

Professor Andy Lawrence
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Dear Professor Lawrence

VIRTUAL OBSERVATORY TECHNOLOGY CENTRE UK (VOTC:UK)

The Statement of Interest for VOTC:UK was considered by the Particle Physics, Astronomy and Nuclear Physics Science Committee (PPAN) at its meeting on 27/28 November 2008.

VOTC:UK aims to provide unified access to observational data and ensure the compatibility of data from facilities and missions. The intention was to minimise the total cost of maintaining data access and exploitation in the UK as the cost could potentially be significantly higher if each facility were to act separately.

PPAN recognised that the SoI highlighted the lack of a coherent data strategy policy within STFC, something that was regarded by PPAN as a regrettable deficiency. While PPAN were very supportive of the concept, they were not totally convinced that the proposal as currently presented was the best way forward. In particular, concern was expressed about whether the project could really be delivered within the suggested timescales and whether all those cited in the proposal as supporters were prepared to invest the required effort. It felt that a key element required for STFC to support such an initiative was hard evidence that the community would place it above other priorities. PPAN was not convinced that the SoI demonstrated this.

To take this forward, PPAN asked that the VOTC team work with STFC and those cited as co-investigators to further develop this concept. PPAN suggested that the next step might be to hold a workshop involving the relevant research community to ensure real commitment and buy-in from stakeholders. PPAN would also welcome the involvement and advice of the newly-created advisory panels. The aim would be to put forward a further SoI which better demonstrated the commitment of all stakeholders and, separately, to ensure that STFC started formulating a coherent data curation strategy.

You are invited to discuss future developments with Simon Berry (simon.berry@stfc.ac.uk) or Colin Vincent (colin.vincent@stfc.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely



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