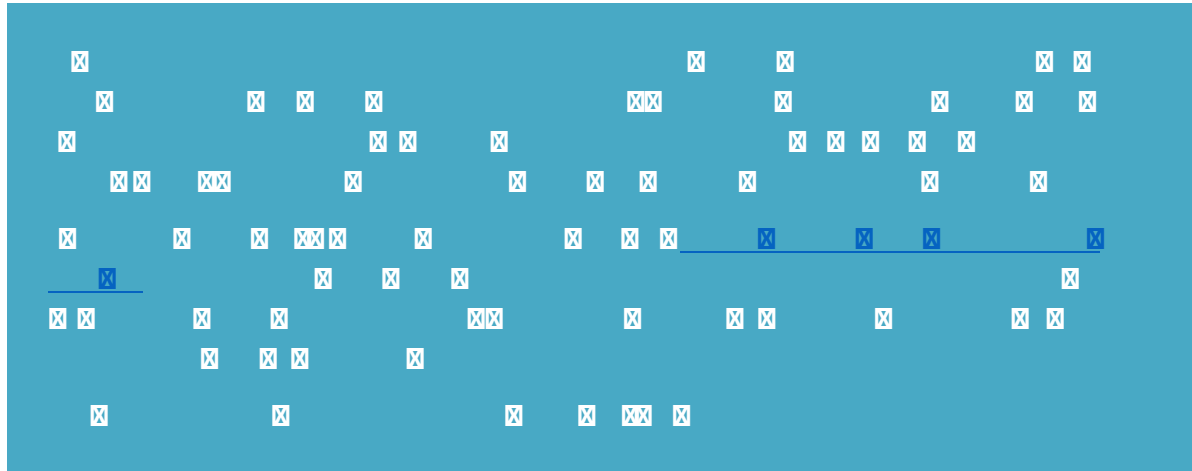




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information more accessible, improving coordination between government bodies, and clarifying responsibilities for managing and directing chemicals policies and enforcement.

Discussion also highlighted a significant skills gap across both the public and private sectors, particularly in regulatory sciences, which has been exacerbated by Brexit. Participants underscored the need for training not only in traditional science skills but also in areas such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and interdisciplinary skills at the science-policy interface. Early educational exposure to topics like risk and regulation and providing work placement and secondment opportunities were suggested. The challenge of retaining a skilled workforce within the public sector was also highlighted.

3. Opinions on a Chemicals Agency

The idea of establishing a UK chemicals agency elicited mixed reactions. Many participants felt that at present, a Chemicals Agency would not solve the immediate uncertainty in the system such as UK REACH, burdens on industry, and resourcing issues, and would pose a new challenge for funding allocations. However, proponents highlighted potential benefits such as the simplicity of having a single body tailored to UK needs, opportunities for international leadership, and improved coordination and learning across



other strategies such as industrial and decarbonisation strategies, and ensuring policy certainty to support investment and innovation. Many also stressed the need to clarify the policy lead for each strategy.

6. International Considerations

Some representatives from industry, NGO, learned societies and academia shared regulatory compliance costs, on regulatory flexibility and on competitiveness.

Conclusions and next steps

The workshop concluded with a consensus on the need for a well-coordinated and adequately resourced approach to UK chemicals regulation that supports innovation, protects human health and the environment, and aligns with international standards while addressing unique UK needs. Participants agreed that a comprehensive chemicals strategy is needed to enact this vision. However, there was an acknowledgement that this may not be a high priority for Defra at the moment.

Everyone agreed that there is a need for ongoing cooperation across the sector. Short-term priorities include the collaborative development a vision for future chemicals policy for the UK, advocating for the inclusion of chemicals in the industrial strategy, and moving forward with a joint approach to skills development, including engagement