

STFC GRANTS REVIEW

Mark Lancaster

Birmingham PPAP Meeting : 5th July 2010

James Stirling - chair

Mark Lancaster

Mike Bode (Astro / Science Board) [Liverpool John Moores]

Brian Fulton (Nuclear / PPAN) [York]

Mike Merrifield (Astro) [Nottingham]

Ex-Officio from STFC

Janet Seed (Associate Director STFC Science Programmes)

Colin Vincent (Head of Astro Division)

Rosemary Young (UK Space Agency)

Deb Miller (Project Manager)

Tony Medland (Head of PP and NP Division)

Andrew Lemasurier (Head of Grant Policy)

To report recommendations to STFC (John W) by end of Sep

Other research councils don't have them and perceive RGs as an expensive luxury.

Making 5 year cash commitments has proved difficult in the past 3-4 years and this is likely to get worse. Reneging on commitments has undermined STFC's relationship with universities (and itself !).

The administrative overhead of the present system has become onerous for both STFC and PIs. And we now have the SSC....

To define a system that delivers science and is flexible.

To define a system that is more robust and responsive to funding fluctuations (of the downward variety).

To fix some of the structural problems in the system e.g. PPRP vs PPGP reviews.

To reduce some of the overhead in the system.

To define a system that is acceptable to the Auditors/Treasury/RCUK.

It will not review the fraction of STFC's cash in grants.

It will not likely try and impose a one-size-fits-all and will respect differences in the STFC areas.

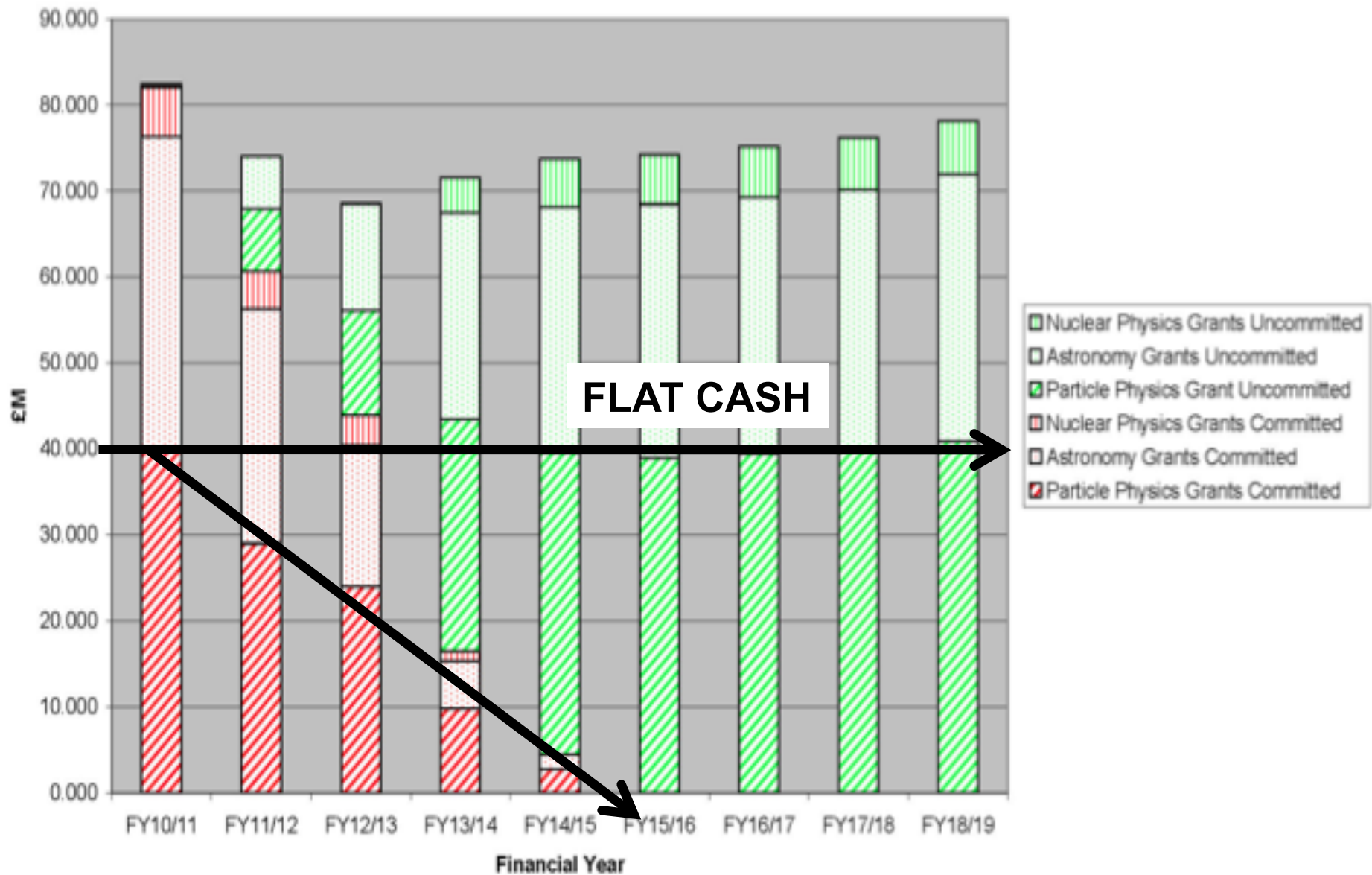
This is an open process – there is not a pre-defined idea to discontinue rolling grants or a Machiavellian STFC agenda

Grants (£135M) are ~ 20% of STFC's budget (£650M).

Rest is in: large-scale projects (JAI/CI, IPPP, HPC, etc), PPRP projects, subscriptions, “non-cash”, capital, KE.

PP grants (inc PPD and experimental M&O/travel) are £35-40M.
Exp/Univ: £20M, Exp M&O/Travel: £5M, Theory: £7M, PPD: £5M.

Committed and Uncommitted Grant Cash



Strong support for a “rolling-grant” system i.e. one with long-term (stable) funding for Academics, RAs and technicians. It provides coherence and allows commitments to be made to long-term projects.

Issues with current system

- **fEC : particularly funding of Academics**
 - disparity between universities & PPD (losing out due to “system”)
[PPGP has raised this twice & this panel also highlighted – needs solution]
 - theory : 200 Ac and 30 RAs. Logical extension to this is that in any cut scenario there will be 200 Ac funded & zero RAs.
- **Tension between PPRP funding and PPGP** particularly for projects being reviewed concurrently (SuperNEMO [2009], T2K [2006])

Lack of flexibility

- Project ring-fences within RG & new project R&D within RG generally only “allowed” in years 4/5 – possibly stifling new projects.

- Two Meetings : 25th May, 25th June
- Detailed input from all the grants panels & STFC managers
- Initial discussion of possible options

Clear in these discussions that model of funding PP-experiment is different from astro and more complicated. Astro only funds RAs on RG and technicians on project grants. RG/RAs awarded every year to 1/3 of the groups

These shouldn't be taken as definitive, merely as straw-man options to facilitate further input/discussion and to give a sense of the directions/options we are considering.

There are non-trivial issues with all of these ...

1. Continue RG pretty much as-is and cope with cuts as we have recently in a rather ad-hoc manner.
2. 3-year standard grants. Possibly with staggered bids (a la astro) to better buffer funding fluctuations.

3. Core/Platform grants for 6-years that fund the essential core posts to fulfill M&O and new-project commitments. Core will necessarily be smaller than the core now to guarantee it against cuts. Additional (standard?) grant funding (Ac, RA, tech) to supplement this.

4. ?

- Model and circulate possible options to grant panels/PPAP/community
- Request feedback and any other suggestions

Novel ideas are very welcome.

With looming swingeing cuts the status-quo will *not* remain so we should try and get ahead of the game & suggest something that **WE** think will work as opposed to having something random imposed on us...