

Minutes of the STFC Extraordinary Council meeting
Wednesday 17th December 2025
Virtual meeting

Attendees

Council:

Michele Dougherty (Chair)
Andy Schofield (SIM)
Stan Bentvelsen
David Charlton
Lucy Edge
Patricia Hodgson
JT Janssen
Jana Kolar
Jayne Lawrence
Angeli Möller
Andrew Pontzen
Hitesh Thakrar
Carsten Welsch

Council observers:

Keith Grainge, Chair of Science Board (PPAN)
Jacqui Cole, Chair of Science Board (F&L)
Howard Stone, incoming Chair of Science Board (F&L)
Maya Riddle (Secretariat)

Other attendees:

Roger Eccleston, Exec Director National Labs: Large Scale Facilities
Keith Zimmerman, COO
Chris Wrench, Director of Finance
Head of Strategy (item 3)

1 Welcome and Executive Chair Update

- 1.1 Michele Dougherty (MKD) welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked members for any conflicts of interest.
- 1.2 It was noted that Keith Grainge had been appointed as the next Director of Jodrell Bank Observatory and Jodrell Bank Centre for Astrophysics.
- 1.3 Council thanked Jacqui Cole for all her work as Chair of Science Board Facilities & Labs and welcomed the incoming chair, Howard Stone.
- 1.4 An update was provided on the UKRI Infrastructure Fund. Due to funding pressures on the portfolio, the Infrastructure Advisory Committee had been asked to tension uninitiated infrastructure projects with new proposals. A number of scenarios had been submitted to UKRI Executive Committee (ExCo).

2 Minutes

- 2.1 Council approved the draft minutes from the November meeting and amended minutes from the October meeting.
- 2.2 It was noted that previous minutes had now been published on the website.

3 Allocations Update

- 3.1 An update was provided on the financial breakdown of UKRI's allocations using the bucket model. Funding for curiosity driven research in bucket 1 was due to rise slightly over the spending review period. But legacy commitments would fall and funding shift to priority areas and targeted programmes. Legal commitments would be honoured but discretionary funding would be reduced.
- 3.2 The proposed settlement for STFC would put significant pressure on both the PPAN (particle physics, astronomy and nuclear) programme and on the national labs. This was on top of existing pressures and measures taken to date.
- 3.3 Saving measures and revenue growth targets were being integrated into the STFC transformation programme.
- 3.4 A paper on the future development of STFC had been taken to ExCo in December and would go onto the UKRI Board in January.
- 3.5 Council members discussed the significant financial challenges ahead, and the strategic implications for the organisation, including the need for major cost savings and the potential risk to university physics departments. Further clarity was requested including the percentage terms of the proposed savings measures in order for Council to provide informed advice.
- 3.6 It was noted that Science Board (PPAN) was planning a review of projects to develop potential saving scenarios for the PPAN programme. STFC Programmes Directorate would be asked to provide clarity on the scale and nature of the required savings.
- 3.7 Several members emphasised the need for bold, strategic decision making which looked at the future shape of the PPAN programme. This included considering areas of duplication to give headroom.
- 3.8 It was confirmed that Council and other advisory bodies including Science Board F&L would be consulted to help shape thinking.

3.9 MKD thanked everyone for a constructive discussion and said there would be an opportunity to discuss in more depth at the joint meeting with the Executive Board in January.

4 Any other business

4.1 MKD wished everyone a good Christmas break.

4.2 The next meeting was scheduled for 14th and 15th January 2026.