



**AGREED MINUTES OF THE TWENTY-NINTH MEETING OF STFC COUNCIL**  
**HELD at THE EUROPEAN ORGANISATION FOR NUCLEAR RESEARCH (CERN),**  
**GENEVA SWITZERLAND – and by videoconference**  
**16<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

<b>Attendees</b>	
<b>Council Members:</b>	Mark Thomson (chair) (MAT) Sheila Rowan (Co-chair) (SR) Jon Butterworth (JB) Mike Dunne (MD) Patricia Hodgson (PH) Anu Ojha (AO) Ben Olivier (BO) Angeli Moeller (AM) Hiranya Peiris (HP) Andy Schofield (AJS) Pam Thomas (PT)  Maya Riddle (MR), Private Secretary Janice Masone (JM), Minutes Secretary
<b>Apologies:</b>	Maggie Aderin-Pocock (MAP) Hitesh Thakrar (HT)
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Ruth Elliot (RE), UKRI deputy CFO Paul Monks (PM), BEIS CSA Tara Shears (TS), Chair of Science Board
<b>Invited Guests:</b>	Mark Affonso (MA)*, STFC Finance Director – item 5 Beth House (BH), Associate Director International – item 3 Rosanna Greenop (RG) STFC Strategy Team- Item 6 Rich Farrow (RF), UK CERN Industrial Liaison – Item 7 & 8 Amy Welch (AW), DSIT International Research Infrastructures – Item 7 & 8 Sarah Verth (SV), Associate Director, Particle Physics – Item 7 & 8

<b>Chair, Mark Thomson</b>		
<b>1. Welcome and opening comments</b>		
1.1	Mark Thomson (MAT) welcomed everyone to the twenty-ninth meeting of STFC Council, which was held at The European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva, Switzerland and by videoconference.	
1.2	Apologies were received from Maggie Aderin-Pocock & Hitesh Thakrar.	
1.3	MAT reminded Council members that they are required to keep the Secretary informed of any changes to their personal register of interests as they arise. No conflicts were declared for this meeting.	
1.4	On the previous day (15 <sup>th</sup> Feb) Council had the opportunity to tour some of the major facilities at CERN. The tour comprised visits to the ISOLDE, LHCb, ATLAS and the LHC superconducting magnet assembly hall. Council also had the opportunity to meet UK early career scientists, engineers and technicians. Council found the day enjoyable and informative and expressed sincere thanks to Stephanie Hills and the CERN Protocol Office for their help in organising the day.	
<b>2. Minutes, Actions and Matters Arising and Actions from the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022 – STFC (UKRI) 23/01</b>		
2.1	<b><u>Minutes</u></b> Council approved the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting held on 15 <sup>th</sup> November 2022.	
2.2	<b><u>Actions</u></b> The actions from previous meetings were reviewed and were either complete or in progress. More detail on progress can be found in the Action Register which is an annex to these minutes	
2.3	<b><u>Matters Arising</u></b> There were no matters arising from the minutes or actions of the meeting held on 15 <sup>th</sup> November 2022.	
<b>3. International Science Partnerships Fund - STFC (UKRI) 23/02</b>		
3.1	Council welcomed Beth House (BH) to the meeting. BH provided information on the development and scope of the new International Science Partnerships Fund (ISPF), as well as outlining the opportunities and challenges for STFC in securing funding for future international programmes. STFC has secured £18m of ISPF funding so far, concentrating on countries core to STFC's own mission and developing/future priorities.	
3.2	Council noted the information provided on the ISPF and discussed the opportunity provided by this fund to expand STFC's international activities. Key points of this discussion are noted below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The combination of the ISPF and UKRI's Infrastructure fund will create the opportunity for a much stronger international funding portfolio. Council felt there could also be significant benefit to STFC who is well placed to take the lead internationally in priority areas such as Quantum, AI and Data.</li> <li>ii. Council advised STFC to ensure there is appropriate leadership and support in place to make the most of these new opportunities; MAT confirmed that STFC</li> </ul>	

		<p>has strong links with many international partners including the US, several lab-to-lab agreements exist, and more are being developed.</p> <p>iii. Council considered the potential impact arising from the transformation of BEIS into DSIT. It is anticipated that there may be a move to targeting fewer countries with a more priority themed approach. Council felt there could be tensions between government and community priorities and it may be more challenging to gain support for some areas of STFC's international portfolio. Council advised STFC to take a strategic approach and be prepared to mitigate the risk of any gaps developing.</p> <p>iv. Council thanked BH for a very clear paper and an informative discussion and looked forward to receiving an update in due course.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Science Board Update- STFC (UKRI) 23/03</b>	
4.1	Mark Thomson (MAT) invited Tara Shears (TS), Chair of Science Board, to give her update from the meeting held on 6-7 December 2022 to Council. The main discussion points are noted below	
4.2	<p><b><u>Advisory Panels</u></b>  TS's presentation described the landscape in which STFC's Advisory Panels currently operate, including dependencies and overlap with other parts of the programme, and highlighted current concerns raised by the advisory panels.</p> <p>i. Council noted that the advisory panels raised concerns around funding, skills, computing, better communication around Visions/Infrastructure Fund processes, engagement with UKSA and the role of the panels in prioritisation.</p> <p>ii. Discussion focused on the challenges of encouraging communities to overcome their reluctance to prioritise roadmaps. This advice and input are key factors in developing strategies and will be particularly useful to the new Science Board as prioritisation will be an important part of its remit.</p>	
4.3	<p><b><u>Statements of Interest (SOI)</u></b>  Science Board considered three SOIs details of which can be found in the paper. For the majority, Science Board felt that although the science was clearly excellent, the level of funding requested could not currently be accommodated in the core programme. They recommended other potential routes to funding in some cases.</p> <p>i. Council felt it was important to know when high-quality science remains unfunded due to pressure on STFC's programme budgets. Council recommended that future Science Board report include a view of scientific merit, to allow such evidence to be collected, whether or not a project fits within a given budgetary envelope for the programme.</p>	
4.4	<p><b><u>Current issues highlighted by Science Board</u></b>  TS raised some of the key issues discussed at the last meeting which Science Board wished to highlight to Council:</p> <p>i. <b>ESA science flat cash:</b> In MAT's last update to Science Board, he reported that the ESA Ministerial has decided to hold ESA's science programme flat. Science Board wish to highlight that this will be a detriment to current and future missions and is a threat to existing investments.</p> <p>ii. Council acknowledged that engagement with ESA could be stronger. It was felt that appointment of former STFC Council member Professor Carole Mundell as ESA Director of Science presented an excellent opportunity for STFC to</p>	

		<p>open a channel and facilitate engagement to build a better understanding with the UK community.</p> <p>iii. <b>Quantum Technologies for Fundamental Physics (QTFP):</b> Communities are keen to sustain and develop this novel work beyond the current call. This activity is jointly funded by STFC and EPSRC.</p> <p>iv. Council noted the issue highlighted by Science Board and recommended that STFC, and EPSRC, prioritise continuing to support this if budgets allow.</p> <p>v. <b>Dual key mechanism:</b> UKSA funds space-based missions and instrumentation costs and STFC provides exploitation funding. These are managed through the dual key mechanism. Science Board flagged concerns around this arrangement which are consistently raised by the relevant advisory panels. These concerns mainly relate to community understanding, complexity of the process and a perceived disconnect between facility time and exploitation funds.</p> <p>vi. Council heard that STFC regularly meets with UKSA to discuss the dual key and both parties are generally in alignment in their priorities and approach. It may be more about increasing understanding of the process in the community. Council members advised that the dual key mechanism could be featured in the STFC update to the National Astronomy Meeting (NAM) in July 2023.</p>
	4.5	<p><b>Particle Physics responsive PDRA round</b>  Science Board was happy to report that following a very challenging Consolidated Grant round for Particle Physics (experiment) the CSR settlement had enabled a funding call for additional PDRAs which had, for most experiments, restored PDRA effort to pre-2015 levels. Council agreed this was excellent news for the programmes and community.</p>
	4.6	<p><b>Science Board Membership</b>  The recent recruitment round for new members of Science Board has been very successful and five new members, who will greatly increase the diversity of the Board, will be joining. Council members commended STFC for all of the effort put into raising an excellent slate of diverse applicants.</p>
	<b>5.</b>	<b>Finance and Governance Committee Update- STFC (UKRI) 23/04</b>
	5.1	Council welcomed Mark Affonso (MA) to the meeting, he joined Sheila Rowan (SR) in giving the update from the most recent meeting of the STFC Finance and Governance Committee (FGC).
	5.2	<p>The most recent meeting of the Finance and Governance (F&amp;G) Committee took place 17th January 2023. MA and SR gave Council members an overview of the main discussion points arising from the meeting and particularly drew Council's attention to the UKRI and STFC risk registers. The following points were noted:</p> <p>i. <b>STFC Corporate Risks:</b> Council shared FGC's concerns about the increasing number of black rated risks with no sign of de-escalation on STFC's Corporate Risk Register (CRR). It was confirmed that there are effective mitigation plans in place for many of them, and there are plans to re-evaluate the RAG ratings. The report for the next meeting will reflect a more current status of risks.</p> <p>ii. <b>Finance Update:</b> Council noted the update contained in the paper. It was agreed there would be an update on the STFC budget at the next meeting on 31 March.</p>

		<p>iii. <b>UKRI Corporate Risks:</b> FGC has asked STFC to work with UKRI to better understand why the risk related to Horizon Association has been closed off, this will be discussed further at the next FGC.</p> <p>iv. <b>Finance Team Changes:</b> Council noted that Mark Affonso plans to step down from his role as Finance Director in Spring 2023. He will remain with UKRI, mostly focusing on SHARP. Council offered grateful thanks to Mark Affonso for his hard work over the years and wished him all the very best in his new role.</p>
<b>6.</b>	<b>STFC Governance Changes- STFC (UKRI) 23/05 and 23/06</b>	
6.1		Council welcomed Rosanna Greenop (RG) to the meeting. RG presented the Terms of Reference for two new Science Boards and set a proposal for changing the reporting line for the Education, Training and Careers Committee and the Advisory Panel for Public Engagement.
6.2		<p><b><u>Science and Technology- STFC (UKRI) 23/05</u></b></p> <p>Since this was last discussed by Council in November 2022, the remit and membership of the new Science Boards has been further developed and defined and Council was invited to comment on and approve the Terms of Reference (ToR) for both boards.</p> <p>i. Science Board (PPAN) will provide STFC with strategic scientific advice on, and assessment of, the STFC Particle Physics, Astronomy, and Nuclear Physics (PPAN) programme, which includes particle astrophysics, space science and related areas of accelerator science.</p> <p>ii. Science Board (National Laboratories, Multidisciplinary Facilities and Technology), formerly TAAB, will provide advice and guidance to STFC related to STFC-supported national and international multidisciplinary facilities, the STFC national laboratories and related technologies, including accelerators and computing.</p> <p>iii. The updated Terms of Reference (ToR) were shared with the Finance and Governance committee in January 2023 where they were approved with the feedback that further work is needed on the names and the recognition that the ToR may need to be adapted as forward work plans are developed. Council engaged in a healthy discussion of the proposed changes. Key points included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology should be included in the ToR for both boards</li> <li>• Both set of ToR should clearly link to STFC's strategy/delivery plan</li> <li>• Council advised better use of task &amp; finish group to address cross-cutting areas - drawn from standing members and experts.</li> <li>• Council recommended holding an annual joint meeting of the two Science Boards</li> <li>• The new chairs of will be observers at Council and will bring scientific expertise – ideally with experience of using STFC facilities.</li> <li>• Council proposed naming the boards PPAN Science Board and Facilities &amp; Labs Science Board</li> <li>• Council formally agreed the ToR for the new Science Boards</li> </ul> <p>iv. Council agreed to move formal reporting lines for ETCC and APPE into Science Boards (matrixed), with annual reports to Council and maintaining a Council member on each.</p>

6.3		<p><b>STFC Innovation and Industry Board (IBB)- STFC (UKRI) 23/06</b></p> <p>Following a review of the governance boards in 2022, it is proposed to merge the Innovation Board (IB) and the Industry &amp; business Partnerships Board (IBPB) to form the Innovation and Industry Board (IBB) which will sit within STFC's Business and Innovation Directorate (BID). Council was asked to approve the ToR for this new board. The following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. As the outgoing chair of Innovation Board, Ben Olivier (BO) was supportive of the merger in principle, providing the new Board was adequately resourced with a clear programme of work and specific inputs and outputs and opportunities for members to provide constructive challenge as required.</li> <li>ii. The IBB will be chaired by Hitesh Thakrar, with Angeli Moeller as a member. The two have already begun to discuss the benefits of combining the two boards.</li> <li>iii. Council supported the proposal to merge the IB and IBPB and agreed the ToR for the IBB</li> </ul>
<b>7. UK Strategy for CERN – STFC (UKRI) 23/07</b>		
7.1		<p>Council welcomed Sarah Verth (SV), Rich Farrow (RF) and Amy Welch (AW) to the meeting to introduce the UK Strategy for Engagement with CERN, which is being jointly developed by STFC and Department for Science, Innovation &amp; Technology (DSIT, formerly BEIS)..</p>
7.2		<p>The team provided an overview of the UK's relationship with CERN and outlined the the nature of current returns from CERN and how this might be improved over time. DSIT and STFC have ambitions to improve industrial and skills returns from CERN, which have historically been poor. This strategy focuses on maximising the benefits of UK CERN membership and does not comment on science or research goals. Council members were invited to comment on the proposed strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The strategy was well received by Council, who recognised this as a major step forward for the UK's relationships with CERN.</li> <li>ii. The strategy will provide a coherent approach to developing relationships in this area. There were several suggestions on the messaging/audience and measures for success which were noted by the team and will be worked into the next iteration.</li> <li>iii. Council recommended ensuring other UKRI Councils are involved as the strategy develops.</li> <li>iv. Council was unanimous in its support of this strategy and thanked the team, including Jessica Atkinson who was not present, for their hard work. Council looked forward to receiving updates in due course</li> </ul>
<b>8. CERN Industrial Return (presentation)</b>		
8.1		<p>Mark Thomson invited Rich Farrow (RF) to give an insight into the CERN Industrial Return.</p>
8.2		<p>RF gave a presentation which included an overview of CERN contracts with UK companies, and new goals introduced since 2020 designed to increase the overall value and IRC. These goals relate to expanding the vision for capturing the IRC by working with UK universities and enhancing the wider benefits to industry through measures including innovation and IP creation, capital investment, skills</p>

		<p>development, export readiness and international partnerships. RF invited comment and questions from Council members, main points are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Council members asked how the UK's return compares to other member countries. RF explained that although there has been a drop off in more recent years, the UK's return compares favourably to non-European members, although European members still have the largest share.</li> <li>ii. Council was surprised that the number of staff/users/student were significantly lower than the UK's share of subscriptions and advised this was something the UK should seek to influence and address.</li> <li>iii. Council was overall very supportive in the change in approach and pleased to note that this was starting to make a positive impact on industrial return. Council wished RF and the team well with this task and looked forward to receiving updates in due course.</li> </ul>
		<b>9. Executive Chair's Update (presentation)</b>
		<b>Chair: Sheila Rowan</b>
	9.1	Sheila Rowan (SR) invited Mark Thomson (MAT) to give his update to Council. The main points arising from the discussion of MAT's presentation are noted below:
	9.3	<p><b>People Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <b>STFC Senior Management:</b> Council noted that Neil Geddes (Executive Director, National Laboratories, Science and Technology) has announced his retirement in summer 2023, recruitment round is underway.</li> <li>ii. As previously reported, Mark Affonso will step down from his role as STFC Finance Director at the end of March 2023. Council was pleased to note that Chris Wrench has been appointed to this role following a competitive recruitment round.</li> <li>iii. <b>STFC Council:</b> Recruitment for 2 new council members has gone live. STFC is looking to strengthen the PPAN side and is hoping to recruit senior academics in this area. Council members were encouraged to share the advert with any interested colleagues.</li> <li>iv. <b>Pay Case:</b> The STEM pay case is currently with Treasury for approval and has received a positive recommendation from the previous Secretary of State.</li> <li>v. <b>Skill Factory:</b> Council was delighted to hear that STFC is continuing with plans to launch a Skills Programme which will benefit UK research and innovation. The scheme will support 75 apprenticeships a year.</li> <li>vi. <b>Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI):</b> UKRI has now refined its strategy making it shorter and sharper with strong inclusivity and diversity statements. Council expressed an interest in seeing the final strategy.</li> <li>vii. Council members flagged that the current ARIA recruitment round is not very inclusive in its language and style. Paul Monks agreed to informally raise this with the CEO of ARIA</li> <li>viii. <b>New Year Honours:</b> Council offered sincere congratulations to Gillian Wright (Director, UK ATC) on being awarded a CBE for services to Astronomy, and Zoe Bowden (former ISIS Deputy Director and Head of Operations) on being</li> </ul>

		awarded an MBE for services to science.
		ix. Council encouraged STFC to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the Honours process to celebrate the often unsung heroes of UK science.
	9.4	<p><b><u>Live Issues and Highlights</u></b></p> <p>i. <b>Government changes:</b> Council discussed the new Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) which brings in many elements previously within the remit of BEIS but with the addition of Digital and AI formerly covered by DCMS. There was some concern about Energy being covered by a different department but there will continue to be strong links between the two. It was agreed that STFC should invite Paul Scully DSIT minister to RAL or DL</p> <p>ii. <b>Exascale:</b> Council noted that support for Exascale is included in the recommendations from the DCMS Future of Compute Review which is due to be published imminently. In answer to questions from Council members, MAT confirmed that Exascale will enable STFC to address current data storage risks. Council asked to be kept updated on potential implications for STFC as the recommendations go forward to implementation.</p> <p>iii. <b>Astronomy Grants:</b> MAT reported a mixed reception and concerns, particularly from larger groups, on the changes to STFC's Astronomy Grants which come into force from 2024. STFC plans to review the new grants processes once they are properly embedded and will take on the views of the community as part of this.</p> <p>iv. <b>Quantum Technology for Fundamental Physics (QTFP):</b> Council agreed that the QTFP programme represents an exciting emerging area. Council advised that STFC's Executive Board should consider how to continue to support QTFP projects at some level, subject to a mid-term review and mindful that proposals will need to go through peer review. Council also felt that a diversity audit of the current QTFP consortia, at least along a gender axis.</p> <p>v. <b>ESS:</b> Council was alarmed by MAT's latest report on ESS financial management issues and asked for assurance and further discussion at the next meeting.</p>
10.		<b>Any other Business</b>
	10.1	Council was disappointed to learn that Wellcome Trust had stopped providing funding to support Physics Teachers visits to CERN. It was confirmed that this was around £50k per year. STFC will work with UKRI to consider how they can continue to support this very important and impactful activity.
	10.2	On the first day of this two-day visit, Council had the opportunity to attend a roundtable with early careers staff at CERN and had learned that inconsistency over health care cover was a concern for many of the them Council advised STFC to consider how to address this issue.
	10.3	Council suggested holding a Brits @ CERN event to align with the publication of the UK CERN Strategy. This will be considered by relevant colleagues within STFC.
8.		<p><b>Closing Remarks</b></p> <p>MAT thanked members and guests for their contribution. The next meeting will be held by Zoom on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.</p>