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## STFC science board bears brunt of lost confidence

 by [Laura Hood](mailto:Laura.Hood@ResearchResearch.com)

**Physicists have given a lukewarm reception to the Science and Technology Facilities Council Science Board's plan to consult them on its programmatic review. They warn that the process is being rushed and they don't trust its transparency.**

At a town meeting in London on 3 March, the Particle Physics, Astronomy and Nuclear Physics Science Committee (PPAN) and the Physical and Life Sciences Committee (PALS), the two groups that advise the board on the scientific merit of STFC-funded projects, presented lists of their high, medium and low priorities.

Before presenting his group's findings, Walter Gear, the PPAN chairman, told the gathering that his team had been "outraged" and "disgusted" that they had been forced to wield an axe over such a significant portion of the STFC programme. He confirmed that ground-based solar-terrestrial physics was in danger of being dropped but that the Gemini telescopes would continue to be funded until 2012 despite being a low priority. However, the UK is planning to sell 50 per cent of its telescope time after 2009 to fund this venture. Low priority projects at PALS include the Fourth Generation Light Source project at Daresbury.

Several attendees said they were unimpressed to hear that the consultation on these lists would only be open for three weeks—and that the nine independent panels that will review their submissions are yet to be appointed, despite the pressing schedule. Seeking to allay their misgivings, Peter Knight, the board's chairman, told them that they would be able to make recommendations for the panels and that he hoped they would have access to all the information submitted under the consultation.

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