

Concerns from National Schools Observatory on STFC cuts

You have probably seen quite a lot of discussion in the news recently about the funding problems faced by the newly-formed Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) which is responsible for funding much of the UKs physics research, including Astronomy.

We thought you might wish to know how the funding issues may affect the NSO. Although the NSO itself is funded by the University, who also own the Liverpool Telescope, STFC have adopted the LT as a National Facility and provide a substantial fraction of the running costs. This unfortunately means that the future of the Telescope, and hence the NSO, is dependent on the outcome of an ongoing "Programmatic Review" of all STFC facilities.

Whatever the outcome of the review it is clear that, even if STFC support for the LT continues, as we sincerely hope, significant cuts will be (and already have been) made in the UKs Astronomy, Particle Physics and Nuclear Physics programmes. Both the Institute of Physics and the Royal Astronomical Society have stressed the importance of these subject areas in attracting young people into science, but it is not yet clear what impact these arguments are having.

You can find out the latest details by following the various links on the "Save Astronomy" website: <http://www.saveastronomy.org.uk>

Should you wish to make your own voice heard, there is a petition at <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/Physics-Funding/> which closes on the 18th of February and already has more than 15,000 signatories. You may also wish to write to your MP -see the RAS information at <http://tinyurl.com/yo3cpa> or through "Save Astronomy": <http://www.saveastronomy.org.uk/write.shtml>

Anyway, we will keep you up-to-date as we learn more.

Yours

Andy Newsam

Dr. Andy Newsam
National Schools' Observatory,
www.schoolsobservatory.org.uk

Director of the NSO
John Moores University, Liverpool, UK