

# Press Release

13<sup>th</sup> September 2007

## **UK's future in Space – a new beginning?**

The UK should have involvement in both human and robotic elements of space exploration if it wants to play a full and active role in the unique opportunities that will define space exploration during this century.

This is one of several recommendations made in a report published today [13<sup>th</sup> September 2007] by the UK Space Exploration Working Group [SEWG], an advisory committee established by the UK Government's British National Space Centre [BNSC]. The report findings were announced today at the BA Festival of Science in York.

The SEWG was tasked in January this year to review current worldwide plans for space exploration as defined by the Global Exploration Strategy<sup>1</sup> – an international initiative that involves fourteen national space agencies including the UK - which outlines the ambitions of the world's space-faring nations including China, Russia, India and Japan. The Global Exploration Strategy heralds a new era of exploration that will see humans and robots working in partnership on the surfaces of the Moon and Mars, while fleets of unmanned probes venture out across the far reaches of the solar system.

'We recommend that the UK engages in preparatory human space flight activities', said Professor Frank Close, University of Oxford and Chairman of SEWG. 'Simultaneously we should maintain and extend the UK's significant role in planetary science and robotic exploration. The UK has had a great tradition in exploration over the centuries but it is now time for a new vision'.

The Working Group's recommendations stress the need to be involved 'at the start' in this grand challenge of space exploration which it believes provides

key opportunities for the UK to shape and participate fully in space science whilst building on its position as a centre of excellence for science, technology and innovation. Engaging in both human and robotic elements together will generate valuable scientific knowledge says the report and return value to the UK through technological challenges, innovations and new commercial ventures. The report recommends the UK should establish a detailed plan to enable a decision to be made on whether the UK becomes involved in human space flight in the decade beginning 2010 if it wishes to take advantage of the excellent scientific opportunities that appear in a range of disciplines in the period beyond 2020 when there are plans to establish a permanently crewed lunar outpost.

Professor Close added, 'For the first time in history the world's space agencies are planning to work together on the human exploration of the Moon, Mars and perhaps asteroids, with accompanying robotic missions to prepare the way. This is not science fiction – it is the real thing. A high-profile, UK-branded presence in human space exploration would engage British society in the full excitement of space exploration and help to inspire a new generation of scientists and engineers'.

The UK Space Exploration Working Group was tasked with reviewing global plans for space exploration, assessing the opportunities and benefits for UK participation and advising on a suitable focus for UK activities should it decide to engage more strongly in space exploration – including manned space. The resulting conclusions and recommendations have been submitted to UK Space Board, the governing body of BNSC.

Commenting on the report's recommendations Professor Keith Mason, Chair of UK Space Board and CEO of The Science and Technology Facilities Council, a key partner in BNSC said, 'the working group has produced a comprehensive report and set of recommendations which will contribute and feed into the new UK Civil Space Strategy currently being developed by BNSC and scheduled for publication this autumn'.

Professor Mason added, 'Given the global interest in space exploration with the USA, China and India having already announced their intention to establish manned lunar bases, then this report is particularly timely. We shall give serious consideration to its recommendations'.

ENDS

### **Background Notes**

**The full report, the collective conclusions of the four groups and full list of recommendations is on the BNSC and STFC websites; see: [www.stfc.ac.uk/uksewg](http://www.stfc.ac.uk/uksewg)**

### **UK Space Exploration Working Group [SEWG]**

The UK Space Exploration Working Group comprised twenty-three members drawn from academia, industry, education, BNSC officials and a former Chief Executive of PPARC (a predecessor research council to STFC). The Chair was Prof. Frank Close, a particle-physicist from Oxford University.

For full membership list, see below.

The Group was set up in January 2007 as an *ad hoc* committee to:

- review current global plans for space exploration;
- assess what opportunities and benefits exist for UK participation, and;
- provide advice to BNSC and partners as to which areas the UK should focus on if it wishes to engage in space exploration.

The report has been produced on behalf of BNSC partners for input to UK Space Board; BNSC Space Advisory Council; STFC Science Committee; STAB; and other relevant advisory committees.

The Working Group was split into four sub-groups to assess the potential benefits to science, technology, commerce and society.

The Report includes a range of possible engagement scenarios including various levels of robotic and human involvement together with illustrations of a range of missions in which the UK could play a leading role whilst collaborating with other nations.

## **SEWG Membership**

**Chair:** Professor Frank Close University of Oxford  
**Co-ordinator:** Jeremy Curtis STFC Rutherford  
Appleton Laboratory

### **Science**

Prof Monica Grady (Chair) Open University

Dr Ian Crawford Birkbeck College  
Prof Jenny Thomas University College London  
Prof Peter Wilkinson University of Manchester  
Prof John Zarnecki Open University

### **Technology and Knowledge Transfer**

Nathan Hill (Chair) STFC  
Ian Gibson BNSC  
Mike Haggood STFC Rutherford Appleton Laboratory  
Chris Lee SciSys/UKspace  
Steve Welch MSSL

### **Commerce**

Prof Sir Martin Sweeting (Chair) Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd  
John Auburn Vega/UKspace  
Andy Hide LogicaCMG  
Chris McLaughlin Inmarsat  
Richard Tremayne-Smith BNSC  
David Williams Avanti Communications

### **Society**

Prof Frank Close (Chair) University of Oxford  
Alex Blackwood Careers Scotland  
Kevin Fong UCL  
Katy Haswell MusicEngine TV  
Prof Steve Miller UCL  
Prof Ken Pounds University of Leicester

## **Contacts**

Peter Barratt  
STFC Head of Media Relations  
Tel: 01793 442025  
Mobile: 07879 602899  
Email: [peter.barratt@stfc.ac.uk](mailto:peter.barratt@stfc.ac.uk)

Fiona Hatton  
BNSC Communications Unit  
Tel: 020 7215 0905  
Email: [fiona.hatton@bns.gov.uk](mailto:fiona.hatton@bns.gov.uk)

Azara Bibi  
BNSC Head of Communications  
Tel: 0207 215 0806  
Email: [Azara.bibi@bns.gov](mailto:Azara.bibi@bns.gov)

Jeremy Curtis  
STFC Rutherford Appleton Laboratory  
Tel: 01235 446460  
Mobile: 07770 695399  
Email: [j.curtis@rl.ac.uk](mailto:j.curtis@rl.ac.uk)

Prof Frank Close  
University of Oxford  
Tel: 01865 273368  
Email: [F.Close1@physics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:F.Close1@physics.ox.ac.uk)

Prof Monica Grady  
Open University  
Tel: 01908 659251  
Mobile: 07921 911208  
Email: [m.m.grady@open.ac.uk](mailto:m.m.grady@open.ac.uk)

Nathan Hill  
STFC  
Tel: 01223 422405  
Mobile: 07976 707246  
Email: [nathan.hill@stfc.ac.uk](mailto:nathan.hill@stfc.ac.uk)

Prof Sir Martin Sweeting  
Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd  
Tel: 01483 803803  
Email: [M.Sweeting@sstl.co.uk](mailto:M.Sweeting@sstl.co.uk)

<Ends>