

Physicists call for heads to roll over cash cuts

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THE first call for heads to roll over a funding crisis in British physics came last week, on the same day British astronomy was officially denied access to half the sky.

On 25 January, the UK's Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) withdrew from the Gemini observatory in an effort to plug an £80 million budget gap. Astronomers from the UK are now almost blind to the sky above the northern hemisphere. "Gemini is one of the most visible signs of the problem that UK physics is facing," says Jim Wild at the University of Lancaster.

Ground-based solar science is another victim of the cuts. While scientists can still observe space weather caused by the sun, they have been left with no way to study its effect on Earth.

As funding for Gemini was being cut, Wild and a group of space physicists issued a vote of no confidence in the STFC leadership. "Their decision is illogical," Wild says. "Even if the needed money comes in, we worry that we will still be in a mess with these people handling it."

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