

Editorial: UK physics cuts bite deep

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A MONTH after British physicists heard that £80 million had been wiped off their budgets, the full extent of the damage is starting to show. Hundreds of jobs will go and at least two university physics departments look likely to close. Furthermore, the UK will lose the ability to make the best of those international collaborations in which it is still taking part.

When the Science and Technology Facilities Council announced the cuts in December, it said it would withdraw from the international group that funds the two large Gemini telescopes. UK astronomers asked for a reprieve on the northernmost telescope, the loss of which will leave them blind to the northern sky, but last week the STFC told them no ([see "Physicists call for heads to roll as UK cash cuts bit"](#)). The council is urging optimism over its continued commitment to other big projects, including the Large Hadron Collider and the planned Extremely Large Telescope. Yet it seems the cuts will curtail involvement in these too. Universities will lose about a quarter of their positions for postdoctoral physicists, so the UK will have far fewer researchers capable of using these big machines.

Such a damaging state of affairs might have been avoided if the STFC had discussed the cuts with physicists when it first realised the financial mess it was in. As it is, the council's decisions are looking increasingly ill-considered. It is not too late for it to carry out proper consultation - nor for it to reconsider this savage attack on imaginative science.

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