

Additional evidence for House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee

1. This is additional material for the Committee, in support of the oral evidence given at the session on 10 January.

Astronomy facilities in the UK

2. We would like members of the Committee to note two UK facilities carrying out work on astronomy instrumentation, for use in both ground- and space-based projects.
3. The UK Astronomy Technology Centre (UK ATC) in Edinburgh is a world-class facility sited at the Royal Observatory, Edinburgh, and is part of the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC). Notable UK ATC work includes the construction of the Mid-Infrared Instrument (MIRI) for the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), in operation since 2022. MIRI gave the UK scientific leadership in JWST, and many UK astronomers are now benefitting from its work.
4. The Rutherford Appleton Laboratory (RAL), part of the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus near Didcot in Oxfordshire, includes RAL Space, another STFC facility. RAL Space has been involved in more than 200 instruments on space missions, and is another world-class facility. Scientists and engineers there also worked on MIRI, as well as spacecraft including the STEREO solar observatory, the Rosetta mission which made the first soft landing on a comet, the Indian Chandrayaan lunar mission and the Herschel and Planck space observatories.