

Subject: FW: For response ASAP on Tuesday 3rd - Fw: RPN- Fears over STFC cost-savings plan aired since September 2025
Date: Monday, 22 June 2026 at 10:54:13 British Summer Time
From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED] - UKRI
Attachments: image001.png

Original chain below

[REDACTED]
UK Research and Innovation
[REDACTED] [@stfc.ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org)

From: Ian Chapman - UKRI [REDACTED] [@ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@ukri.org)>
Date: Monday, 2 March 2026 at 20:31
To: [REDACTED] [@stfc.ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org)>; UKRI CEO <ceo@ukri.org>;
[REDACTED] - UKRI [REDACTED] [@ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@ukri.org)>; [REDACTED] - UKRI
[REDACTED] [@ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@ukri.org)>; [REDACTED] (STFC,RAL,COMMS) [REDACTED] [@stfc.ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org)>;
Dougherty, Michele (STFC,Caxton House,COOO) [REDACTED] [@stfc.ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org)>
Subject: Re: For response ASAP on Tuesday 3rd - Fw: RPN- Fears over STFC cost-savings plan aired since September 2025

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Views?

Ian

From: [REDACTED] - STFC UKRI [REDACTED] [@stfc.ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org)>
Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 20:25
To: Ian Chapman - UKRI [REDACTED] [@ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@ukri.org)>; UKRI CEO <ceo@ukri.org>; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] - UKRI [REDACTED] [@ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@ukri.org)>; [REDACTED] - UKRI
[REDACTED] [@ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@ukri.org)>; [REDACTED] - STFC UKRI [REDACTED] [@stfc.ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org)>;
Michele Dougherty - STFC UKRI [REDACTED] [@stfc.ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org)>
Subject: Re: For response ASAP on Tuesday 3rd - Fw: RPN- Fears over STFC cost-savings plan aired since September 2025

Thanks Ian. Afraid they are on website (Dec minutes linked below). I can see what the person is trying to say ('in addition to CDR, we'll be doing x, y, z') but that has been lost in the note.

<https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/STFC-Council-Minutes-17-December-2025-web.docx>

The PPAN letter is better on this:

Curiosity-driven research will be the largest component of UKRI's portfolio across the SR period, with substantial investment and annual increases in funding for applicant-led research. Alongside this, UKRI and its councils will deliver more applied and targeted research towards strategic government priorities and innovation, with an intentional move towards a more cross-disciplinary, programmatic and outcomes-focus model. This applies across UKRI, including STFC.

I.e. it's not instead of, it's in addition to.

Best wishes,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

UK Research and Innovation

[REDACTED] [@ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@ukri.org)

From: Ian Chapman - UKRI [REDACTED] [@ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@ukri.org)

Date: Monday, 2 March 2026 at 20:20

To: [REDACTED] [@stfc.ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org), UKRI CEO <ceo@ukri.org>, [REDACTED] - UKRI [@ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@ukri.org), [REDACTED] - UKRI [@ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@ukri.org), [REDACTED] (STFC,RAL,COMMS) [@stfc.ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org), Dougherty, Michele (STFC,Caxton House,COOO) [@stfc.ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org)

Subject: Re: For response ASAP on Tuesday 3rd - Fw: RPN- Fears over STFC cost-savings plan aired since September 2025

Yes, absolutely - discussions are not the final positions, which we have reported very clearly with numbers. [REDACTED]

How have these been accessed - was that an FOI? [REDACTED]

Ian

From: [REDACTED] - STFC UKRI [REDACTED] [@stfc.ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org)

Sent: Monday, March 02, 2026 20:10

To: UKRI CEO <ceo@ukri.org>; [REDACTED] - UKRI [REDACTED] [@ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@ukri.org); [REDACTED] - UKRI [REDACTED] [@ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@ukri.org); [REDACTED] - STFC UKRI [@stfc.ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org); Michele Dougherty - STFC UKRI [@stfc.ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org); Ian Chapman - UKRI [REDACTED] [@ukri.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@ukri.org)

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Removing DSIT colleagues, adding Ian and Michele. ResPro have been digging into council minutes from late last year and prompted Ministerial request below.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Support for curiosity driven research is protected across the SR period, comprising around 50% of UKRI's investment, with the other half of our budget supporting applied research and innovative companies.

Curiosity-driven research is vital to the health of the sector and is a priority for UKRI and the government because this is where the truly transformational discoveries and novel ideas are most likely to arise. Funding for this will grow as the economy allows.

[REDACTED] - can you work up a statement along the lines requested?

Many thanks,
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
UK Research and Innovation
[REDACTED]@ukri.org

From: [REDACTED] (DSIT) [REDACTED]@dsit.gov.uk>

Date: Monday, 2 March 2026 at 19:15

To: [REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org>, UKRI CEO <ceo@ukri.org>,
[REDACTED] - UKRI [REDACTED]@ukri.org>, [REDACTED] - UKRI
[REDACTED]@ukri.org>

Cc: [REDACTED] (DSIT) [REDACTED]@dsit.gov.uk>, [REDACTED] (DSIT)
[REDACTED]@dsit.gov.uk>,
[REDACTED]@beis.gov.uk>, [REDACTED] (DSIT)
[REDACTED]@dsit.gov.uk>

Subject: For response ASAP on Tuesday 3rd - Fw: RPN- Fears over STFC cost-savings plan aired since September 2025

OFFICIAL

Hi team,

With huge apologies for the late email, Minister Vallance has queried the below article and why there is a statement about a shift away from curiosity-driven research (highlighted in yellow). Do we know why this has been included / what message they have heard to make this interpretation?

It'd be great if you could provide a line / clarification we can share with the Minister, e.g.:

- UKRI recognise the importance of engaging affected research communities and understanding consequences
- That is why STFC are consulting research communities on options for how to fund the things they value most more sustainably in advance of decisions in June
- STFC infra costs have risen at over 50m a year over the last SR
- Other research communities (including other physics related areas) and wider public

services would have to be asked to reduce if escalating costs in STFC infra portfolio cannot be funded more sustainably

Minister Vallance's office has asked for a response for first thing tomorrow morning (essentially as soon as possible). Apologies again for the ask here, please do let us know if that's not doable.

Best wishes,

UKRI Sponsorship
Science, Research and Innovation Directorate
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
@dsit.gov.uk



Department for
Science, Innovation
& Technology

www.gov.uk/dsit | <https://twitter.com/SciTechgovuk>

OFFICIAL

From: Patrick Vallance
Sent: 02 March 2026 17:35
To: Vallance, Minister (DSIT) @dsit.gov.uk>
Subject: Fwd: RPN- Fears over STFC cost-savings plan aired since September 2025

Begin forwarded message:

From: @sciencemediacentre.org>
Date: 2 March 2026 at 14:50:43 GMT
To: @sciencemediacentre.org>
Subject: RPN- Fears over STFC cost-savings plan aired since September 2025

<https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-uk-research-councils-2026-3-fears-over-stfc-cost-savings-plan-ai-red-since-september-2025/>

Fears over STFC cost-savings plan aired since September 2025

By Robin Bisson

Oversight body repeatedly raised concerns over “lack of transparency” with research community

Members of the Science and Technology Facilities Council’s oversight body raised concerns about major cost-saving plans impacting UK physics research as early as September 2025, documents show.

Minutes of STFC council meetings reveal that concerns were repeatedly raised over a “lack of transparency” and “restrictions on communications” with the research communities who are reliant on STFC funding.

In late January, Research Professional News revealed that STFC is having to find [£162 million in cost savings by 2029-30](#), resulting in cuts to science facilities it supports and to its external grants programme for physics and astronomy.

The cuts, in response to STFC’s projected costs outstripping its budget, have sparked an ongoing backlash from the UK’s research community.

Concerns first raised

Members of STFC’s council were first informed of a “transformation programme”, intended to “render STFC a more agile, efficient and effective organisation”, at a meeting on 17 September.

The process would include “rationalisation”—both of research that STFC carries out itself, “to ensure strategic alignment”, and of projects that the research council supports, “to identify potential savings and strategic fit”, according to meeting minutes.

In response, council members raised “concern over unintended consequences” and highlighted “the need to engage with STFC’s communities and stakeholders”.

The following day, in a discussion about the communication of UK Research and Innovation’s budget allocation, which was unpublished at the time, the council “raised concerns about the lack of transparency with our communities”. The minutes add that STFC “should be more honest about the challenges ahead and the need to make some tough decisions otherwise we risked losing their trust”.

In a later session of the meeting with UKRI chief executive Ian Chapman, council members “flagged concern over restrictions on communications with STFC communities”. Chapman “responded that we should be transparent but that we did need to be in line with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology”.

Further measures added

In a meeting on 18 November, council members were informed that STFC was “anticipating significant challenges that will require further measure[s] over those already planned as part of the transformation programme”.

The minutes add that “achieving a sustainable financial position by the end of the spending review will require difficult choices” and that different cost-saving strategies were under consideration.

“Council raised concerns about the impact of the measures on the talent pipeline, the viability of core science programmes, and the need for transparent

communication with the research community,” the minutes continue, adding that STFC’s executive chair, Michele Dougherty, had committed to “rapid engagement with stakeholders once allocations are confirmed”.

In a discussion about communications, council members “emphasised the need for rapid and transparent engagement with the research community...once funding decisions are known”, and particularly with the particle physics, astronomy and nuclear physics community supported by STFC’s grants programme.

UKRI **published its budget allocations** on 17 December, and Dougherty sent a letter on 28 January to the PPAN community, detailing that STFC’s budget for external grants would be 30 per cent lower in 2026-27 than it had been two years earlier, and that project leaders would be asked to model funding reductions of up to 60 per cent.

Pressure increases

An additional extraordinary council meeting was held on 17 December, at which an STFC official highlighted “a major shift of funding from curiosity-driven research to priority areas and targeted programmes”.

Council members were told that “legal commitments would be honoured but discretionary funding would be severely reduced”, according to the minutes, and that “the settlement would put significant pressure on both the PPAN programme and the national labs...on top of existing pressures and measures taken to date”.

In response, the minutes state, council members discussed issues including “the need for major cost savings and the potential risk to university physics departments”.

UKRI leadership has said that **“no decisions” have been taken** as STFC goes through a prioritisation process that is due to conclude by the summer. But there is increasing pressure for a rethink as physics groups warn of the potential impact of the cost reductions.

Dougherty is due to appear before the House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee on 4 March to discuss financial pressures at STFC.

An STFC spokesperson previously said that the research council “has just commenced a six-month consultation exercise with our Science Board advisory body and all of our research communities, including astronomy, to ensure that we make considered and measured choices about how the savings we need to make are realised and so put STFC on a sustainable footing.

“The potential impact on early career researchers is a core part of that prioritisation process, and we will be speaking with relevant community groups as part of the discussions over the coming months.”

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(STFC,RAL,)

From: Dougherty, Michele (STFC,Caxton House,COOO)
Sent: 02 March 2026 21:02
To: [REDACTED]; Ian Chapman - UKRI; UKRI CEO; [REDACTED] - UKRI;
 [REDACTED] - UKRI; [REDACTED] (STFC,RAL,COMMS)
Subject: Re: For response ASAP on Tuesday 3rd - Fw: RPN- Fears over STFC cost-savings plan aired since September 2025

Looks sensible to me , thanks

Sent from [Outlook for Android](#)

From: [REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org>
Sent: Monday, March 2, 2026 8:46:15 PM
To: Dougherty, Michele (STFC,Caxton House,COOO) [REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org>; Ian Chapman - UKRI [REDACTED]@ukri.org>; UKRI CEO <ceo@ukri.org>; [REDACTED] - UKRI [REDACTED]@ukri.org>; [REDACTED] - UKRI [REDACTED]@ukri.org>; [REDACTED] (STFC,RAL,COMMS) [REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org>
Subject: Re: For response ASAP on Tuesday 3rd - Fw: RPN- Fears over STFC cost-savings plan aired since September 2025

I suggest getting back to [REDACTED] at DSIT with the following, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Is this ok?

- Thank you for spotting this issue in the minutes, which does not reflect UKRI policy. Comments made by individuals in private discussions are not the final positions, which we have reported very clearly with numbers.
- As we have said publicly since, support for curiosity driven research is protected across the SR period, comprising around 50% of UKRI's investment, with the other half of our budget supporting applied research and innovative companies.
- We have also said to the community that curiosity-driven research will be the largest component of UKRI's portfolio across the SR period, with substantial investment and annual increases in funding for applicant-led research. Alongside this, UKRI and its councils will deliver more applied and targeted research towards strategic government priorities and innovation, with an intentional move towards a more cross-disciplinary, programmatic and outcomes-focus model. This applies across UKRI, including STFC.

Best wishes,

UK Research and Innovation
@ukri.org

From: Dougherty, Michele (STFC,Caxton House,COOO) [REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org>
Date: Monday, 2 March 2026 at 20:35

To: [REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org>, Ian Chapman - UKRI [REDACTED]@ukri.org>, UKRI CEO <ceo@ukri.org>, [REDACTED] - UKRI [REDACTED]@ukri.org>, [REDACTED] - UKRI [REDACTED]@ukri.org>, [REDACTED] (STFC,RAL,COMMS)@stfc.ukri.org>

Subject: Re: For response ASAP on Tuesday 3rd - Fw: RPN- Fears over STFC cost-savings plan aired since September 2025

Hi Ian, my email crossed yours.....happy to correct the record that conversation was misreported and confirm the line taken in PPAN letter
Michele

Sent from [Outlook for Android](#)

From: Dougherty, Michele (STFC,Caxton House,COOO) [REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org>

Sent: Monday, March 2, 2026 8:31:51 PM

To: [REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org>; Ian Chapman - UKRI [REDACTED]@ukri.org>; UKRI CEO <ceo@ukri.org>; [REDACTED] - UKRI [REDACTED]@ukri.org>; [REDACTED] - UKRI [REDACTED]@ukri.org>; [REDACTED] (STFC,RAL,COMMS) [REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org>

Subject: Re: For response ASAP on Tuesday 3rd - Fw: RPN- Fears over STFC cost-savings plan aired since September 2025

I agree with the lines to take. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Sent from [Outlook for Android](#)

From: [REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org>

Sent: Monday, March 2, 2026 8:25:49 PM

To: Ian Chapman - UKRI [REDACTED]@ukri.org>; UKRI CEO <ceo@ukri.org>; [REDACTED] - UKRI [REDACTED]@ukri.org>; [REDACTED] - UKRI [REDACTED]@ukri.org>; [REDACTED] (STFC,RAL,COMMS) [REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org>; Dougherty, Michele (STFC,Caxton House,COOO) [REDACTED]@stfc.ukri.org>

Subject: Re: For response ASAP on Tuesday 3rd - Fw: RPN- Fears over STFC cost-savings plan aired since September 2025

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I.e. it's not instead of, it's in addition to.

Best wishes,

Implications for Applicant-led research over the SR period

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- A reduction in funding for **applicant-led curiosity driven research**:
 - Applicant-led total will decline over the SR period as funding for legacy commitments phases out.
 - At the same time, funding for buckets government priorities and support for business will increase as funding for the enabling platform stays flat in real terms

