

The Programmatic Review and its implementation – some comments from the Action Group on the STFC ‘Implementation of the Programmatic Review’ document¹ and the open science community meeting held at the Royal Society on 8 July 2008

1. We welcome the significant improvements to the programme that have occurred in recent months in comparison with the Delivery Plan announced in December 2007. This demonstrates very clearly what can be achieved in difficult circumstances by a more open approach that is the normal practice in the particle physics community. Likewise, we welcome the acknowledgement by senior officers in STFC that the publicity created by the community had an effect on DIUS that led to important financial flexibility. Nevertheless good science has been lost and some highly quality research groups will be hit disproportionately.
2. The implementation plan will lead to the withdrawal and reissue of grants that will hit almost every university particle physics group. We anticipate that universities will rightly be very concerned about the precedent that this sets. It is deplorable that STFC and/or DIUS created further confusion in the Government’s response to the Select Committee report² since the statement in paragraph 76 that the level of rolling grants for particle physics will be unaffected until at least 2010-11 is clearly incorrect. We welcome the apology made by STFC at the meeting. To help restore trust and confidence between STFC and its university stakeholders, we ask STFC to write to Vice-chancellors of all universities concerned, explaining in detail why this lamentable situation has arisen and pledging to make every effort to avoid a recurrence.
3. A clear statement from STFC to the particle physics community on the level of grant reduction through the current process and in the 2009 grants round, both in cash and number of posts supported, and a comparison with 2006, would help reduce the uncertainty and anxiety that surrounds the current process and would enable groups to plan accordingly. This would be an important step on the road of greater openness and transparency that STFC says that it now embraces.
4. There were repeated requests from the floor at the 8 July meeting for greater involvement of the community in the next CSR and we welcome the positive response from STFC. The particle physics community certainly needs to help make the case, including the knowledge exchange argument. The forthcoming IOP HEPP Group report on the future of particle physics, with particular emphasis on KE, should help kick-start the discussion.
5. There is no doubt that the events of the past six months have caused enormous damage to the relationship between STFC and the research community it serves, a relationship that relies on trust and transparency. We therefore welcome the recent acknowledgement by STFC that it is willing to work more closely with the community in future in determining strategy and priorities, and we urge the community to take full advantage of this opportunity.

¹ <http://www.stfc.ac.uk/resources/pdf/FinalProgRevOutcome.pdf>

² <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmdius/639/639.pdf>