

## Director's Corner

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Brian Foster

### Black December

*Today's issue features a Director's Corner from Brian Foster, Global Design Effort Regional Director for Europe.*

It looks as if last month will be classified as "Black December" as far as the ILC is concerned. Barry has already written of the developments in the USA funding which took us all by surprise. Slightly less "out of the blue", but still shocking, was the news just two weeks earlier from the UK. The Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), established last April to take over the remit of the previous PPARC and CCLRC, announced that they were going to withdraw from the ILC project.

The background to this decision is complex, and tightly bound up with the foundation of the new research council and the associated liabilities that it inherited from its predecessors. Assurances were given by Ministers that the new research council would not be saddled with historic liabilities. These assurances do not appear to have been respected inside the new Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills which took over the UK's science portfolio with the advent of Gordon Brown as the new Prime Minister. December saw the announcement of a tough overall spending review in the UK that, taking into account provision for the full cost of research at universities, resulted in more or less flat-cash to spend on research projects. This, combined with the inherited liabilities, led to an £80 million deficit in the STFC spending plans. This in turn led to the UK's announcement about the ILC.

It should be emphasised that the STFC decision is not one based on the normal processes of peer review. There has been no statement from any of the peer review bodies that calls into question the value of ILC research or the place of the ILC as the internationally agreed next step in particle physics. Rather the decision is a response by executives to the perceived shortage of funds over the next few years.

The reaction inside the Linear Collider UK (LCUK) collaboration, which coordinates all UK ILC work in both machine and detectors, was one of shocked disbelief, quickly succeeded by a determination to fight this decision. The UK community has been heartened by the strong expressions of support from colleagues all across the world. At an "all hands" meeting of LCUK two weeks ago in Oxford, there was unanimous agreement to try to continue the UK's work in the ILC as much as possible using other sources of funding, while fighting to reverse the STFC decision. STFC itself has shown concern to try to mitigate the large-scale disruption that such abrupt decisions will cause. I am working with STFC officials to try to produce a plan that will attempt to maximise the return from the substantial UK investment in linear collider technologies to date. It is reassuring to hear that STFC still places great importance on the Cockcroft and John Adams Institutes for Accelerator Science. The UK will continue to be a major proponent of linear collider work inside the new European Seventh Framework programme (FP7) in a major coordinated bid due to be submitted next month.

There will be some inevitable loss of UK leadership and R&D, particularly in the positron source, the damping rings and beam delivery system, as well as in the development of silicon detectors and calorimetry techniques, which will be a serious problem for the Global Design Effort and the detector development activity. Barry has outlined the



The UK is a leading contributor to different ILC-related projects, including laser-wire beam diagnostics shown here.

revised plans that the GDE Executive Committee has agreed, taking account of the UK and US developments. Inside the UK, my colleagues will continue to try to find as many ways as possible to continue to contribute to the ILC. Much of the UK's current work is generic and applicable to whole areas of accelerator science and development. We have a long-planned joint ILC-Compact Linear Collider (CLIC) meeting at CERN on 7 and 8 February. In addition, as European Director, I have an advisory group consisting of senior physicists from around Europe; this group will meet on 12 February to discuss the new vista that faces us in Europe and to look to the future. Despite this sea of troubles, I have been heartened by the determination I see from all ILC colleagues to ensure that the great progress we have made to date will continue.

-- *Brian Foster*