

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister's Office
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

28 March 2021

Dear Prime Minister

Re: Risk to UK Science Funding

We are writing on behalf of The Physiological Society to express our grave concern at the imminent risk to UK science funding.

The commitments made to the UK's status as a 'Science Superpower' and the central role that science plays in the *Plan for Growth* and *Integrated Review of Defence and Foreign Policy* are clear statements of the importance you place on research. Your Government's support for science thus far has been very welcome.

However, the Government's commitments are at serious risk of being undermined by proposed cuts to science funding.

The UK's association to Horizon Europe was warmly welcomed by UK researchers. Nevertheless, if the association costs are met from existing R&D budgets this will amount to a cut of over £1 billion a year – and potentially much more in future years. This is the cost of funding the entire Medical Research Council and Science & Technology Facilities Council combined. It is equivalent to cutting more than 18,000 full time academic research posts.

Public investment encourages private investment, which is an essential component of the Government's plan to reach the 2.4% of GDP target spend on science by 2027. A cut in public science spending of this magnitude will be made worse by an estimated further reduction of up to £1.6 billion in private R&D that it would have stimulated.

These concerns about cuts due to Horizon Europe costs come on top of the recent announcement to cut ODA funding by £120 million, which will curtail successful programmes that have bolstered the UK's place in the world and helped tackle the challenges faced by developing countries.


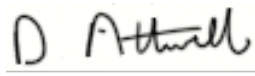
We are acutely aware that the UK faces a challenging economic period ahead. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the immense value of a strong R&D base in responding to a public health emergency. These cuts in science budgets would cause significant damage to UK science – hampering our national resilience to future challenges and stifling our ability to innovate our way out of the economic downturn. Importantly, science R&D cannot be turned on and off like a tap.

The Science of Life

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We urge you to ensure that the Government remains true to its word to “turbocharge” our ambition to be a science superpower, and ensure that science funding is maintained, so we are well-positioned to deal with the next world health crisis and the ongoing climate change threat.

Yours sincerely,

David Paterson FRSNZ

President

University of Oxford

David Attwell FRS

President-elect

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Daniel Burdass

Chief Executive