

Early Career Researcher Town Hall

IOP HEP/APP, Edinburgh

9th April 2026

Alison Elliot, Lucien Heurtier, Harriet Watson, Aidan Wiederhold, Simon Williams, Estifa'a Zaid

Particle, Astro and Nuclear physics research funding

UK Research and Innovation + Add to myFT

UK to scrap more than £250mn in planned physics project funding

Cern particle accelerator led by British scientist among institutions affected by wider research shake-up



POLICY AND FUNDING | NEWS

UK physics leaders express 'deep concern' over funding cuts in letter to science minister Patrick Vallance

03 Mar 2026 Michael Banks



The Telegraph News Iran crisis Sport Business Money Travel Tools Opinion Ukraine Health Recommended

UK news Politics World Donald Trump Health news Defence Science Education Environment Investig

Labour budget cuts 'risk Britain missing out on next Einstein'

UK universities will no longer attract geniuses who solve mysteries of the universe, warn scientists

These cuts to physics research will be a disaster for UK scientists - and for our standing in the world
Jon Butterworth



Higgs boson breakthrough was UK triumph, but British physics faces 'catastrophic' cuts



The STFC turmoil bodes ill for UK plc as well as UK physics

Even if delayed grants arrive soon, it is too late to hire postdocs this year, and wider budget cuts will cut the supply of tech skills, says Malcolm Fairbairn

Published on March 23, 2026

Last updated March 23, 2026

[Malcolm Fairbairn](#)

Scientific research + Add to myFT

UK physicists raise alarm over planned funding cuts

Research chief tries to quell alarm as government reshapes science funding in effort to boost growth



PARTICLE AND NUCLEAR | NEWS

CERN upgrade to LHCb experiment threatened by UK funding cuts

09 Feb 2026 Michael Banks



experiment at CERN is unlikely to go ahead if cuts are not reversed. (Courtesy: The ASTR)

Questions & Short survey



<https://www.menti.com/alwvz7ka7omd>

Reprioritisation of PPAN funding

To PPAN Community

Sent via email:

Date: 28 January 2026

Re: STFC – reprioritisation of PPAN investments

Dear Particle Physics, Astronomy and Nuclear Physics (PPAN) community,

Context

In October, UKRI received its four-year budget from DSIT of £38.6 billion, rising to nearly £10 billion per annum by the end of the period, with details published in December. Set against a challenging fiscal backdrop, it is more important than ever to ensure that this level of public investment in R&D maximises economic and societal benefits to the UK public. From April 2026, funding will align with UKRI's mission to advance knowledge, improve lives and drive growth.

In January the community received news:

- STFC's PPAN budget likely to be around 70% of 24/25 budget
- UKRI shifting to a strategic, outcome-focused approach (buckets)
- Projects asked to identify how they would respond to flat cash and **reductions of 20%, 40% and 60%**, and also identify the funding point at which the project becomes **non-viable**

This is in addition to Infrastructure Funds being cancelled for LHCb Upgrade II, EIC, REUDI and C-MASS.

For a general overview, please see [Particle Physics Action Group session](#).

[Repository](#) of community letters to UKRI/STFC and Government as well as new articles and other relevant documents.

Effect on Early Career Researchers

To PPAN Community

Sent via email:

Date: 28 January 2026

Re: STFC – reprioritisation of PPAN investments

Dear Particle Physics, Astronomy and Nuclear Physics (PPAN) community,

Context

In October, UKRI received its four-year budget from DSIT of £38.6 billion, rising to nearly £10 billion per annum by the end of the period, with details published in December. Set against a challenging fiscal backdrop, it is more important than ever to ensure that this level of public investment in R&D maximises economic and societal benefits to the UK public. From April 2026, funding will align with UKRI's mission to advance knowledge, improve lives and drive growth.

Concerns:

- Cost saving will fall primarily on ECR positions - fewer postdoc and PhD positions?
 - Theory postdocs already lost for this year due to missed funding deadline
- Our reputation will be damaged internationally and harm our current and future leadership prospects
- Disruption to large international projects
- Long term damage to the UK field in general affecting the health of particle physics departments.

Our response

Letters from ECRs/Fellows:

- UK ECFA ECR Panel Members
- ECR Open Letter
- Advanced Fellows

We were all invited to a meeting at the IOP in London with:

- Professor Sir Ian Chapman, **UKRI CEO**
- Professor Michele Dougherty, **STFC Executive Chair**
- Professor Grahame Blair, **STFC Executive Director of Programmes**

Also in attendance

- Elizabeth Chamberlain, IOP Head of Policy and Public Affairs

Early Career Researcher response to changes in UK particle physics funding

Dear Professor Sir Ian and Professor Dougherty,

We are writing in response to the letter to the Particle Physics, Astronomy and Nuclear Physics (PPAN) community from Professor Dougherty on 28th January 2026 and to the open letter on 1st February 2026 from Professor Sir Ian. As the UK representatives to the Early Career Researcher (ECR) panel of the [European Committee for Future Accelerators](#), we advocate for the particle physics ECR community in the UK. As ECRs we are both directly exposed to near-term funding changes and deeply invested in the [long-term trajectory and international standing of particle physics in the UK](#).

LETTER OF SUPPORT AGAINST CUTS TO FUNDING UK THEORETICAL PARTICLE AND HIGH ENERGY PHYSICS

<https://uktheory-international-letter.github.io/index.html>

10 February 2026

The Lord Vallance of Balham KCB
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Dear Lord Vallance,

cc: Liz Kendall MP, Dame Chi Onwurah, The Lord Mair CBE, The Lord Winston, Professor Sir Ian Chapman

We write to you as a group of advanced fellows including UKRI Future Leaders Fellows (FLFs), Royal Society University Research Fellows, and STFC Ernest Rutherford Fellows. As advanced fellows, the UK scientific community has entrusted us with the future of the UK's curiosity-driven research. It is therefore with urgency that we express our extreme concerns in relation to the announced changes to the funding of particle physics, astronomy and nuclear physics (PPAN) through the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC). These changes and the reprioritisation of PPAN investments

Meeting with STFC/UKRI at IOP

[Our meeting minutes](#)

We asked

- **What are the reasons for the cuts and what are the sources of overspend ?**

The Response

- **Cuts will be to reduce a predicted overspend**, by cutting now they expect to reduce how much they might have had to cut in the future
 - Ian Chapman expressed concern that the organisation had committed to several new projects in recent years without sufficient long-term financial forecasting. He gave examples such as ATLAS, DUNE, Boulby expansion, Diamond 2, ISIS and 2nd round of Hartree.
 - STFC indicated that two thirds of the necessary savings would come from internal restructuring within STFC rather than exclusively from the research grants budget, although expressed that this would likely mean job losses within STFC.

Action Item

- More transparency to quantifiably shed light on where the cost pressures originate from.

Meeting with STFC/UKRI at IOP

[Our meeting minutes](#)

We asked

- Are the 30% cuts to PPAN funding set in stone?

The Response

- **Cut to 70% of the PPAN budget of 2024/25 is not set in stone** - subject to the current reviews and consultation.
- Michele confirmed this is the current likely trajectory but reiterated no final decisions have been made and that a study was needed to see how STFC could afford this reduction.

Action Item

- Clarify to the community in a letter from STFC that cuts are not set in stone.

Meeting with STFC/UKRI at IOP

[Our meeting minutes](#)

We asked

- **Is the loss of an entire cohort of theory postdocs indicative of more to come in PPAN?**

The Response

- Loss of theory postdocs in this years hiring period was not intentional - delay in funding decision
- STFC representatives acknowledged that some loss of postdoctoral positions is expected under the current circumstances, but no detailed modelling of the long-term impact on research output has yet been undertaken.
- They indicated that they do not intend for ECRs to bear the entire burden of reductions.

Action Item

- ECRs strongly recommended that such modelling form part of a formal impact assessment.

Action items

From first draft of minutes UKRI produced:



- ★ STFC to produce modelling of the effects of reductions to the PPAN grants line, including implications for postdoctoral numbers and programme viability.
- ★ UKRI/STFC to consider engagement with relevant government departments (DESNZ, MOD etc.) on broader talent, skills and capacity implications.
- ★ UKRI to provide clearer guidance to PPAN researchers on accessing cross-UKRI opportunities and alternative funding routes.
- ★ UKRI to define appropriate mechanisms for continued, proportionate engagement with ECR representatives.
- ★ ECR representatives to support broader community engagement efforts, with UKRI to follow up on how this can be structured.

Lords and Commons select committees

Both the houses of Lords and Commons have a Select Committee for Science and Technology, who ***examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT).***

Evidence session on 4th March with Catherine Heymans, Jon Butterworth and Simon Williams - **great showing from the community.**

Dame Chi Onwurah, Chair of House of Commons SITC: “widespread cuts have been proposed before adequate consultation with those affected was undertaken”.



Updates in March

These are just the headlines, for details see the original communications (listed in this [repository](#)).

- **UKRI accepts responsibility for loss of theory postdocs this year.**
- **PhD studentships will remain at current level.**
- **There will be no reduction in in PPAN post-doc numbers.**
- Timeline for project prioritisation:
 - **March/April:** STFC's Science Board PPAN will be reviewing engagement responses in and will involve inputs from its advisory panels (which cover specific discipline areas and represent their communities).
 - **June:** Science Board PPAN present scenarios to STFC Council and Executive Board, including impact assessments.
 - **June onwards:** STFC to engage with UKRI and DSIT on options.
- Prioritisation principles include
 - scientific excellence, demonstrable UK leadership, value for money and balancing impacts/long term health on communities.
 - International expert review will be part of the process.
 - In parallel, a prioritisation exercise will be undertaken for the broader STFC facilities and labs.

What's next?

Letters

Lack of funding is stifling scientific research

Dr Simon Williams says the UK is trying to build a quantum ecosystem while hollowing out the academic pipeline that produces the talent

ECR engagement initiatives have gathered attention - start your own!

- [Letter template](#) you can send to your MP
- [Industry letter](#) - over 200 signatories
- Long term: do outreach and tell the public why our work is important.
 - Potential meeting between MPs/physicists as an annual event like in USA.
- Stay for the STFC Town Hall after this - and speak up if you have something to add.
- Tell us how you want to stay involved! e.g. another Town Hall style meeting
 - <https://www.menti.com/alwvz7ka7omd> - the last question has a space for your suggestions

Subscribe to the mailing list for UK ECRs in particle physics [PHYS-ECR UK](#)

Subscribe to the mailing list for general UK physics [HI-PHI-L UK](#)

Questions & Short survey



<https://www.menti.com/alwvz7ka7omd>

ECFA ECR panel

ECFA

European Committee for Future Accelerators



Our mandate:

*The objective of the ECFA Early-Career Researcher (ECR) Panel is for its members to **discuss all aspects that contribute in a broad sense to the future of the research field of particle physics**. In its advisory role to ECFA, the panel reports to ECFA on a regular basis. An annual report of the ECFA ECR Panel is added as a standing item to the agenda of Plenary ECFA meetings.*

UK members: Alison Elliot (RAL), Harriet Watson, Aidan Wiederhold, Estifa'a Zaid

[ECFA ECR panel members](#)