

PRESS RELEASE

The UK is at risk of losing its world-class network of Science Centres

Over 150 leading scientific lights call for £25m government support for vital educational venues

- 153 leading voices from the UK's STEM community have signed an open letter to government, including **Professor Brian Cox, astronauts Major Tim Peake and Helen Sharman, Professor Sir Robert Winston, Sir Venki Ramakrishnan, Professor Alice Roberts, Professor Jim Al-Khalili and eight Nobel prize winners.**
- The letter, from the Association for Science and Discovery Centres (ASDC), has been sent to the Prime Minister, Chancellor and Minister of State for BEIS and calls for £25 million in emergency resilience funding to secure the future of UK Science Centres.
- Science and Discovery Centres provide inclusive access to science learning for millions of children and families across the UK's regions, including many in the UK's most disadvantaged communities.
- From the letter: *"It was deeply disappointing to learn that Science and Discovery Centres had been largely excluded from the remarkable government support being made available to other cultural organisations in similar dire straits. Science and Discovery Centres work to place science at the heart of our culture in the UK, and yet many cannot access the arts, heritage and culture rescue package of £1.57 billion."*

For immediate release, 8th October 2020. The UK's network of charitable Science and Discovery Centres deliver inclusive science and technology experiences to children across the country, reaching families and schools in some of our most socio-economically disadvantaged communities.

They play a crucial role in inspiring young people with STEM, creating the environmental and science innovators we need for our future, and ensuring the UK stays at the forefront of global R&D and innovation.

This world-class network is at risk - revenue streams and visitor numbers have been dramatically reduced by the pandemic. Despite their entrepreneurial ethos, and track record of success, centres are being forced to close vital science outreach programmes and face the prospect of shutting their doors altogether. The UK Science and Discovery Centres, represented by ASDC, has appealed to the government since April 2020 for a £25 million resilience fund to help secure the future of the UK's Science and Discovery Centres.

With no funding in sight and the pandemic far from over, 153 leaders from across the UK's scientific community have come together to highlight the importance of our national infrastructure which inspires future scientists by signing an open letter to Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Chancellor Rishi Sunak and Secretary of State Alok Sharma.

The letter has been signed by some of the world's most famous scientists and science advocates including **Professor Brian Cox, Professor Sir Robert Winston, Professor Alice Roberts, eight Nobel prize winners and two British astronauts - Helen Sharman and Tim Peake.**

The letter, written by Dr Penny Fidler (CEO) and Ben Ward (Chair) of ASDC, asks the government to recognise the precarious situation Science Centres are in, one severely exacerbated by the lack of central funding, and asks the Prime Minister and Chancellor to grant funds to ensure their long-term viability.

Supporting signatures include some of the country's most celebrated science advocates, including:

Further leading scientists, including **Professor Dame Athene Donald** DBE FRS; **Professor Jim Al-Khalili**, OBE FRS; **Lord Martin Rees** OM FRS, Astronomer Royal, and **Nobel Prize Winners; Sir Venki Ramakrishnan**, President of the Royal Society, **Sir Gregory Winter** CBE, FRS; **Sir Paul Nurse** FRS, and **Professor Sir Martin Evans** FRS.

13 Vice-Chancellors including **Professor Chris Day** of Newcastle University, **Professor Ian Greer** of Queen's University Belfast and **Professor Karen Holford** CBE of Cardiff University and **Dame Janet Beer** DBE, Vice-Chancellor, University of Liverpool.

Leaders from the world of the STEM industry, including **Malcolm Skingle** of GSK, **Dr Geoff Mackey** of BASF plc, **Sharon Davies**, Chief Executive of Young Enterprise, **Mottie Kessler** MBE, CEO of 2M Holdings, **Steve Elliott**, CEO of the Chemical Industries Association, and **Cormac Whelan**, CEO, NOKIA UK & Ireland.

And political supporters such as **Darren Jones**, MP Bristol Northwest; **Stephen Metcalf**, MP for South Basildon & East Thurrock, **Rt Hon Esther McVey**, MP for Tatton and **Steve Rotherham**, Mayor of Liverpool City Regions.

As well as 53 Trustees and CEOs of the UK's Science and Discovery Centres and museums.

The open letter is the latest activity in The ASDC's Science Centres For Our Future campaign which launched in May 2020. Ben Ward, Chair of Trustees and CEO of Winchester Science Centre, writes in the letter:

"We know that our network makes a big impact. We know that we are at the forefront of supporting STEM learning. We know that we bring value, opportunity and enrichment to every region of the UK and that together we introduce millions of children to science each year.

"What we do not know is why you, our government, would allow this valuable and viable national STEM asset to fall through the cracks, putting this network, and all it delivers, in such jeopardy? ...

"This is why we, as CEOs, Chairs, Trustees, Eminent Scientists, Science businesses, Mayors, MPs and University Vice Chancellors are writing to implore you to listen in our time of need, to invest £25 million as an Emergency Resilience Fund to help UK Science and Discovery Centres weather this pandemic and continue to provide the backbone of exploratory science education across the country."

Find out more about the Science Centres For Our Future campaign, and see videos of support, at <https://future.sciencecentres.org.uk>

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The press release, letter, fact sheet, logos and images can be found on the Science Centres For Our Future Google Drive [HERE](#).

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About ASDC

ASDC is the national charity that brings together the UK's major science engagement organisations to inspire young people, families and communities with science. Within our network are over 60 of the nation's publicly accessible Science Centres, discovery centres, environment centres, science museums and scientific bodies. Together, we strive for a more equitable and sustainable society where science is fully accessible to everyone.

Every year in the UK, over 25 million people of all ages and backgrounds choose to engage with science at one of the UK's Science and Discovery Centres or science museums. Over half are girls and women. Over half, are school-age children.

www.sciencecentres.org.uk