UK Research and Innovation

[redacted]

10 September 2026

Dear [redacted],

Freedom of Information (FOI) requests: FOI2026/00706, FOI2026/00707

Thank you for your Freedom of Information requests, both of which were received on 12 August 2026. Your original requests are included in **Annex 1** at the end of this letter.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) has aggregated these requests for the purpose of estimating the cost of compliance under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Although framed differently, both requests concern the STFC financial position, associated cost reductions and prioritisation exercise, including related decision-making, correspondence and supporting documentation. UKRI considers the requests to be for the same, or substantially similar, information and notes that responding to them would require searches across substantially overlapping business areas, information repositories and categories of records.

Your requests collectively seek a broad range of recorded information relating to STFC's financial position, funding settlement, cost reduction requirements and prioritisation exercise, including:

- internal and external correspondence;
- communications involving UKRI and STFC senior leadership, boards, committees, government departments and external stakeholders;
- meeting minutes, agendas, papers, presentations and decision records;
- financial forecasts, models, options papers, risk assessments and supporting analyses;
- records relating to the development, assessment and approval of prioritisation proposals and outcomes; and
- records relating to stakeholder and community engagement activities.

Our response

We can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) holds information falling within the scope of your request. However, we estimate that the cost of complying with your request would far exceed the appropriate limit set out in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004.

We have therefore refused your request under section 12(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Section 12(1) of the FOIA allows a public authority to refuse a request where it estimates that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the prescribed limit.

For UKRI, the appropriate limit is £450, equivalent to 18 hours of staff time, calculated at the statutory rate of £25 per hour.

When estimating whether the cost limit would be exceeded, a public authority may take into account one or more of the following activities:

- determining whether information is held;
- locating the information;
- retrieving the information; and
- extracting the requested information.

It may be helpful to explain why UKRI estimates that responding to your requests would exceed the appropriate limit.

Information falling within the scope of your requests is held across multiple business areas, electronic repositories, records management systems, shared workspaces and other corporate records.

The requests span a period of more than 18 months and involve numerous stakeholders, boards, committees, programme teams, facilities, external organisations and government departments across both UKRI and STFC, requiring extensive searches across multiple sources and the review of a substantial volume of potentially relevant records.

UKRI estimates that the work required would significantly exceed the statutory limit of 18 hours and has therefore refused your requests under section 12(1) of the FOIA.

Advice and assistance

Under section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, UKRI has a duty to provide advice and assistance, so far as it is reasonable to do so.

Whilst UKRI is unable to comply with your requests in their current form, it may be possible for us to comply with a revised request seeking a narrower category of information.

The best way we can assist you is to suggest that you consider narrowing the scope of your request. This may include:

- reducing the timeframe covered by the request;
- limiting the request to specific categories of documents;
- focusing on a smaller number of subject areas, business areas or individuals; or
- reducing the number of questions or topics covered.

Any revised request will be considered on its own merits and will be subject to the provisions of the FOIA, including the application of any relevant exemptions.

Your rights

If you have any queries regarding our response please do let us know. If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review, explaining which elements of this decision you disagree with and why. Internal review requests should be submitted within 40 working days of the date of our response and should be addressed to:

Head of Information Governance
Email: foi@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: www.ico.org.uk

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see UKRI's complaints procedure[1].

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]
Information Governance
Information Rights Team
UK Research and Innovation
foi@ukri.org | dataprotection@ukri.org

[1] https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target

Annex 1 – original FOI requests

FOI2026/00706

I am writing to request recorded information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 concerning the **STFC prioritisation exercise and the STFC prioritisation outcomes for 2026 to 2030**.

For this request, I am primarily seeking information **held within STFC**, including information held by its Executive Chair, Executive Board, Science Boards, directorates, facilities and relevant programme teams.

The relevant period for this request is **1 January 2025 to 12 August 2026**, covering the development of the STFC Transformation and prioritisation process through to the announcement of the final prioritisation outcomes and PPAN project-level outcomes.

Please provide the following information.

1. STFC Executive Board correspondence

Please provide all emails, including relevant attachments, concerning the STFC prioritisation exercise that were sent or received by members of the **STFC Executive Board** during the above period.

This should include correspondence concerning:

- the requirement to bring STFC to a balanced financial position by 2029/30;
- the scale of savings or cost reductions required;
- prioritisation principles and methodology;
- proposed savings options;
- individual facilities, laboratories, programmes or projects being considered for reduction, restructuring, mothballing, alternative funding or closure;
- the allocation of reductions between PPAN, Multidisciplinary Facilities, National Laboratories and Estates, professional services and other parts of STFC;
- alternative scenarios considered;
- scientific, financial, operational or reputational risks;
- recommendations made to UKRI; and
- the final prioritisation outcomes.

Routine emails unrelated to the prioritisation exercise can be excluded.

2. Executive Board and Multidisciplinary Facilities

Please provide all emails and relevant attachments concerning the prioritisation exercise exchanged between members of the **STFC Executive Board** and the directors, senior leadership or representatives responsible for STFC's **Multidisciplinary Facilities**.

This should include correspondence relating to:

- Diamond Light Source;
- ISIS Neutron and Muon Source;
- the Central Laser Facility;
- Lasers for Science Facility;
- ISIS muon beamlines; and
- proposals for efficiency savings, reduced operating time, reductions in user or technical support, alternative operating models, additional external income or possible closure of capabilities.

Please also include relevant correspondence between the Executive Board and Facilities and Laboratories Directors relating to the development and assessment of these options.

3. Executive Board and PPAN

Please provide all emails and relevant attachments concerning the prioritisation exercise exchanged between members of the **STFC Executive Board** and:

- Science Board PPAN;
- the chairs or members of relevant PPAN advisory panels;
- STFC officials responsible for Particle Physics, Astronomy and Nuclear Physics;
- relevant programme or portfolio managers; and
- representatives of individual PPAN projects where their future funding was discussed as part of the prioritisation exercise.

This should include correspondence relating to:

- the budget-reduction scenarios supplied to or considered by Science Board PPAN;
- the appraisal of individual projects;
- proposed portfolio reductions;
- rankings, scoring or prioritisation of projects;
- recommendations made by Science Board PPAN;
- subsequent changes made by the Executive Board to those recommendations;
- decisions to maintain, reduce, reprofile or cease future support for projects;
- the level of protection afforded to PPAN grants, postdoctoral researchers, PhD studentships and fellowships; and
- consideration of whether PPAN should remain within STFC.

4. Minutes and records of meetings

Please provide minutes, agendas, papers, presentations, briefing documents, action logs, decision logs and contemporaneous meeting notes for meetings at which the STFC financial position or prioritisation exercise was substantively discussed.

This should include relevant meetings of:

- the STFC Executive Board;
- STFC Council;
- Science Board PPAN;
- Science Board Facilities and Laboratories;
- meetings between the Executive Board and Facilities and Laboratories Directors;
- meetings between the Executive Board and PPAN representatives;
- meetings involving the cross-UKRI Facilities Strategic Advisory Group where records are held by STFC;
- joint or extraordinary meetings convened specifically to consider prioritisation or financial reductions; and
- meetings between STFC and UKRI concerning the proposed prioritisation outcomes.

Where formal minutes were not produced, please provide any recorded notes, summaries, action records or decision records that exist.

5. Prioritisation methodology and evidence

Please provide all recorded information describing how options were assessed and prioritised, including:

- prioritisation criteria;
- scoring frameworks;
- ranking methodologies;
- decision matrices;
- project assessment forms or pro formas;
- instructions or guidance supplied to assessors;
- budget-reduction scenarios;

- financial assumptions;
- impact assessments;
- risk assessments;
- equality or workforce impact assessments where these relate to the prioritisation decisions;
- scientific assessments;
- recommendations from advisory boards or panels; and
- documents showing how recommendations were modified or balanced by the Executive Board.

I am particularly interested in the recorded output of the exercise described publicly as Science Board PPAN's comprehensive appraisal of options across different funding-reduction scenarios.

6. Options for Multidisciplinary Facilities

Please provide recorded information relating to the options considered for the Multidisciplinary Facilities before the final decisions were reached, including:

- potential operating reductions;
- possible facility or capability closures;
- alternative operating models;
- external-income assumptions;
- reductions to user support;
- reduced facility operating time;
- savings estimates;
- financial and scientific consequences of each option; and
- the criteria by which options were accepted or rejected.

Where different savings scenarios were prepared, please provide each scenario or version that was formally considered by the Executive Board or Science Board.

7. PPAN project-level decisions

For the PPAN projects included in the final prioritisation annex, please provide the recorded information used to reach the project-level outcome, including where held:

- the project's submission or pro forma used in the prioritisation exercise;
- assessments of that submission;
- scoring or ranking information;
- recommendations made to the Executive Board;
- Executive Board decisions or amendments;
- recorded reasons for maintaining, reducing, re-profiling or not prioritising future support; and
- any correspondence communicating or discussing the proposed outcome before it was formally announced to the project.

8. Correspondence with UKRI

Please provide emails and relevant attachments exchanged between the STFC Executive Chair or STFC Executive Board and:

- the UKRI Chief Executive;
- UKRI Executive Committee;
- UKRI Board or Board secretariat; and
- UKRI finance or strategy officials

concerning the STFC prioritisation exercise, the proposed savings package, the balance between PPAN, Multidisciplinary Facilities and National Laboratories, and approval of the final recommendations.

This should include the recorded recommendation submitted by STFC Executive Board to the UKRI Executive Committee and any correspondence concerning changes requested or made before the proposal was considered by the UKRI Board on 1 July 2026.

9. External correspondence

Please provide relevant emails and attachments exchanged by STFC senior management concerning the prioritisation exercise with external stakeholders, including where applicable:

- Diamond Light Source and its shareholders;
- Wellcome;
- universities and research organisations;
- representatives of PPAN projects;
- facility user communities;
- scientific societies or representative organisations;
- international scientific partners; and
- government departments.

I am seeking correspondence specifically relating to prioritisation proposals, proposed reductions, alternative funding arrangements, impacts of the proposals or the final decisions, rather than routine operational correspondence.

10. Community engagement

Please provide recorded information arising from the engagement roundtables and town halls that informed the prioritisation exercise, including:

- agendas;
- presentations;
- written submissions;
- meeting notes;
- summaries of feedback;
- reports analysing the feedback; and
- records showing how that feedback influenced or altered the final recommendations.

Format and handling

I would prefer disclosure electronically to my email address. Where spreadsheets or scoring matrices exist, I would prefer them in their original electronic format where reasonably practicable.

For emails, please include relevant attachments.

Where part of a record is exempt, please redact the exempt material and disclose the remainder wherever reasonably possible.

If information is withheld, please identify the exemption relied upon and, where a qualified exemption applies, explain the relevant public-interest assessment.

If compliance with the request in full would exceed the section 12 cost limit, I would ask you to provide advice and assistance under section 16 before refusing it outright, including an estimate of which elements create the greatest burden and how the request could be narrowed.

If prioritisation is necessary to remain within the appropriate limit, my preferred order is:

1. minutes, papers and decision records of STFC Executive Board and the two Science Boards;
2. prioritisation criteria, scoring, scenarios, recommendations and decision matrices;
3. emails between the Executive Board and Multidisciplinary Facilities leadership;
4. emails between the Executive Board and PPAN/Science Board PPAN;

5. correspondence between STFC Executive Board and UKRI Executive Committee/UKRI Board;
6. project-level PPAN records; and
7. other internal and external correspondence.

For each numbered part of this request, please confirm whether information falling within that category is held, even if disclosure of some information is subsequently refused.

FOI2026/00707

I am writing to make a request for recorded information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 concerning the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), its financial position, the budget and cost reductions associated with the 2026–2030 Spending Review period, and the subsequent STFC prioritisation exercise.

For the purposes of this request, I am interested in records held by **UKRI centrally**, rather than records held solely within STFC, for the period **1 January 2025 to 12 August 2026**.

In particular, please provide the following.

1. Internal correspondence concerning the STFC financial position and required reductions

Please provide emails, including attachments, and other recorded internal correspondence held by UKRI concerning:

- the level of funding to be allocated to STFC for the financial years 2026/27 to 2029/30;
- STFC's forecast financial position during that period;
- the decision that STFC needed to reduce its forecast expenditure or operating costs;
- the calculation, assessment or discussion of the approximately £162 million reduction in STFC's annual forecast costs required by 2029/30;
- the decision to require STFC to achieve a balanced financial position by 2029/30;
- proposed or considered reductions affecting STFC's facilities, National Laboratories, Multidisciplinary Facilities, PPAN programme or other scientific activities;
- UKRI transitional financial support for STFC between 2026/27 and 2028/29; and
- the development, review and approval of the STFC prioritisation proposals subsequently announced in July 2026.

I am particularly interested in correspondence involving the offices or members of:

- the UKRI Chief Executive;
- UKRI's senior finance leadership;
- UKRI Executive Committee;
- UKRI Board and its secretariat;
- UKRI officials responsible for strategy, budgets and allocations;
- the STFC Executive Chair; and
- STFC Executive Board where correspondence was exchanged with UKRI centrally.

For clarity, routine correspondence unrelated to STFC's financial position, budget allocation or prioritisation exercise is outside the scope of this request.

2. External correspondence

Please provide emails, including attachments, and other recorded correspondence between UKRI and external organisations or individuals concerning the STFC financial position, proposed reductions or prioritisation exercise.

This should include relevant correspondence with:

- the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT);
- HM Treasury;

- ministers, private offices or special advisers;
- other government departments or public bodies where relevant; and
- external organisations or stakeholders consulted about the proposed STFC financial settlement, cost reductions or consequences of those reductions.

This part of the request includes correspondence concerning the size of the STFC funding allocation, the scale of the required reductions, possible alternatives, financial risks, consequences for scientific facilities and programmes, and the proposed response to STFC's financial position.

3. UKRI meetings, minutes and papers

Please provide the minutes, agendas, meeting papers, briefing papers, presentations, decision papers, action logs and other recorded information relating to meetings at which any of the following were substantively discussed:

- STFC's financial position;
- STFC's 2026/27 to 2029/30 budget allocation;
- the required reduction in STFC's forecast costs;
- the STFC prioritisation exercise;
- reductions affecting Multidisciplinary Facilities, National Laboratories or PPAN;
- transitional financial support for STFC; or
- approval of the final STFC prioritisation proposals.

This should include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- relevant meetings of the UKRI Executive Committee;
- relevant meetings of the UKRI Board;
- relevant UKRI finance, strategy or budget meetings; and
- any meetings between UKRI senior management and STFC senior management concerning these matters.

I specifically request the papers, minutes and decision record relating to the **UKRI Board meeting of 1 July 2026** at which the STFC prioritisation programme was agreed, together with the papers and recorded recommendation from the UKRI Executive Committee that preceded that decision.

4. Financial analysis and options

Please provide recorded information showing how the scale of the required STFC cost reductions was calculated, including, where held:

- financial forecasts;
- financial models;
- underlying assumptions;
- options papers;
- scenario analyses;
- sensitivity analyses;
- risk assessments;
- impact assessments;
- budget allocation papers; and
- papers considering alternative levels of funding or alternative approaches to balancing STFC's finances.

Where spreadsheets or financial models are held electronically, I would prefer these in their original electronic format where reasonably practicable.

5. Decision-making and alternatives

Please provide recorded information setting out:

- alternative options considered before the final STFC settlement and prioritisation programme was approved;
- any request by STFC for a larger allocation or additional support;
- UKRI's consideration of such requests;
- discussion of whether additional UKRI resources could be transferred to STFC;
- the reasons for accepting or rejecting alternative funding options; and
- recorded assessments of the scientific, operational, reputational or strategic consequences of the reductions ultimately agreed.

Format and handling of the request

I would prefer the information electronically to my email address

Where an email falls within scope, please include its attachments where those attachments are themselves relevant to this request.

Where information within a document is exempt, I would ask that the exempt information be redacted and the remainder of the document disclosed wherever reasonably possible.

If any information is withheld, please specify the exemption relied upon and, for any qualified exemption, provide the reasoning and public-interest assessment supporting its application.

If UKRI considers that the cost of complying with the whole request would exceed the appropriate limit under section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act, I would be grateful if, **before simply refusing the request**, you would provide reasonable advice and assistance under section 16 identifying:

1. which parts of this request can be answered within the cost limit;
2. which parts create the greatest search burden;
3. what reduction in date range, custodians or subject matter would enable disclosure; and
4. whether the request could be satisfied by prioritising, in this order:
    a. UKRI Board and Executive Committee minutes, papers and decision records;
    b. financial models, options papers and assessments underlying the STFC reductions;
    c. correspondence involving UKRI senior leadership and STFC senior leadership;
    d. correspondence with DSIT and HM Treasury; and
    e. remaining internal and external correspondence.

For each category above, please also confirm whether UKRI holds information falling within its scope even where some or all of that information is subsequently withheld.