

Funding for the Ashok Kumar Fellowship

The Ashok Kumar Fellowship was established in 2010, in memory of the late Dr Ashok Kumar MP. Kumar was a respected chemical engineer and IChemE Fellow, who chaired the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) Board from 2005 until his sudden death in March 2010.

The Fellowship provides funding for one chemical engineer per year to work at POST for three months. The Fellow will usually work on a briefing paper for MPs on a subject, to provide them with independent, impartial advice on topical science and engineering issues relevant to the public.

Ashok had strong ties in the North East and held the seat in Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland from 1997 to 2010. As a chemical engineer himself, Kumar was well-placed to represent this region which has a significant process industry presence. His affiliation with the North East was reflected in the funding for the Fellowship, 50% of which was provided by IChemE and 50% by the North East Process Industry Cluster (NEPIC).

In June 2018 NEPIC contacted IChemE and explained that, following a review of their financial situation, it would no longer be able to support the Fellowship and that the funding would be stopped with immediate effect. Unfortunately, this was communicated to IChemE after Jennifer Spragg from the University of Leeds had been offered the 2018 Fellowship.

The rules for funding such activities within Parliament preclude direct commercial sponsorship. The IChemE has therefore been unable at this stage to secure an alternative partner to take this Fellowship forward. As the application and interview process for the 2018 Fellowship had already completed, the Institution has agreed to honour the commitment that had been made to Jennifer.

Given the uncertainty over the future of the Ashok Kumar Fellowship, IChemE is currently not accepting applications to the 2018/19 programme and unless an alternative source of funding can be found, it is unlikely that the Fellowship will continue in 2019.

If any Member is aware of either a personal or non-commercial party that may be interested in picking up the sponsorship for this award, then they are encouraged to inform the IChemE team at Ashok@icheme.org.

Claudia Flavell-While

IChemE Director, Learned Society

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