Professor Brian Collins has a very varied, interesting and important role that affects all our lives.

As Chief Scientific Adviser to two Government departments – the Department for Transport and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills – his advice helps improve everything from national infrastructure such as ICT, water and the road and rail network to new opportunities for business development.

And he cites his EPSRC-supported PhD as providing him with the fundamental skills to succeed in any environment. “A lot of Government policy has science, technology or engineering implications. From modernising roads and railways to the support of high-tech businesses who can provide new, low carbon solutions to old problems,” says Collins.

Part of his job is to evaluate the scientific evidence that supports such policies. But he is also responsible for promoting research and innovation for solving problems.

One example that he has actively promoted is new research on the examination of the factors that determine how people get on and off trains. This has helped refine the business case needed for high performance railway infrastructure upgrades.

He has also promoted the development of new technology to improve air quality monitoring.

His career also includes senior roles at the Ministry of Defence, at one of the largest commercial law firms in the world, within the charity sector and at universities.

Collins says his D.Phil in Astrophysics at the University of Oxford gave him the fundamental methods and approach to problem solving that have helped him to succeed, an appetite to continue to learn about new areas and the ability to learn from others, along with the time to develop his own research skills.

“IF YOU GO THROUGH THE PHD TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROCESS SUCCESSFULLY YOU COME OUT WITH SO MANY OPTIONS AND CAN CONTRIBUTE IN LOTS OF WAYS TO SOCIETY.”

BRIAN COLLINS
BRINGING INNOVATION TO THE NATION