

Professor Andy Lawrence
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Dear Professor Lawrence

VIRTUAL OBSERVATORY TECHNOLOGY CENTRE UK (VOTC:UK)

The progress report and request to submit a full proposal to PPRP for VOTC:UK was considered by the Particle Physics, Astronomy and Nuclear Physics Science Committee (PPAN) at the meeting held on 7/8 May 2009.

An initial Statement of Interest (SoI) for VOTC:UK had been considered by PPAN in November 2008. Advice to the applicants at that time had centred on the need to better demonstrate the commitment of all stakeholders to the project. At the same time, advice was sought from the Advisory Panels relating to the strategic importance of the project and the likely community demand. PPAN noted that input from the Advisory Panels was not yet available.

PPAN remain supportive of the concept put forward in the initial SoI and remain convinced that there is a strong case for the development of a virtual observatory. PPAN noted that the nature and level of commitment contained in the letters of support submitted with the progress report varied and that it was significant that none gave a definitive indication of financial commitment. The concern raised previously that any development of a virtual observatory must be user driven with significant levels of community support remained unresolved.

Given that this project was not demonstrated to be of a high scientific priority and the essential evidence of substantial financial commitment had not been provided, PPAN felt that a proposal submission at this stage would be premature.

PPAN agreed that future user-led proposals in this area would not be prejudiced and would be considered on their individual scientific merits; however, PPAN did not wish to see this proposal resubmitted in its current form.

Yours sincerely



Trish Mullins
Secretary, Particle Physics, Astronomy and Nuclear Physics Science Committee