

Julia Lopez MP

Shadow Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology

House of Commons

SW1A 0AA

Tuesday 21st April 2026

Dear Ms Lopez

In a speech on 11 April, Kemi Badenoch, reiterated a Conservative Party proposal to reduce UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funding by £2 billion per year, or £6 billion over three years, through cuts to what have been described as “wasteful” or “nonsense” research grants.¹ These reductions are proposed to fund defence capability.

With UKRI’s total budget for 2026/27 set at £9.2 billion, this would represent a cut of more than 20 per cent. Such a reduction would have profound and largely irreversible consequences for the UK research and innovation system. As I am sure you can appreciate, these proposals are a cause for great concern amongst the R&D community that CaSE represents.

First, UKRI funding underpins the full spectrum of UK R&D, including discovery research that feeds directly into applied science, engineering, defence capability, and industrial competitiveness. The peer-review system is explicitly designed to ensure quality, relevance, and excellence in research. History consistently shows that strategic capabilities from cyber-security and AI to advanced materials and biotechnology emerge from the broad, curiosity-driven research base rather than from narrowly prescribed topics.

Second, a cut of this scale would weaken UK national security. UKRI funding supports skills pipelines, facilities, and international partnerships that the defence, intelligence, and security communities depend upon. Reductions would increase reliance on overseas research capacity, reduce resilience in sensitive technologies, and worsen the already acute challenges of recruiting and retaining world-class scientists and engineers in the UK.

Third, the economic consequences would be significant. Public R&D investment crowds in substantial private investment and underwrites regional growth clusters across the UK. Abrupt funding reductions would disrupt long-term programmes and damage the UK’s credibility as a stable partner for industry and international collaborators. Once lost, this capacity is extremely costly or even impossible to rebuild.

¹ [Tories vow to create £50bn defence fund through green cuts, Kemi: "Power does not come from wishful thinking"](#)

Finally, there is a strategic risk. International competitors are increasing, not reducing, public R&D investment in response to geopolitical and technological competition. A large retrenchment by the UK would signal a retreat from our position as a leading research nation.

I would welcome clarity on three points:

- 1. What assessment has been made of the systemic impacts of a £6 billion reduction on UK research capacity, skills, and infrastructure?**
- 2. How would national security-relevant research, facilities, and talent pipelines be protected from collateral damage?**
- 3. What concrete mitigation measures are planned to prevent long-term harm to productivity, industrial strategy, and international standing?**

I hope these consequences have been fully considered, and that any future proposals will reflect the strategic importance of a stable and adequately funded UK research base.

We intend to publish this letter, and any reply we receive, on our website.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alicia Greated', written in a cursive style.

Dr Alicia Greated FIET FRSE
Executive Director
Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE)