

## **Statement from the UKIRT Board**

31 May 2012

The Board welcomes the extension of JCMT to September 2014 and recognises the difficult financial constraints of the STFC programme.

We are however, very disappointed that STFC funding for UKIRT operations will cease from 30 September 2013 and do not understand why the opportunity to continue scientific operations for another year has been rejected, particularly as the operations costs that would fall on STFC are very low. (Through contributions from international customers and the shared operation with JCMT, the additional funding needed to operate UKIRT to Sept 2014 is calculated to be <£100k).

UKIRT is a world-leading facility; WFCAM on UKIRT remains the most sensitive wide-field IR camera in the world in the critical K-band and provides unique infrared survey opportunities for a large range of programmes including complementary data to some of the highest priority current and planned astronomy programmes. It is poised to add to the extraordinarily successful UKIDSS surveys and is starting a hemisphere survey (extending deep infrared observations across the whole of the accessible northern sky) that will now have to be curtailed.

UKIRT's productivity is at an all-time high, with the number of papers published in 2011 amongst the highest of any telescope in the world, with a remarkable cost-effective operation that is a real testament to the skill and dedication of the JAC staff.

In order to ensure optimum scientific returns over the next 16 months, we anticipate that a call for proposals will be released shortly.

The board reiterates its thanks to the JAC staff who operate UKIRT efficiently and effectively and we will work with the Director to ensure that UKIRT continues to provide its unique data and scientific programme and to secure the future of the telescope. We hope that another organization will come forward to take over operation of UKIRT and continue its heritage of outstanding, world-leading astronomy from one of the very best observing locations on Earth.