

## Massive extension for Daresbury planned but 'Alice' still under threat

Ian Pearson, the minister for science, yesterday announced £25m in funding for a massive expansion of the Daresbury science campus.

The announcement has enraged scientists who say the new investment will be spent on turning the site into a business park rather than on scientific research. Several key projects at the main Daresbury Laboratory are currently under serious threat of being axed following the funding crisis at the Science and Technology Facilities Council.

"They just want a call centre. That doesn't do anything for science," said Swapan Chattopadhyay, director of the Cockcroft Institute for Accelerator Science, based at Daresbury.

One project at risk is the particle accelerator Alice, which is the first of its kind in Europe. Alice has already received £25m of public funding but may be scrapped as early as July, after six years of design and construction, before it has provided any experimental results.

UK scientists who had planned to use Alice say they may now have to do experiments in the US or Russia.

"We have all written to say the STFC should reprioritise Alice," said Chattopadhyay. "If that's not there, there is no reason for scientists of international stature to be stay at this laboratory, they will go elsewhere."

Alice's fate, along with 29 other lower priority science facilities, will be announced by STFC on 1 July.