



**UK Research  
and Innovation**

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To Industry Leaders

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### **Response to your letter of support for PPAN Science**

We would like to thank the signatories for this letter and for taking the time to share their concerns. We recognise how strongly many people feel about the future of Particle Physics, Astronomy and Nuclear (PPAN) research, including those now working in the industry sector, and we appreciate your continued engagement with the UK research landscape.

First, it is important to be clear that no final decisions have yet been made in STFC's prioritisation process. We are in an ongoing process of assessing options and engaging with the community, and we are carefully considering the impacts before any decisions are finalised.

The UK has a proud track record in curiosity-driven research across particle physics, astronomy, astrophysics and nuclear physics. These areas have delivered major scientific breakthroughs, supported innovation, and trained highly skilled people who go on to make important contributions across the wider economy. We fully agree that this capability is an important national asset.

The Government has awarded a record budget for research and innovation, and it is now UKRI's role to allocate that funding across a wide range of programmes to deliver the greatest overall impact in accordance with its mission to advance knowledge, improve lives and drive growth. STFC's core budget is broadly flat over the current period through to 2030.

Forecasts for the costs of delivering STFC's current portfolio exceed the funding available. Some level of cost pressure is not unusual in a system that aims to be ambitious and internationally competitive. UKRI's role is to support that ambition, but also to ensure that the overall portfolio remains sustainable. Where costs are projected to exceed budgets, it is necessary and responsible to take action rather than allow those pressures to materialise unchecked. That is the context in which this current exercise is taking place.

STFC faces particular pressures due to its growing cost base – factors include inflation and higher operating and staffing costs. Therefore, the goals set out in its 2022 delivery plan are no longer affordable and STFC needs to reshape its cost base over the whole Spending Review period so that its budget is balanced and sustainable by 2030.

STFC will prioritise activities and operations to realise efficiency savings. The additional costs mean that some pre-existing programmes will need to be reduced in scope and budget in order to deliver within budget. This is precisely the exercise that is now underway.

This responsible approach involves making savings across the entire portfolio, with the majority of savings coming from efficiencies within STFC rather than reducing research funding. STFC has been working on those in-house savings for many months already.

We understand that the potential changes to PPAN funding are concerning for the community. These are not easy choices, and they will not be taken lightly.

As part of that wider consultation process over the next month alone we will be meeting face-to-face at town meeting-style events with many hundreds of our research community to talk about what may or may not be possible going forward to help us shape that discussion.

The UK remains committed to international collaboration and to being a reliable partner in major global scientific projects. We will continue to meet our key obligations and to focus support where the UK can make the strongest contributions. At the same time, we remain committed to curiosity-driven research, and its role in skills, innovation, and long-term economic growth.

We also recognise the concerns raised about talent and career pathways. We are committed to supporting early career researchers moving forward and overall, across the PPAN grants programme, we aim to restore the funding that level for postdocs that was in place before the current SR (to FY25-26 level). Supporting early-career researchers and maintaining a strong pipeline of skills into both academia and industry are priorities for STFC-UKRI.

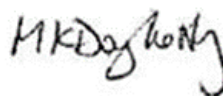
We agree that the benefits of fundamental, curiosity-driven research are wide-ranging and often unpredictable, and that this is a key part of its value. This remains central to our discussions with government and to how we approach these decisions.

We will continue to engage openly with the community as plans develop and as mentioned earlier no final decisions will be made until that process is complete. The perspectives shared in your letter are an important part of those discussions, and we are grateful for your contribution. Your letter, along with the conversations we are having with our research community members in the coming months, as well as discussions with our advisory bodies, will all be part of the wider analysis and decision-making path.

Yours sincerely,



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