

# Innovation, Universities and Skills

## Astronomy Centre



**[Nigel Griffiths](#)** (Edinburgh South, Labour) | [Hansard source](#)

To ask the [Secretary of State](#) for Innovation, Universities and Skills

(1) what steps he is taking to ensure the future of the Institute for Astronomy on the [Blackford Hill](#) site in Edinburgh;

(2) what the proposed change in Science and Technologies Facilities Council for funding the Astronomy Technology Centre ([ATC](#)), Edinburgh is in (a) percentage and (b) cash terms; and what assessment he has made of the likely effect of that change on the ATC's work;

(3) what staff changes are being considered by the Science and Technologies Facilities Council for (a) Daresbury, (b) the Astronomy Technology Centre, Edinburgh and (c) the [Rutherford Appleton Laboratory](#).



**[Ian Pearson](#)** (Minister of State (Science and Innovation), Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills) | [Hansard source](#)

The [UK](#) Astronomy Technology Centre (UK [ATC](#)), which is owned by the [Science and Technology Facilities Council](#) ([STFC](#)), is a world leader in the design and construction of instruments for many of the world's major telescopes.

However, STFC's demand for its services has declined since the UK joined the [European Southern Observatory](#) in 2002.

The STFC is looking at the future of the Astronomy Technology Centre in relation to the potential demand for its services and the council's science budget allocation. STFC is exploring the possibility of a partnership that makes use of the unique skills in the ATC and applies them to a wider portfolio, and it will look to work with the local universities and local funding agencies in taking that forward. It is too early to say what the outcome of these discussions will be.

STFC issued a notice on 2 January calling for voluntary redundancies across all its activities. In line with previous announcements, the [SRS](#) ([Synchrotron Radiation Source](#)) at Daresbury will close on 31 December 2008 but STFC has not taken a decision on whether any compulsory redundancies (other than those relating to SRS) will be needed.