



Science and  
Technology  
Facilities Council

# Update from STFC

**G. Blair**

**DRD-UK**

**Liverpool**

**11<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

## Funding of R&D in STFC

STFC has increased funding for R&D via:

- Uplift in real terms of Consolidated Grant (includes blue skies R&D)
- Reinstatement of early-stage R&D responsive mode
- Revision of later-TRL R&D scheme, together with input from IUK
- Successful application to UKRI Infrastructure fund for pre-construction R&D in: EIC, LHCb, GW, ...
- New programmes in quantum technology (QTFP)
- New programmes of R&D at Boulby

In addition, the UK has now rejoined Horizon Europe:

- More opportunities for new schemes and cross-EU collaboration.

Most of these are the result of additional funding

# There is currently no financial headroom in the core programme

The next SR will be important (as always) :

- Any years of flat cash will represent a cut to an existing funding stream
- There may be cross-UKRI initiatives that could redirect central funding
- Existing inflationary pressures are very high and have not yet fully played out.
- The lack of flexibility means STFC needs to be very careful about managing expectations with international partners.

There is therefore a pressing need to prioritise the PPAN programme because only the highest priorities can be afforded.

This process will be informed by a newly-reformed Science Board (PPAN)

# Changes to our advisory structures

In 2023 we changed our advisory structure to establish two parallel Science Board's with specific focus, which aim to deliver more focused strategic advice to STFC.

Pre-2023

## Science Board

Strategic scientific overview and assessment of, and Science advice on, all the programmes STFC supports. This includes both the multidisciplinary Facilities and Particle Physics, Astronomy and Nuclear Physics (PPAN)

## Technology and Accelerator Advisory Board

Strategic advice on STFC's funding and support for underpinning technologies, such as detectors and instrumentation, e-infrastructure, accelerator technology, and the connection to innovation and industry



New

## Science Board (PPAN)

Will provide high level advice on:

- the long-term balance of the PPAN programme
- **prioritised roadmap** for the different strands of the programme
- set within the context of the STFC 10-year financial plan

## Science Board (Facilities and Laboratories)

Will provide high level advice on:

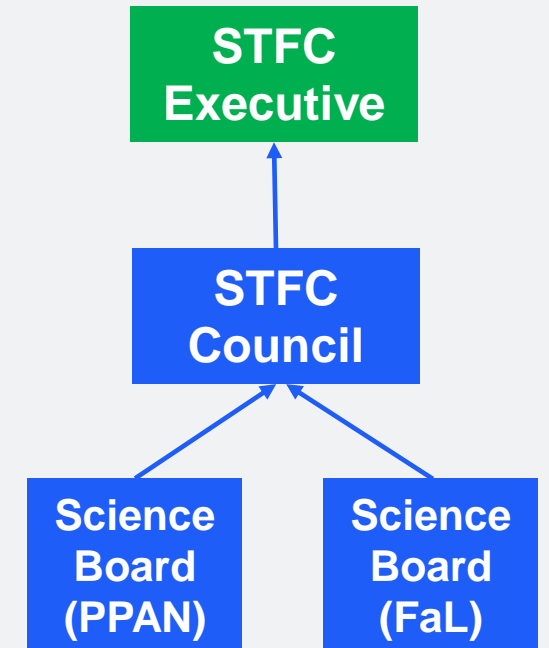
- strategic priorities and the STFC 10-year plan
- the overall scientific investment portfolio
- balance of capability and capacity across international and national large-scale multidisciplinary facilities

- Two equally important Science Boards will provide focused advice to Council
- Advice on some topics (e.g., accelerators) will come from both Science Boards
- See links for terms of reference and membership

# General structure

## Advice and decision-making

- **STFC Executive Chair and STFC Executive Board**
  - decision-making with responsibility for STFC budgets
- **STFC Council**
  - advisory to STFC Executive Chair and STFC Executive Board
  - our **top-level advisory body** where all aspects of STFC come together, PPAN, Facilities and Laboratories, Innovation, ...
- **STFC Science Boards**
  - provide detailed scientific/technology advice to STFC Council
  - make recommendations on **strategy and priorities**
  - an issue might be owned solely by one of the boards; by both boards; or jointly by one of the boards as lead (members with specific experience may be seconded to the other board to address the relevant issue)



# PPAN Roadmap

Science Board (PPAN) develops a long-term prioritised roadmap to set the guiderails on future investments (in terms of reference).

**During 2024 SB (PPAN) is developing a PPAN Roadmap:**

- This defines a balanced programme of excellent science across the PPAN research areas over a 10-year timeframe, within a realistic financial planning envelope:
  - taking account of health and breadth of discipline
  - maintaining appropriate support to ensure return on past investments
  - exploiting UK leadership and capability in strategically important areas
  - engaging in future projects
- Science Board (PPAN) reviews the rolling 10-year plan for STFC PPAN core programme
  - balance of exploitation, M&O, development projects, R&D etc.
  - balance of projects small/medium/large
  - studentships, fellowships, and skills pipeline
  - cross cutting themes e.g., quantum, R&D etc.
- The PPAN Roadmap will be maintained on a rolling basis – prioritisation and balance of programme is no longer a separate activity every ~five years.

# Steps towards a PPAN Roadmap

## 12-13 June SB (PPAN) meeting

- Statements of Interest for new opportunities are invited to the June meeting and biannually (deadline 1 May).
  - SB (PPAN) will review the Sols submitted but priority will be given to those that align with the Infrastructure Fund and those that are time sensitive.
  - Sol not assessed in June will be deferred to a future meeting.
- Existing programme manager portfolio information and 10YP will be presented to SB (PPAN) – an early version of what the PPAN Roadmap will become. This will provide an overview of the current programme and highlight future pressures.

## Spring/summer

- Programme managers will discuss the input required for the PPAN Roadmap with the Advisory Panels.
- Opportunity for community consultation on current and future priorities

## 17-19 September SB (PPAN) meeting

- Advisory Panels to submit answers to ‘key questions’, chairs may be asked attend the meeting.

## September-February

- SB (PPAN) refine the PPAN Roadmap following input from the Advisory Panels.

# Sol submission process and assessment

## Process

- Biannual call for Sols to be submitted to Science Board (PPAN):
  - Submission cut off dates for 2024 are [1<sup>st</sup> May](#) and [1<sup>st</sup> November](#)
- Project teams encouraged to engage with programme managers throughout the year and to seek advice prior to submission .
- Demand managed through publication of the PPAN Roadmap
- Ensure a process for exceptions in place for complex opportunities or if review at speed is necessary

## Assessment criteria

- **Scientific excellence and timeliness**
- **Strategic drivers and prioritisation**
- **Benefits**
- **Step change**
- Other considerations include deliverability, risk and environmental sustainability



# UKRI IF- Wave 5 Preliminary Activities

## Entry route for potential STFC IF submissions has been integrated with the Sol process

- Deadline for Sol submissions that may be routed towards STFC's preliminary activity (PA) prioritisation process for the IF is **1<sup>st</sup> May**
- Submissions should use the standard Sol template provided on the [Sol webpage](#)
- **De-risking PAs**
  - De-risk a future infrastructure fund investment such as the delivery mechanism or technical design, better understand the costs, or to run a pilot which will refine the approach before a full proposal can be developed
  - Up to £8m total over 4 years, but most PAs are expected to be £5m or less
- **Environmental sustainability PAs**
  - Understand, plan, and mitigate environmental sustainability aspects of a future infrastructure fund investment
  - Up to £2m over 4 years

**Potential PA submissions will only be routed towards prioritisation for the fund if they are a high strategic priority, with strong evidence for the timeliness of submissions being vital**

## STFC is refreshing its prioritisation processes.

- There are routes for R&D, but competition is strong.
- If DRD aspires to a dedicated funding line, then PP funding elsewhere will need to be reduced.
- A well-formulated and internally-prioritised Sol will help concentrate thinking.
- Science Board is well represented with PP community and is well-placed to advise STFC; they are the first step.

# Thank You

All of these are the result of additional funding