



## Testimonies from members of STFC panels, boards and committees

### Astronomy Grants Panel

***Prof Lyndsay Fletcher (AGP Deputy Chair):***

“Work on the STFC Astronomy Grants Panel is not without challenges, but it is very rewarding. I particularly value the relationships developed with colleagues from the STFC, and from the very broad range of disciplines represented by the AGP. I have learned a lot about the research that our community is engaged in, and about how (and how not) to present this effectively. My time on the AGP has improved my skills as a panel member and chair, and helped give me confidence in my own judgement and voice. Everyone on the AGP works hard for our science and our community, and I like being part of that team”.

(April 2019)

***Prof Philippa Browning (former Chair of AGP/SS Panel):***

“Being part of STFC Astronomy Grants Panel has been hard work, but never boring - it is very interesting to learn about the wide range of exciting research being carried out in the various UK groups. I appreciated the chance to make a contribution to our community, and seeing how the Panel works has convinced me that a huge effort goes into making decisions as fair and balanced as possible. I also enjoyed working with the other members on the Panel and with the STFC staff, there is a very cooperative spirit. Of course, there are also benefits in learning how to write a good proposal”.

(April 2019)

***Prof Haley Gomez (former AGP panel member):***

Being part of AGP was a real eye-opener, it helped me in writing my own proposals to see what makes an excellent vs good vs bad proposal. It gave me greater insight into the UK astronomy community as a whole, as well as introducing me to fields of research that were previously on my periphery. I would argue that being part of a panel like this is invaluable experience not only from career progression and networking point of view, but to understand the bigger picture and overall gain an insight into the future priorities/directions of one's research field. I especially valued getting an opportunity to work with STFC staff. Honestly it was extremely rewarding.

(April 2019)



## Physical Sciences and Engineering Advisory Board

### ***D. Lennon, the Chairperson of the STFC Physical Sciences and Engineering Advisory Board 2012-2017:***

An account of my time on the STFC Physical Sciences and Engineering Advisory Board

The STFC Physical Sciences and Engineering Advisory Board (PS&EAP) was set up in the summer of 2012. I was fortunate enough to be nominated as its first Chairperson, being assigned a 3 year term. That period may be described as 'colourful and rewarding'; with quite a few things going on concerning the sustainable operation of Central Facilities, plus new opportunities/threats on the horizon. Against this background of stimulating activity, I was asked to continue in my role as Chairperson for a further two years that covered the period September 2015-September 2017. I believe it reveals a lot when, despite having a rather challenging 'day job' in Glasgow, I recall that I was delighted and flattered to have the opportunity to continue in to a second term of office.

On reviewing my experiences with the PS&EAP, I firstly note that I believe it to be an important part of the UK's scientific governance. Primarily it provides a 'checks and balances' oversight of current issues linked with the disciplines of physical sciences and engineering that connect with STFC Central Facilities such as ISIS, Diamond, Central Laser Facility, ILL and ESRF. It also takes a future look; this involves liaising with high-end STFC panels such as Science Board, as well as Central Government (e.g. the Department of Business Innovation, as was). The PS&EAP was always inherently aware of partnerships and shared aspirations within Research Councils UK (as was), with a particular slant to the EPSRC.

Against that intricate but stimulating background the principal issue during my 5 year tenure was the quality of the people that I was fortunate to meet and engage with. Probably first shout should go to the STFC Secretariat, who were outstanding. Not only did they look after the mechanics of the various meeting, conflicts and opportunities for the PS&EAP's routine functions but, importantly, they worked to protect and shelter me as Chairperson. That combined level of support ensured all meetings were properly structured and delivered sensible outcomes. Secondly, I celebrate the numerous science and engineering colleagues that I was fortunate to work with over the 5 year duration. The skills-set was broad and deep, with the individuals invariably displaying quality, wisdom and generosity in their approach to our various problem solving tasks.

On reflection, I highly value my time as a member of the PS&EAP. I honestly believed that we made a difference. The period 2012-2017 was not an easy time for science policy in the UK and I am certain that good folk are continually needed for guidance and advisory roles for now and in future years. Without hesitation I would highly recommend getting involved with STFC advisory panels, and I particularly endorse the PS&EAP.

(28<sup>th</sup> March 2019)



## Project Peer Review Panel

### ***Prof Paula Chadwick (former Chair PPRP):***

Joining PPRP enabled me to learn about the huge range of projects across STFC's remit, from complex, multi-institution projects such as the LHC detectors, to much smaller projects, many of them trying out new techniques. I learnt a lot of science on the way, gained a deeper understanding of STFC's processes and made contact with colleagues whom otherwise I would never have met. All of this has been invaluable to me in my own work.

(April 2019)

### ***Dr Jonathan Hays, Particle Physicist, Queen Mary, University of London (PPRP Member):***

"Joining the PPRP has allowed me to be exposed to the inner workings of STFC. This has helped me to gain a deeper understanding of how the funding systems work.

Reviewing project proposals as a member of the PPRP has been highly educational. Evaluating proposals has given me key insights into what makes a good proposal and how they are assessed that will help me improve my own submissions.

Attending PPRP meetings has given me a broader view of the STFC programme and helped me enhance my professional network – building connections with my peers across disciplines and around the country, and key STFC staff."

(March 2019)

### ***Professor Julian Osborne, Astronomer, University of Leicester (PPRP Chair):***

"Being a member of PPRP has been a great education experience, broadening my knowledge of the scope of STFC-funded activities and providing insight in to how the different STFC communities work. Reviewing PPRP proposals has taught me the difference between a good proposal and a poor proposal, I have been able to pass this knowledge on within my university department."

(March 2019)

### ***Professor Graeme Burt, Accelerator Engineer, Lancaster University (PPRP Core Member):***

"I now have a great appreciation of what STFC panels are looking for, in terms of project management, clear goals, and how they are evaluated and this has helped me writing my own grants. It's also good understanding the breadth of STFC programmes to understand the tensioning between the different core programmes, outside of my own area. Finally it great to make a network of contacts across of the STFC community"

(March 2019)



## Impact of the STFC panels, boards and committees

### The Advisory Panel for Public Engagement

The Advisory Panel for Public Engagement has played a central role in setting the strategic direction of STFC's public engagement programme. In recent years, the Panel has taken a lead on refreshing STFC's public engagement strategy, our approach to evaluation, and the grant schemes that we use to fund public engagement in the STF community. Panel members have been invited to contribute to working groups and discussion sessions that have investigated the community's attitudes to undertaking engagement, sought to investigate and challenge peer review behaviours, supported the development of support for early career researchers, and championed new approaches and partnerships at STFC's national laboratories and in the university community.

### Computer Advisory Panel (CAP)

The Computer Advisory Panel has a positive impact on the future of STFC's computational strategy and in the last year they have continued to encourage cross-council collaboration to ensure this happens. Requirements for computing hardware, storage and network bandwidth are increasing in data volumes, which means the need for meeting this challenge is ongoing and essential to ensure the UK can continue to produce world leading science.

### DiRAC RAC (Resource Allocation Committee)

Every year DiRAC RAC successfully determines the overall allocation of DiRAC time across the whole portfolio of proposals, ensuring DiRAC is fully utilised and supports world leading science. DiRAC RAC makes an impact through assessing proposals in a systematic and time constrained process, ensuring time allocated to a project has been fully justified, is internationally competitive and of strategic relevance.

STFC Staff (2019)