

Professor Sir Ian Chapman  
Chief Executive  
UK Research and Innovation

4 February 2026

Dear Ian,

As leaders of the Royal Society of Biology and its Strategic Partner organisations, we welcome your candour in your open letter of 1 February about the difficult decisions being made for research funding, and your recognition of the negative outcomes these decisions will have for some in the sector. In this context, we are writing on behalf of the biosciences research community to express grave concern about the pause in funding of curiosity-driven research, particularly in relation to the announcements by MRC and BBSRC. The Royal Society of Biology's membership and network of organisational members represents many tens of thousands of bioscientists in the UK. We are urgently seeking clarity on their behalf as to how the implementation of this pause will impact our community and the world-class research it delivers.

As an immediate first step, we urge you to provide assurances that current grant-holders will not be affected by the pause – in contrast to the interruption of existing programmes announced by STFC. You have rightly noted that stability and certainty are essential requirements for productive research.

We also ask that you communicate further details of the plans to the research community as swiftly as possible, to minimise disruption and continued uncertainty. Furthermore, we encourage you to publish a breakdown of any discovery research that has been assigned to the other "buckets". This is in the context of BBSRC funding for applicant-led discovery research increasing in cash terms by only £5m from 26/27 (£112m) to 29/30 (£117m). This will be a real-terms cut across the Spending Review period, at a time when the average cost of such grants is increasing, resulting in fewer grants being funded.



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In the context of a fragile higher education system, there is deep concern about the impact of a pause in discovery research funding on the sustainability of the whole UK science ecosystem, and above all its impact on the early- and mid-career researchers who are our future. We understand that there will be challenges ahead for UKRI and are keen to work with you towards addressing them. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the situation further, and to offer our assistance with communicating the changes and their implications to our community.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Doug Brown FRSB  
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Royal Society of Biology

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President  
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Professor Jack Gilbert  
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cc. Anne Ferguson-Smith, Patrick Chinnery