



Gravitational Waves communications

The British experience

UK involvement in GW

- Scotland's Ron Drever one of pioneers of GW using interferometers
- Partners with AEI/MPG in GEO600 at Hanover
 - Major groups at Glasgow, Birmingham, Cardiff and four smaller groups
- Early involvement in Advanced LIGO
 - 1st country to commit funding for upgrade (before NSF)
 - Key mirror suspension designed and built in Glasgow and STFC labs
 - Key computational and analytical groups in Cardiff and Birmingham



Initial issues

- Early engagement by UK PIs with STFC as funding agency
 - STFC, INFN, IN2P3 discussed approach at EPPCN in November
 - Common concern about US approach, and worry about US leaks
- LIGO / Caltech / JPL had never managed multi-national, multi-institutional collaborative communications
 - STFC, INFN, IN2P3 have done it before, but were being ignored
- Funding agencies had to insist on recognition this was a multi-national success
 - Bypassed LIGO to avoid internal politics
 - Discussion with NSF



Plan global and local

- Publication date kept slipping, impossible to properly plan
 - I proposed a firm target date of 11 February to coincide with AAAS meeting
- Detection would obviously be a global science story
 - Goal to ensure also a mainstream story
 - A Scottish success there, a Polish one there, even a Malaysian success!
- By mid-December I'd briefed Minister, developed a comprehensive national communications plan and engaged directly with relevant scientists
 - Only briefed one team member to maintain security



A success but too much effort

- Massive coverage – all front pages, lead item on BBC and other outlets
 - Public recognition at Washington event by NSF Director of key UK role
 - Popular culture references
- But what do we do for a second detection?
 - Cannot afford never-ending “negotiations” with Caltech to insist other nations and other institutions are recognised
- LIGO needs a communicator
 - LSC sensibly looking at transition from searching to studying
 - Comms proposal fed in already





Questions