

The recent announcement by STFC is a significant set back to the New Light Source project. I will not dwell on the reasons behind this regrettable outcome but clearly the appalling financial background is the overwhelming factor motivating this and other decisions. Nevertheless there can be little question that sooner or later the UK will need to build a FEL or will be frozen out from future developments over a vast landscape of light source enabled science and technology. So whilst this is not the moment to move rapidly to building the facility it is imperative that we continue to maintain strong pressure for an eventual approval.

Let us for now, however, focus on the positives. In just under two years the NLS project has achieved a great deal. A compelling science case has been developed and a technically innovative and highly credible outline design for a facility that can deliver this science (and much more) has been produced. In many respects the science case and design are world leading and will continue to influence other FEL projects around the globe. This phase of NLS concludes in April when a CDR (conceptual design report) will be published which is the formal outcome of the project and a solid basis upon which to restart the mission at some future date.

The NLS team has been truly superb and it has been a privilege to have had the opportunity to work with them over the last two years. I am especially grateful to the excellent group of accelerator and light source scientists from the Daresbury Laboratory and Diamond Light Source who have come together under Richard Walker's exemplary leadership to deliver such a ground breaking and technically detailed design in such a short space of time. I would also like to acknowledge the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of international experts led by Prof Joerg Rossbach (Hamburg) who have undertaken detailed and demanding reviews of NLS and I thank them for their enthusiastic support for the project. NLS could not have progressed to this point without also the excellent team of science coordinators who marshalled the most expert scientific advice available to assemble the science case, I am enormously grateful to all the scientists who have participated in that process in the UK and internationally.

Now it is vitally important to maintain UK momentum in FEL science and the highest priority in the short term must be devoted to establishing strong UK groups participating in FEL research at the existing international facilities; FLASH, LCLS and (from 2015) XFEL as well as other developing FEL projects in Europe and Japan. If it is true that the UK cannot at the present time afford to build a FEL of her own it has also become abundantly clear to me over the last two years that she cannot afford not to play a major part in FEL science.

Jon Marangos
NLS Project Leader