

25 March 2021

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
10 Downing St
Westminster
London
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

The UK is globally recognised as a home of powerful science and research and our bioscience strength is a means and a guide towards a healthier people, a better economy and a sustainable environment. You have highlighted and helped this on many occasions.

In the current particularly difficult times recognising and supporting these strengths is vital, as is investing in their future. The fast pace of many bioscience fields means that losing momentum through even temporary underinvestment risks building significant long-term losses. In fields already rocked by the pandemic interruptions, programme cuts could cause lasting damage.

I am very concerned that the funding cuts to the Global Challenge Research Fund detailed in letters to researchers on 11th March will have a significant impact on the UK's research community, output and reputation as a collaborator. Much of the work enabled by this competitive fund addresses areas where the biosciences make a real and much-needed difference, not least among them biosecurity, global health, anti-microbial resistance, and sustainable development. Internationally collaborative research not only builds value and knowledge but adds hugely to the positive visibility and standing of the UK abroad, supporting diplomacy and co-operation.

I share the dismay of very many at the potentially truncated projects, ended jobs and dissolved knowledge networks as a result of cuts to the ODA budget. It is antithetic to the Government's stated ambition to build the global standing of UK research and innovation. In addition, it comes at a worrying time, as we await promised updates on the 2020-2021 R&D allocations; there is widespread concern that if the cost of associating with Horizon programmes is to be borne from within the £14.6bn tranche, it will be an effective cut of £1bn overall, and entail greater impacts on the UKRI budget - this would be catastrophic.

We want to see realistic and supported ambitions that fulfil the potential of the UK bioscience community, and the international networks they have carefully forged over many years. Any reduction in the funds available to the research community now could leave a lasting scar on the progress and capacity of UK science. We would be grateful for your attention to this

matter and to know that we can retain the hope of realising your Government's aspirations for science achievement.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Mark Downs CSci FRSB
Chief Executive

cc:

Amanda Solloway MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Minister for Science, Research and Innovation

Sir Patrick Vallance FRS FMedSci FRCP
Government Chief Scientific Adviser and Head of Government Science and Engineering
Profession

Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser DBE FRS FRSB
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Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park
Minister of State
Minister for Pacific and the Environment
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