

Update from UKRI International Champion Professor Christopher Smith – Thursday 20 May 2021

Earlier this year, in the context of the reduction of UK Government Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.5% of GNI for 2021, BEIS gave UKRI a reduced capped allocation for spend across our ODA portfolio.

Since then, over a compressed timescale and alongside other difficulties during this pandemic, universities, institutes and businesses in the UK and globally have worked with us to manage down spending commitments so that we could report to BEIS a level of expenditure within our ODA cap. We have worked hard with BEIS to make the most of the funds available, and we are grateful for additional funds for areas of the portfolio such as climate change.

We have now written to HEIs with financial information covering changes to their GCRF grants including confirming those deemed to have a special consideration. Further communications will follow for the Newton Fund.

We are immensely grateful to PIs, CoIs and grant holding institutions and businesses for their hard work at responding to this very difficult challenge. We know that many grants which were close to starting had to be stopped before funds were fully committed. Of those that were ongoing, we are aware difficult decisions had to be made.

However, thanks to the enormous effort from our partners, the vast majority of grants awarded by UKRI are continuing, albeit at a reduced rate. In addition:

- We are conducting and will publish an Equality Impact Assessment for the processes we have followed.
- We will commission a review of the GCRF Hubs, in place of the intended stage gate review, to assess performance and develop the case for funding in 2022/23.
- We will work with FCDO and BEIS, and will engage with stakeholders, to construct a case for the 2021 Spending Review.

We acknowledge and understand that the financial circumstances in which we have all found ourselves have led to an immensely challenging process, and one which has adversely affected research, researchers and the beneficiaries of research across the UK and the world. We remain committed to the belief that excellent research and innovation conducted through global partnerships has an essential role in tackling the world's most difficult challenges.