

Ian Pearson MP

Minister of State for Science
and Innovation

Department for
**Innovation,
Universities &
Skills**

James Jackson

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Your Ref:

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Dear James,

Thank you for your email of 17 December 2007 to John Denham, about the Science Budget allocation to the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) and the possible implications for the funding of STFC's future programmes. I am replying as this matter falls within my portfolio.

Firstly, as you will know, the Government has strongly supported science over the last 10 years, doubling the budget in real terms over that period. The Science Budget of DIUS is set to increase further from £3.4 billion per annum in 2007/08 to almost £4 billion per annum by 2010/11. This takes Government support for the UK's research base to its highest ever level and will enable the UK to maintain its leading position in research excellence, give rise to greater exploitation, as well as helping to build a stronger economy. Overall, the funding for science over the three years will increase in real terms by 2.7% per annum in line with the Government's commitment given in the 10 Year Science and Innovation Framework 2004-2014 to increase funding in line with GDP growth. This compares with an increase in total public spending of 2.1% per year in real terms over the CSR period.

Plan may entail a reduction in research grants for universities, but the research community will continue to have access to a range of world-class facilities, including CERN and the European Southern Observatory, as well as ESRF and ILL, and programmes of the European Space Agency. Membership of these international organisations is increasingly expensive, but STFC believes continuing access to the facilities they provide is a priority and is crucial to the delivery of its science strategy. Major new facilities such as Diamond and ISIS T2 will also provide opportunities for exciting scientific research.

STFC will further develop both the Harwell and Daresbury Science and Innovation Campuses. The Government remains committed to developing the Daresbury Science and Innovation Campus as a partnership between the STFC, the NWDA, the private sector and universities. We have asked Sir Tom McKillop to look at how best to realise the vision for Daresbury as part of his independent review into the future of the Manchester City Region and wider North West economy.

I should also like to stress that the Government continues to recognise the importance of physics graduates not only for scientific research, but also in the wider economy, and continues to encourage young people into physics. The Science & Innovation Investment Framework 2004-2014 set out a long-term strategy to secure and sustain a supply of people with science, technology, engineering and mathematical (STEM) skills to support the science base particularly as the pressures of globalisation increase.

As part of this strategy, the Government has invested nearly £13m over three years in STEMNET to promote awareness of STEM subjects, especially among young people, to help ensure that the UK maintains a flow of well-motivated, high-quality individuals into STEM jobs. In addition, over 17,500 Science and Engineering Ambassadors are supporting school activities, offering mentoring, career guidance and positive role models. My Department is working closely with the Department for Children, Schools and Families on the STEM skills agenda.

The Government remains committed to increasing the average duration of the PhD stipend to three-and-a-half years, and increasing the value of the stipend in line with inflation. The value of Doctoral (PhD) stipends paid by the Research Councils have risen by almost 45% (from £9000 to over £13,000) since 2002 and have more than doubled since 1999 (£6500 to over £13,000).

I should like to add that the Government's Science and Innovation Framework (2004-2014) also stated that the continued health of key research disciplines should be kept under review, and so we have asked RCUK to conduct a number of further disciplinary reviews. Bill Wakeham,

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I should like to add that the Government's Science and Innovation Framework (2004-2014) also stated that the continued health of key research disciplines should be kept under review, and so we have asked RCUK to conduct a number of further disciplinary reviews. Bill Wakeham, Vice Chancellor of Southampton University, will lead the first of these reviews, which will address the health of physics research in the UK.

In summary, STFC has received a budget settlement that involves an increase in its funding over the CSR period, but which, as a result of the strategic priorities that STFC has given to various areas of work, will result in certain restructuring and operational changes. STFC will work to minimise the impact of these changes on stakeholders with due regard to STEM skills during this period of transition.

Yours sincerely,

IAN PEARSON