



Professor Michele Dougherty  
Space and Atmospheric Physics  
Imperial College  
London SW7 2AZ,

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Dear Professor Dougherty,

**Statement from STFC Advisory Panels on outcome of  
Programmatic Review**

Thank you for your recent letter expressing your concern at the outcome of the recent STFC Programme Prioritisation as regards the Near Universe Advisory Panel's priorities. I completely understand that the process has led to significant concern and uncertainty within all the science communities that we support. You are correct to state that the programme contains some necessary but unpalatable choices, such as the reduction in funding for studentships and fellowships, and I can assure you that Council agreed these actions only after significant debate and discussion which included the chair and deputy chair of science board. I am confident that the plan we present is about as good a programme as is possible within the tight budgets that we are working with. Having such a plan in place will enable us all to make the case, strongly and together, for additional resources for science.

Concerning the specific questions that you raise, I can assure you that the Aurora programme was the subject of significant discussion in Council's November meeting and we are proceeding with this programme - as with all other parts of our portfolio - only after assuring ourselves that it is scientifically justified, and after Science Board recommended that we do so. Following advice from the education, training and careers committee, the reduction in studentships and fellowships funding is being implemented in such a way as to minimize the reduction in numbers of PhD students and advanced fellows, the

highest priorities in this area. The space-based plasma and magnetosphere measurements that you mention are subject to a managed withdrawal - this means that they will not be suddenly terminated, but we will seek to reduce spending on these missions with the end of support after perhaps two years.

As for northern hemisphere telescope access, Council has encouraged the STFC Science Programmes Office to look for imaginative solutions that would provide access at a lower cost than simply buying time on an 8m class telescope.

I would like to emphasise that in these and in all aspects of the programme, Council discussed and debated the issues at its December meeting, but closely followed the advice of our peer review processes as expressed by PPAN and the Science Board.

Council in no way intervened to change priorities or to add its own.

Finally, I would like to thank you once again for the important inputs to the process that the advisory panels have provided. I know this has not been easy for you or your colleagues but I want to assure you that your continued involvement is greatly valued.

*Yours sincerely*  
*Michael Stob*

**Contact address :**

Council Secretariat  
Science and Technology Facilities Council  
Rutherford Appleton Laboratory,  
Didcot, Oxon. OX11 0QX United Kingdom.