

PHYSICAL SCIENCES & ENGINEERING ADVISORY PANEL

The Physical Sciences and Engineering Advisory Panel (PS&EAP) held their fourth meeting on the 19 Jan 16. The following items were discussed:

- Terms of reference for the PS&EAP and where the advisory panel sits within the STFC advisory structure.
- The outputs from the PS&EAP during 2015; it was noted that all outputs are provided on the PS&EAP web page for the community to view, unless the information provided was classified as OFFICIAL – SENSITIVE by STFC.
- An update from STFC on the current position with the comprehensive spending review, the BIS 2020 change programme, the Large Facilities Implementation Group and Large Facilities Advisory Board, and updates on the UK and International facilities.
- Concerns were raised regarding CDTs and the level of engagement students had at the facilities; it was seen to be important that students had the opportunity for facility usage and training. There was also concern about the current disconnect between the funding of postdocs and the allocation of beamtime; this resulted in “double jeopardy” and a known loss of postdocs where beamtime had not been awarded even though the research was funded.
- Proposed changes to the structure of the research councils, as recommended in the Nurse Review; it was seen as important that STFC should remain in full control of the large facilities and that each Research Council should maintain their independence.
- Laser provision: it was agreed that ELI should not be funded at the expense of the CLF, and the Panel advised STFC to be cautious of scenarios where ELI could potentially put the CLF at risk.
- PS&EAP community web-based consultation: the input received in autumn 2015 was discussed but there was concern that the consultation had not been publicised adequately as requested. The output from the consultation was presented to Science Board in Feb 16.
- FELs: the Panel was waiting to see the report from the FEL Review Panel that was still being prepared.
- Horizon 2020: concern was expressed that the proposal for the EUPRAXIA plasma accelerator could impact the UK facilities; lack of upgrades to the facilities had been one of the biggest issues during the last five years.
- Neutron provision: concern was expressed for the future of the ILL due to the building and funding of ESS.
- Engineering: the Panel felt that it could provide increased representation of the benefits of engineering and agreed to raise this with Science Board.

The next meeting will be held in Jan 17; exact date to be arranged in autumn 16.