

To Researchers and Facility User Communities

Sent via email

Date: 13 April 2026

Response to your letter of support for STFC Multidisciplinary Facilities

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your constructive letter regarding the implications of the current financial position of the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), and for highlighting the importance of its facilities to the wider UK research community.

We recognise and agree with your central point: STFC's Multidisciplinary Facilities (MDFs), including Diamond Light Source, ISIS Neutron and Muon Source, and the Central Laser Facility, are critical national assets that underpin a broad and highly interdisciplinary research base. A significant proportion of the science delivered through these facilities is funded through other councils, including Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Medical Research Council (MRC), and we fully acknowledge the importance of this cross-council dependency.

As has been communicated publicly, STFC has specific cost pressures **that are unique among UKRI councils**.

While UKRI has received a strong overall settlement, STFC's core budget remains broadly flat after rising by ~20% in the previous spending review period. At the same time, its cost base has increased significantly, driven by the nature of the large-scale facilities and international commitments it supports, as well as inflationary pressures and rising staffing costs, all of which have added significantly to STFC's operating costs. These pressures have already been partially absorbed through short-term measures, but this approach is not sustainable. Without action, costs would significantly outpace available funding.

In this context, STFC is undertaking a necessary **reset of its cost base**, with the aim of delivering a financially sustainable portfolio over the current Spending Review period. This includes achieving substantial cumulative savings by 2029–30 and making difficult but necessary prioritisation decisions about what we fund and how. This is not about reducing ambition, but about ensuring that the activities we do support are funded at levels that enable them to succeed.

Across the National Laboratories and Facilities, 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.

We fully recognise that these decisions will have implications for both facility operations and the communities that rely on them. Our clear intention is to **protect the long-term strength and integrity**

of the UK's research infrastructure, including the MDFs, while ensuring that they remain sustainable and capable of delivering world-leading science. The majority of cost savings are expected to be delivered internally, but it is unavoidable that some impacts will be felt across the portfolio.

We can reassure you that we will be using a whole-system perspective. Through UKRI, we are working closely with partner councils to better understand and evidence the full extent of reliance on STFC-supported infrastructure. This cross-council view is essential to ensuring that decisions are informed, balanced, and reflective of the interconnected nature of the UK research system.

At the same time, we are taking forward an STFC-wide Transformation Programme to ensure that STFC operates as efficiently and effectively as possible. This includes strengthening coordination across facilities, reducing duplication, and maximising the proportion of resource directed towards research delivery. We are also exploring opportunities to diversify income and enhance partnerships with industry and other stakeholders, in line with UKRI's broader strategic focus on delivering economic and societal impact.

Looking ahead, the MDFs will remain central to STFC's vision and to UKRI's mission to advance knowledge, improve lives, and drive growth. Their role, and their contribution to government priorities, will be an important part of how we make the case for sustained investment in these capabilities. We recognise the importance of clear and transparent communication during this period, and we are committed to engaging with all affected communities, including those who may not traditionally identify as part of the STFC user base. We also welcome your point that the broader user community has an important role to play in articulating the value of these shared national assets.

Thank you again for your engagement and for offering to contribute further evidence. Open dialogue will be essential as we work together to ensure a sustainable and impactful future for UK research infrastructure.

Yours sincerely,



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