



Science and
Technology
Facilities Council

RAL Space

21st Appleton Space Conference

Speaker biographies



Session 1: Space for the benefit of all

Session Chair - Dr Sarah Beardsley (she/her)



Sarah became Director of RAL Space in 2022 and leads around 360 expert staff to deliver science and technology programmes for the UK space sector. She joined STFC in 2000 as an instrument scientist on our first mission to the Moon and was active in defining the UK and European strategies for solar system science, sitting on several national and international advisory panels for the community.

From 2014 she served as Head of the Space Engineering and Technology Division, overseeing the engineers, technicians and project managers underpinning RAL Space's hardware projects.

She is passionate about early careers development and is a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, a Chartered Physicist and Member of the Association of Project Management.

Dr Paul Bate (he/him)



Paul has been CEO of the UK Space Agency since 2021. He leads a team of more than 300 people who provide R&D funding to use space to increase prosperity across the world, protect the planet and to understand the universe. He is the Chair of the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS), the international body responsible for coordinating observations of Earth from space.

In this role he will oversee the activities of CEOS and ensure it is achieving the objectives of its work plan.

Prior to space, Paul ran global sales at Babylon Health, which floated on the New York Stock Exchange in 2021, and built a consultancy business. Paul was David Cameron's senior health advisor in Downing Street and led on health targets and finances in Tony Blair's Delivery Unit. He holds a PhD in Particle Physics.

David Phillips (he/him)



David is Head of Systems, Strategic Programmes and Technology in the Connectivity and Secure Communications Directorate of the European Space Agency, where he is responsible for the delivery of the ARTES programme, which transforms investment in research and development into successful governmental and commercial telecom products and services across the full range of industry activities.

Before joining the agency, David was an executive at Airbus Defence and Space, most recently as Head of Global Government Satellite Sales, and before that he led various space business units, including Military Space Programmes, Commercial Telecom Payloads, Digital and RF Electronic Products, and the Space Antenna Centre of Competence. Prior to joining Airbus, David worked in Naval Systems with the UK MoD.

David is a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

Session 2: The future of the space sector

Session Chair - Dr Jane Hurley (she/her)



Jane is Head of Researchers at RAL Space, responsible for developing and delivering against the RAL Space strategy, leading a team of world leading researchers and championing the research profession within STFC.

Prior to this, Jane was Head of the Earth Observation and Atmospheric Science Division, overseeing 85 staff who worked across technology development, provision of facilities, scientific research and data.

Jane completed a DPhil in Atmospheric, Oceanic and Planetary Physics from the University of Oxford in 2008. Following this she moved into planetary science, working on instrument design and development, science and operations on the ESA Cassini mission and validation on the Rosetta mission. She was also an instrument scientist on the UK-provided microseismometer on NASA's InSight mission to Mars.

Wing Commander Hamish Pearson (he/him)



Wing Commander Pearson's service has centred on the management of military parachuting capability; physical education and human performance; training; and workforce planning and management. On completion of Initial Officer Training, Pearson undertook Parachute Jumping Instructor training and completed tours supporting the UK's Airborne Forces.

In 2008 he studied for a MSc in Public Health at the University of Bristol prior to assuming the HQ Physical Education Research and Development post in 2009.

Subsequent to this Wing Commander Pearson has completed roles in the staff of the RAF's People Director and as the Profession Advisor for the RAF's Training Specialisation.

In July 2025 Pearson took post in the UK's Space Command as SO1 Space Enablement, overseeing the Command's requirements for workforce, individual training, and infrastructure.

Dr Aprajita Verma (she/her)



Aprajita Verma is a Senior Researcher at the University of Oxford and Project Scientist for the UK Extremely Large Telescope Programme, coordinating the In-kind Contribution Program for the Vera C. Rubin Observatory. Prior to this, Aprajita completed a PhD and short post-doc in the Astrophysics Group at Imperial College London, before joining the science research staff at the Max Planck Institute for Extraterrestrial Physics in Germany.

Her research interests cover a wide range of extragalactic topics, including dust obscured, star-forming, and black hole hosting galaxies, high-redshift (distant) galaxies and strong gravitational lenses.

Simon Garrington (he/him)

Simon Garrington is director of the e-MERLIN/VLBI National Facility and an associate director of the Jodrell Bank Centre for Astrophysics at the University of Manchester.

e-MERLIN combines telescopes across England for high resolution radio astronomy on a wide range of astrophysical projects, and is now also used for bistatic radar observations of satellites and debris at MEO, GEO and beyond.

Session 3: Keynote Speaker

Session Chair - Dr Sarah Beardsley (she/her)

Lucy Edge (she/her)



Lucy Edge is a visionary technology leader with over 25 years of experience driving innovation in the global space and telecommunications sectors.

As a senior executive at Avanti Communications, Satellite Applications Catapult, and ReOrbit, she successfully scaled high-value technology ventures, delivered pioneering space infrastructure missions, and shaped policy at national level with, specific interest in regional growth through deep tech.

A powerful connector across government, industry, and academia, Lucy champions collaboration that drives sustainable, inclusive innovation. She currently serves as Vice Chair of the Royal Mencap Society and on the STFC Advisory Board.

A TEDx speaker and advocate for technology with purpose, Lucy is dedicated to creating resilient, socially impactful growth that benefits communities and economies alike.

Session 4: Space for society

Session Chair – Prof Christophe Dumas (he/him)



Professor Christophe Dumas is the Director of the STFC UK Astronomy Technology Centre and Head of the Royal Observatory in Edinburgh.

He has a strong background in managing large astronomy projects, having previously served as the Head of Operations and an Observatory Scientist for the Thirty Meter Telescope International Observatory currently planned for Hawaii. He also directed science operations at the European Southern Observatory's Paranal Observatory in Chile, working with NASA on several missions.

Christophe has a wealth of research experience focused on the formation of our solar system, and in recognition for his contributions to the field, has a binary asteroid named after him.

Ingo Waldmann (he/him)



Prof. Waldmann is Chief Technology Officer and co-founder of Spaceflux Ltd, a leading UK company developing a global network of optical sensors for Space Domain Awareness (SDA) and key strategic partner within the UK's national SDA ecosystem.

Spaceflux provides real-time monitoring and cataloguing of satellites and orbital debris and delivers advanced optical and AI technologies to enhance space safety and operational resilience.

Prior to his role at Spaceflux, Prof. Waldmann established a distinguished career in astrophysics and artificial intelligence, serving as Professor of Astrophysics at University College London and Turing Fellow at The Alan Turing Institute.

He continues to contribute to space sustainability and technology policy while guiding Spaceflux's research and development of next-generation monitoring and decision-support systems for a safer orbital environment.

Krista Hammond (she/her)



Krista is the Senior Account Manager for Space Weather at the Met Office managing multiple national and international customer and collaborator relationships. She is particularly focussed on working with critical sectors to help them understand the impacts of severe space weather on their operations through outreach and engagement. In her previous role she was an operational space weather advisor with MOSWOC (Met Office Space Weather Operations Centre) and has a sound understanding of the end-to-end forecasting process.

She holds a degree in Environmental Geoscience from the University of Edinburgh and has extensive experience in operations centres as an operational meteorologist and space weather advisor. She was previously responsible for the National Severe Weather Warning Service and produced commercial, aviation, marine and public forecasts in the Met Office.

Christophe Accadia (he/him)



Cristophe is an Italian and French physicist by training, with focus on remote sensing and love for meteorology. He worked on Her Majesty's Service at UK Met Office from 1999-2000) and joined EUMETSAT in 2005 as Meteorological Scientist to support the preparation for EPS-SG (Post-EPS at that time!) and EPS-SG Microwave Imager mission Scientist after that.

Christophe is now leading now a diverse team with a focus on Radio Occultation, MW imaging, MW Sounding, Future Programmes (EPS-Sterna) and support to Copernicus (CIMR).

Peter Huggard (he/him)



Peter leads the Millimetre Wave Technology Programme in RAL Space. He leads 20 staff to develop and deliver state of the art technology for Earth observation, radio astronomy and atmospheric science, supporting operational meteorology and academic research.

The programme's outputs include heterodyne radiometers covering millimetre-wave to terahertz frequencies, millimetre and sub-millimetre wave atmospheric radars. Peter also works with a range of UK universities to develop terahertz technology for diverse non-space applications.

He is a UKRI Individual Merit Fellow and Fellow of the Institute of Physics.

Dr Massimo Noro (he/him)



Massimo is a digital expert and a successful business leader, with a proven track record of delivering technical innovation in complex environments. In 2018 he was appointed Director for Business Development for STFC, based at the Daresbury Campus. He leads business incubation activities and supports early-stage deep-tech companies. He works in partnership with the wider Sci-Tech Daresbury Campus to develop an effective ecosystem where companies grow successfully.

Massimo developed an industrial science career; he rose through the ranks in Unilever, with global R&D roles interfacing with key academic institutions and government bodies.

Massimo has a PhD in physical chemistry from UCLA and is well published in soft matter and self-assembling systems. He is a fellow of the Institute of Physics and has held visiting professor positions.

Session 5: Beyond the lab - Why we should speak the language of growth and security

Session Chair - Jacob Geer (he/him)



Jacob is Orbit Fab's Managing Director in the UK and Europe. Joining in 2024, he leads a team building a bustling orbital economy by allowing spacecraft to be refuelled. Prior to this, Jacob spent 15 years working in the UK government on Defence and Space. In his role as UK Space Agency Chief of Staff, he oversaw the Agency's transformation and steered a £1.75bn civil space portfolio.

Before this Jacob led the UK's civilian Space Surveillance, Active Debris Removal, In-Orbit Servicing, Space Sustainability and National Launch programmes. He has led multilateral engagement with ESA, EU the UN, G7, 5EYES, and bilateral projects with a number of other nations. In his career in Defence, he completed two civilian tours of Afghanistan before leading Science and Technical support to the UK's strategic headquarters, supporting operations in Sierra Leone, Iraq, Libya, Syria and elsewhere with rapid technical advice.

Alexandra Vidyuk (she/her)



Alexandra is the CEO & General Partner of Beyond Earth Ventures, a US-based venture capital firm focused on frontier technologies and space innovation. A physicist and Mensa member, she combines deep scientific training with over a decade of experience in banking and entrepreneurship.

Before entering venture capital, Alexandra founded a fintech company and built a career in global finance, giving her a unique perspective on both technology and markets. She now invests at the intersection of deep tech, finance, and space, helping visionary founders scale groundbreaking companies. In addition to her role at Beyond Earth Ventures, Alexandra serves as a mentor at Creative Destruction Lab (CDL) and is a Karman Fellow, recognised among global leaders shaping the future of space exploration and innovation.

Zoha Naser (she/her)



Zoha is a PhD candidate based in The Freeman Air and Space Institute at King's College London, where her research focuses on how a space-faring nation may communicate a desire to establish or maintain strategic stability in space. This includes how nation states and actors have been able to maintain a condition of relative stability despite proliferation of technology for security purposes and tense international relations.

She is particularly interested in how information sharing could be a tool to foster trust and cooperation between actors in orbit. Zoha previously worked as a Research Assistant at the Centre for Science and Security Studies (CSSS) at King's, where she was involved in a number of research projects ranging from chemical weapons education in Kurdistan to the security of the civil nuclear supply chain.

Zoha holds a BA in International Relations from Royal Holloway, University of London and an MA in Science and Security Studies from King's College London.