



**Note of the 10th Meeting of the Life Sciences & Soft Materials Advisory Panel
held on 12 January 2022**

- The Panel Chair gave an update on panel activities over the last year, including providing input to the 2021 Infrastructure Prioritisation exercise.
- STFC provided an update on the international facilities (ESRF, ILL, European XFEL, ESS)
 - The ESRF Director General would be visiting STFC in March 2022
 - European XFEL would be changing its cost model in 2024. The European XFEL Council working group set up to consider possible mitigations for high or low using shareholders was expected to present its proposals in June 2022
- The Panel raised an issue with collaborative grants with the facilities, commenting that the criteria of funding opportunities are not always clear if facility staff are eligible. It was felt more could be done to clarify call criteria and harmonise across Councils, particularly regarding overseas collaborators.
- The Panel felt it would be helpful to have an overview of the current status of instruments available to the life sciences, looking at capabilities across all types of facilities. A sub-group would be set up to explore what was needed and how best to take this forward.
- The Panel discussed the infrastructure prioritisation process and ways in which the panel's involvement could be improved.
- The Panel also discussed the continued impact of Covid on the LSSM communities. It was felt that overall the situation had changed little for the LSSM communities over the last year. Whilst recognising the efforts the facilities had made to continue to provide access whilst ensuring safe working environments for staff and users, the reduced operations and limited on-site access was still having an impact.
 - Not all experiments could be carried out remotely and it seemed that blue skies research was being curtailed in favour of more certain experimental results
 - There was particular concern about the impact on Early Career Researchers and PhD students, as well as the extra workload being placed on facility staff.
- Martin King, one of the Science Board members who act as links between Science Board and the advisory panel, joined the meeting to give his views on

the importance of the panel's work, such as providing input to some important STFC processes.

- STFC's Strategy, Planning and Communications Directorate gave an update covering:
 - Government priorities for science
 - Current reviews of the UK research landscape
 - UKRI strategy and funding and STFC strategy developments
 - Infrastructure prioritisation exercise, and how the panel would be involved in future exercises.
- The Panel Chair would report to the February 2022 meeting of Science Board.