

3. Strategy relevant news since last OSC 22nd May

It is a relatively short time since the last OSC meeting but a lot has happened, below an overview is given (for some points there are documents on the Indico page giving more information).

3.1 - OSO Astronomy newsletter, June 2026 (see Indico link)

Newsletter to registered OSO astronomy users. Has items on 20 m telescope 50 th anniversary etc etc

3.2 - SKA news. July Council meeting next funding protocol + SRC nodes

Presentation of goals for next funding period 2031-2040. Idea is to complete the SKA design baseline of Array Assembly 4 (AA4) – favoured option is to go from the SKA 2030/2032 initial array AA* directly to AA4. Estimated cost (in fixed 2025 Euros) estimated to be about twice as high for this second ten-year period as for the current period. Multiple countries have expressed potential ‘affordability’ issues.

SRCNet was discussed, mainly in context of the ongoing working group on future governance and valuation to report at next SKAO council meeting 17/18 November in South Africa (JC will attend remotely). On shorter timescales worry was expressed by SKAO management of readiness of SRCNet to handle user support during SKA-low AA1 Science Verification (SV) observation scheduled for mid to late 2027. In last month SKAO has announced urgent measures (suspension of SRCNet Advisory Committee within which SRC nodes are represented) and taking charge itself of leadership of SV. Very unclear situation which makes long term planning (including planned recruitments) of the Swedish SRC node very difficult.

3.3 - Visit of LM delegation to OSO and Chalmers (3rd September)

Morning – visit of Lantmäteriet delegation to Onsala. Jan Erik drove down from Oslo to present arguments for Space Geodesy from the geodetic supply chain perspective. Spent evening before at same hotel as LM delegation had chance to interact informally with LM delegation.

Afternoon – A meeting with Chalmers Rektor LM delegation John, Rudiger, Lars Börjesson. Rudiger gave a short presentation to Rektor. Following discussion covered a wide range including Operations, Research and Education, LM Director and Chalmers Rektor agreed to set up a working group to renew and expand the LM-Chalmers agreement before end of year and committing OSO + LM to contribute to Nordic space geodesy cooperation. Positive response from Rektor who has invited Rudiger to give a space geodesy presentation at Chalmers day in early November.

LM GD Fredrik Holmberg stated at the afternoon meeting he needed a short max 30 sec argument to give to politicians on why OSO should be funded via LM for geodesy, JC suggested to get more publicity for the weekly UT1-UTC measurements between OSO and Japan which are the only US independent UT1-UTC from a station in Europe Perhaps sign an agreement (with photo) LM/or Chalmers + Japanese partner GIS to contribute these weekly observation. OTT-Japan→UT1-UTC→Calibrate Galileo satellites--> Operate SWEPOS Swedish GNSS network -> €€ for Volvo for self-driving cars.



View from the OTT. Fredrik Holmberg, LM General Director (far right)
Martin Lidberg (Head of LM Dept of Geodetic infrastructure)
Marika Ström, chef verksamhetsområde Geodata (Martin's direct manager)
Thomas Öberg, chef verksamhetsområde inskrivning
Maria Johansson, chef HR
Linda Hallenberg, chef Kommunikation
+ Lars Börjesson

3.4 - Threat to Jodrell Bank Observatory and potential effects on EVN/JIVE

A UK science spending review has proposed sweeping cuts to science infrastructures in the UK including the decision to remove all funding for the Jodrell Bank telescopes and the eMERLIN array from 1st April 2028, saving 2.8 million pounds a year. This would result in the 76 m Lovell telescope (third largest fully steerable radio telescope in the world) and the 6-element eMERLIN array in the UK no longer being able to observe with the European VLBI Network (EVN) so reducing the science impact of OSO's involvement in the EVN. Likely also means UK will leave the JIV-ERIC which runs the correlator and provides central operation services to the EVN - leaving a large funding hole for JIVE.

The UK funding body has cited the large UK commitment to SKAO, with its headquarters located on the Jodrell Bank site. as one of the reasons for the proposed cut. If the cuts are followed through on visitors to the SKAO HQ will have a panoramic view of 76 m telescope idle or no longer working for radio astronomy; contrasting with other countries building new telescopes to do VLBI with the SKA. Additionally, the eMERLIN array provides unique baselines of up to 150 km that can be combined with internal SKA AA* data to achieve optical/NIR space telescope resolution.

The Jodrell Bank FAQ on the scientific and other issues surrounding the proposed decision can be found at [Jodrell/e-MERLIN funding FAQ](#). The European radio astronomy community has rallied in support of Jodrell Bank including via this [EVN Directors Support Letter](#) including a signature by JC on behalf of Onsala Space Observatory.

The news of the possible closure of Jodrell Bank has caused a huge public backlash in the UK. The new UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham (has stated in the UK parliament that ‘Jodrell Bank will not close on my watch’ it was left ambiguous however whether he is refereeing to the Jodrell Bank Observatory or the site. Jodrell Bank Observatory is seeking alternative funding sources related to defence/national security, such as radar imaging of satellites (and possibly Space Geodesy to give UK an independent capability to measure UT1-UTC) – these probably have good chances of success; but would likely leave little or no availability of the Jodrell Bank telescopes and eMERLIN to take part in the EVN.

The effects on OSO of Jodrell Bank of the proposed funding cuts are both direct and indirect. There is a direct effect by reducing EVN and JIVE capabilities and hence the science value of OSO’s EVN contribution. There is a potential indirect effect in establishing a precedent that a national radio observatory’s funding can be cut in the face of pressure from SKA funding (but it should be noted that UK involvement in SKA is twice as large relative to GDP than Sweden). Other SKA countries are in contrast increasing their national capabilities in radio astronomy precisely because they are joining or seek to join SKAO.



Despite the threat to Jodrell Bank, the recent EVN Symposium (held every two years) held two weeks ago in Manchester was a very positive meeting with many great talks and science results.



<https://www.e-merlin.ac.uk/EVNSymp2026/>

3.5 - Final signed OSO funding agreement 2027-2030 (Doc A). For reference see copy of submitted VR proposal

See Indico documents

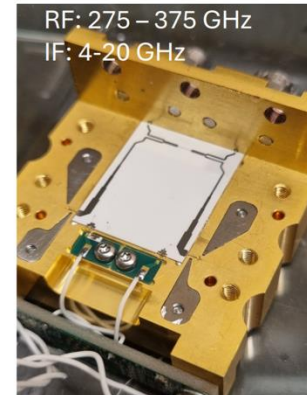
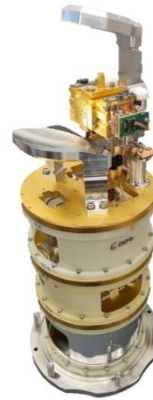
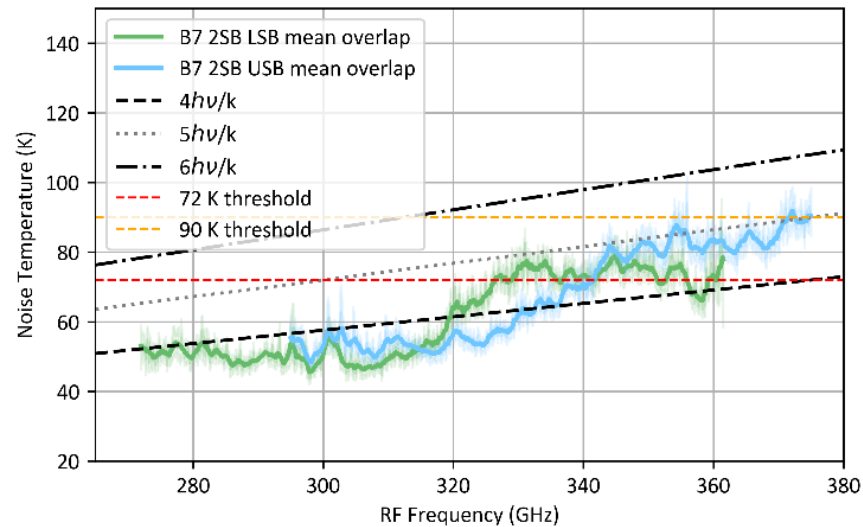
3.6 - Publicity on funding award (Docs A, B).

See Indico documents. A very successful publicity campaign

3.7 - Slides presented during visit of VR Infrastructure advisory committee B on 24th September

Consise general overview of OSO activities right now, including ALMA WSU and SKA construction

3.8 - Notice of coming ESO Call for ALMA WSU B7 receiver and delivery of our B7 prototype to APEX



Prototype new ALMA Band 7 WSU compatible receiver – ready for shipment to Chile before end of year with installation in January- Sorting out final legal issues.

ALMA Band 7 Cold Cartridge Assembly Upgrade / CFP-PR137145-FRI

Date documents can be requested until: 29 Oct 2026 15:00 (UTC -03:00) Pacific SA Daylight Time

Advanced notice of coming call for Band 7 upgrade has recently come out.

FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTES ONLY

The Call for Proposals (CFP) aims to upgrade the legacy ALMA Band 7 Cold Cartridge Assemblies (CCAs) to substantially increase the observing efficiency and scientific capabilities of this receiver band, in line with the ALMA Development Roadmap.

The CFP is scheduled to be issued in Q1 2027 to institutes in the ESO Member States.