

Pollution of the Night Sky

One of the reasons for selecting La Palma as the site for the installation of the UK's major optical telescopes was the comparatively minor interference with the quality of the night sky by urban lighting and overflying aircraft. Any increase in either of these factors will lead almost inevitably to a reduction in the observational utility of the site.

The control of these factors is a matter for high level consultation and nothing said or done by staff not involved directly in such consultation should prejudice any negotiations. However, since official notification often comes too late for remedial action, I would like co-operation in identifying 'early warnings' in order that action may in some instances be started sooner.

There are two areas where every one can contribute.

1) I would like to be informed of any reports, whether in newspapers or elsewhere, of possible future increases in the level of artificial lighting in the Island.

2) I would also like to start a record of the incidence of aircraft vapour trails in the vicinity of the site. Reports to be included in this would include date and time of observation and position and direction in at least crude terms. Regular visitors to the site are requested to co-operate in this.

Circulation : copies to J W G

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