



Department for  
Science, Innovation  
& Technology

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Dear Dr Massey,

Thank you for your correspondence of 28 April following our previous correspondence to Professor Mike Lockwood under reference MC2024/03166 regarding the potential threat posed by the proposed industrial complex near the European Southern Observatory (ESO) in northern Chile, and your clarification as to whether the UK delegation to ESO is aware of these concerns and if they have been communicated to the Chilean authorities. I am responding as the Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation.

I appreciate your concerns and the detailed information you have provided about the significance of ESO to the UK and global astronomy community. The UK Government recognises the critical importance of the dark sky site used by ESO for astronomical research and, more broadly, the substantial contributions made by UK scientists and engineers to ESO's operations. We are proud of our integral role as a member. While green energy development is an important activity in general, the potential impact of light pollution, atmospheric turbulence, and dust from the proposed development by AES Andes is a serious concern that threatens ESO's world-class capabilities.

This proposed development was brought to DSIT's attention last year; since then, department officials have discussed the matter with international counterparts, our Embassy in Santiago has proactively raised UK concerns through diplomatic channels and Baroness Chapman discussed the issue with the Chilean Deputy Foreign Minister Gloria de la Fuente during a visit to Chile.

As ESO's observing potential would be significantly curtailed if the project went ahead, I have asked department officials to consider how we can go further to support efforts to protect this crucial site, including working with our fellow ESO member states and engaging with the Chilean government. A coordinated approach will strengthen our position and increase the likelihood of a favourable outcome.

Thank you once again for bringing this issue to our attention. Please be assured that we share your concerns and will continue to seek to safeguard the ESO site on behalf of the UK astronomy community.

Yours sincerely,

**Lord Vallance**  
Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation

