

Is there anyone working out there?

Astronomers plan to listen for noise made by alien factories using the first UK telescope dedicated to the search for extra-terrestrials.

The **EAAROCIBO** project – launched by a group of scientists and businessmen based in East Anglia - aims to ditch the traditional method of searching for ET that has so far failed to detect interstellar radio transmissions.

The new project is named after the iconic space telescope at Arecibo in Puerto Rico that featured in the 1997 movie *Contact*, starring Jodie Foster. Last November the US National Science Foundation announced the closure of operations at the 57-year-old observatory after two cables gashed a 30-metre hole in the telescope's huge reflector dish.

60 years ago Frank Drake used the 85-foot antenna at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory in Green Bank in West Virginia to search for extra-terrestrial intelligence. This was humanity's first attempt to detect interstellar radio transmissions.

There have been many other unsuccessful attempts to detect alien signals from space. Billionaire Yuri Milner recently extended the search by backing a new \$100 million effort to find alien life searching for signals from a million nearby stars.

Argentinian physicist and UNESCO consultant Guillermo Lemarchand believes that we have only probed around a hundred-trillionth of the cosmic haystack for intelligent signals. Scientists say that the search for ET is a numbers game and the more you look the greater the chances of you finding evidence for their existence.

Jason Williams and Jeff Lashley of the **East Anglian Astrophysical Research organisation** (EAARO) have a new search concept, based on an idea by British-born physicist **Professor Paul Davies**.

The EAARO team have developed a disruptive approach to traditional SETI that is dedicated to finding the techno-signatures of interplanetary industry and mining operations. This novel search method works by looking for noise produced by industrial technologies such as machinery and spacecraft. Unlike traditional searches, EAAROCIBO's ground-based telescope will focus on a particular patch of space with the largest number of stars, a concept similar to that used by the orbiting Kepler Telescope in its search for extra-solar planets.

EAARO are looking at two possible locations for siting the telescope. The first is near Bodmin in Cornwall, and the second option is in North Yorkshire on the edge of the National Park. Filming started last month for a documentary that will be used as a



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resource for crowd funding. The first funding stage is to build a scale working model of the antenna, the second stage will be for the materials and services required for the actual antenna and associated equipment.

“I’m delighted that EAARO will be dedicated to this new approach to SETI,” commented Professor Davies. “While all searches are welcome, what the subject really needs is some innovative thinking. Under Jason Williams’ leadership, the EAARO project will serve as an inspirational trailblazer for SETI 2.0.”

In 1977 Jerry R Ehman using the Big Ear Telescope in Ohio discovered the historic WOW! signal which showed characteristics of being extra-terrestrial. The origin of this 72 second radio signal is still unknown and may be the strongest candidate for an alien radio transmission ever detected. Ohio State University scrapped the telescope in 1998 to make way for the expansion of a golf course.

In honour of Dr John D Kraus who designed and built the Big Ear, EAARO plan to rebuild a similar ‘Kraus Style’ Telescope as the receiving end of EAAROCIBO. It will be the only telescope of its kind ever to be built in the UK and its design elements fit well with Jason and Jeff’s design concept.

EAARO MD Jason Williams said: “EAAROCIBO will be the first dedicated SETI instrument of its kind ever to be built in the UK. Our novel research strategy and innovative approach to combining classic and cutting-edge technologies will give us a refreshing new perspective in this exciting field of research.”

Robert Kuhn, creator and host of the TV series *Closer to Truth*, said: “For centuries, as part of humanity’s grand quest to comprehend existence, to find our place in the vast, ineffable cosmos, great minds have been wondering about, and arguing about, the existence of extraterrestrial intelligence on other planets. As we continue to confirm new earth-like planets throughout our galaxy, and no doubt throughout the universe, employing new technologies in our search, here’s hoping EAARO can help bring us closer to truth.”

The project is supported by Associate Professor David Clarke of Sheffield Hallam University’s Centre for Culture Media and Society. He said:

“The desire to find evidence that we are not alone in the universe may become one of the defining human quests of the 21st century. Opinion polls consistently show that up to half of all Britons believe that ET life exists. This project is important because direct confirmation that we are not alone is seen by many as being fundamental to understanding our true place in the cosmos.”



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Notes to Editors:

EAARO is a not for profit charitable company established back in 2011 as a space research organisation with an unusually high level of public engagement:

<http://www.eaaro.org.uk/>

EAARO's objective is to educate and inspire people in the areas of Science, technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM) through meaningful space research. EAARO managing director Jason Williams can be contacted by email: jason@eaaro.org.uk or by phone 07802 357542 (mobile), 0203 432 6648 (landline).

Prof Paul Davies, of Arizona State University, is an advisor to Breakthrough Listen, former Chair of the SETI Post-Detection Task group, and author of *The Eerie Silence: Are We Alone In The Universe?*

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