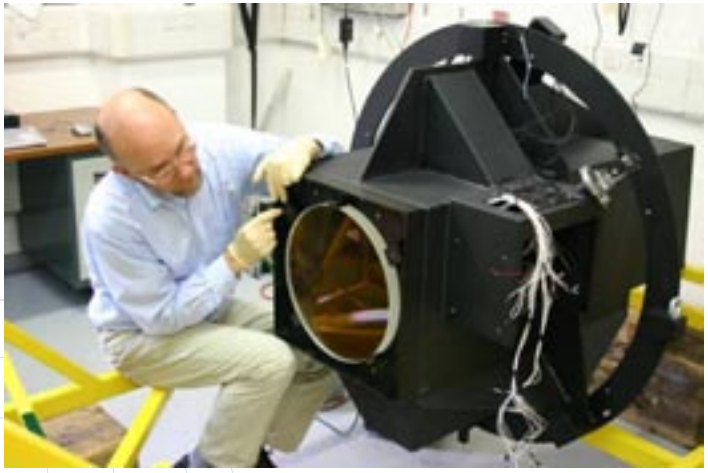
Laser guide star for WHT

A laser guide star system is being installed on the William Herschel Telescope. ASTRON developed the beam launch telescope (BLT) and the wave front sensor (WFS).

The Isaac Newton Group (ING) of Telescopes on La Palma is currently running a project named GLAS. The purpose of the Ground Layer Adaptive Optics System (GLAS) project is to realize a Rayleigh laser beacon for the adaptive optics system, NAOMI.

The fraction of the sky available to high-order adaptive optics at visible wavelengths will increase from ~5% to ~95%. This enables astronomers to exploit adaptive optics for the widest possible science goals.

The BLT is a mechanical structure that contains one big lens accurately aligned with two mirrors and a focusing mechanism. Concept studies started in September 2004 and delivery was planned for the end of March 2006. Thanks to a maximum effort of the team and our suppliers, we succeeded in completing the BLT on schedule. In May it will be mounted on the WHT, and in June the WFS will be integrated. Commissioning is expected after the summer.



BLT with optics during assembly and alignment on La Palma

Hidden Rhythms

On 19 and 20 January 2006, the WSRT became part of an international contemporary art project, 'Hidden Rhythms'. In live radio broadcasts the citizens of the city of Nijmegen were able to 'tune into the stars' as part of artist Susan Philipsz' exploration of the relationships between sound and architecture, and the alteration of the listener's perception of the self in a particular place and time. The sound comprised signals from PSR B1933+16 being relayed into listeners' homes via an abandoned and ramshackle flour factory in Nijmegen. The architecture featured the derelict factory as a former home to a pirate radio station, surrounded by houses that can no longer be entered from the street and having no official address.