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History of the United Kingdom's planning and control of public expenditure

The Nuffield Foundation, in collaboration with the Economic and Social Research Council, intends to commission a new study of the planning and control of UK public expenditure and the role of HM Treasury over the period 1993 to May 2015. The study has the active support of HM Treasury. It will be of interest to academics from a range of disciplines - political scientists, economists, historians, experts in the history of public administration, public sector management and accounting.

To discuss and refine the scope and aims of the study, Nuffield and ESRC are holding a pre-commissioning seminar on 31st March (4-6pm). The event will be chaired by Professor James Banks (Nuffield Foundation Trustee). Speakers will include Professor Christopher Hood (Emeritus Fellow, All Souls College, University of Oxford), Paul Johnson (Director, Institute for Fiscal Studies), Dr Catherine Haddon (Fellow, Institute for Government) and Julian Kelly (Director General Public Spending and Finance, HM Treasury). This consultation event will also provide an opportunity for participants to meet others who might be interested in collaborating on joint bids at the subsequent grant application stage.

The specification for the study will be refined in the light of the discussion before a formal call for grant applications is issued later in the spring.

Aim and Scope of the study

There is significant value to a wide range of people - including current and future academics, government officials and politicians - in analysing how successive governments have planned, managed and controlled public expenditure. The funders and HM Treasury also wish to encourage a wider range of academic research in this area in the future.

Key issues likely to be addressed include:

- Whether and how governments over this period were able to plan strategically through prioritising and re-prioritising areas of expenditure.
- The extent to which spending allocations were influenced by evidence of the impact or efficiency of programmes.
- How changes in relative government priorities affected the system of public spending and its outputs.
- How the UK system of public spending control has evolved over time.
- The ways in which the role and functions of the Treasury changed over this period, including the balance of control and decision-making between Treasury and the main spending departments.
- How far HM Treasury has been able to reflect on and learn lessons from experience.

If you or a colleague are interested in attending please RSVP by emailing Ben Webb bwebb@nuffieldfoundation.org by Thursday 10th March. Places will be confirmed by Monday 14th March.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Teresa Williams', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Teresa Williams
Director, Social Research & Policy
Nuffield Foundation