

## PRESS RELEASE

### **“Take me to your lawyer!” – Durham Law School to contribute legal research to SETI Post-Detection Hub at St Andrews University**

[Durham Law School](#) is pleased to announce that it will be joining the [SETI Post-Detection Hub](#) at St Andrews University as another host institution. The Hub is an initiative of the [UK SETI Research Network \(UKSRN\)](#), and has so far been hosted by the [St Andrews Centre for Exoplanet Science](#) and St Andrews’ [Centre for Global Law and Governance](#).

Durham Law School has research strength in the field of international law, which will be crucial in devising proposals to be submitted by the Hub to political decision-makers for the purpose of establishing domestic and international regulatory frameworks such as national or international official policies, legislation or international agreements, in order to put the search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI) in all its forms on a proper and legitimate footing.

Durham Law School also has the UK’s only dedicated [Chair in Global Law and SETI Policy](#), Professor Michael Bohlander, who will be leading the cooperation for Durham. Beyond the above-mentioned SETI regulation matters, Professor Bohlander’s research focusses on the consequences for human law in the event of contact in the mid- to long term. He has published on the questions of whether it makes sense for humans at this stage to unilaterally attempt to develop principles of a cosmic interspecies metalaw, or which global values humanity would be willing to trade in exchange for advanced alien technology that could solve global problems such as climate change etc. With his academic and practitioner background in international criminal law, he is also interrogating the application of interhuman laws of war to the scenario of a hostile contact with ETI.

Professor Bohlander stated: “SETI is not a mere academic exercise. If one accepts the possibility of contact with ETI, the impact of such a contact on human society may be serious to existential, depending on the kind of contact. Law is a discipline that should be at the forefront of creating a proper governance framework. In the words of former NASA Chief Historian, Dr Steven J Dick, ‘SETI is way behind the curve when it comes to legal implications of discovering intelligent life’. The revision of existing detection protocols and frameworks cannot be left to the scientific or commercial communities alone or remain in the black box of classified military planning but must involve democratically legitimised political actors. The Hub is the ideal platform for this engagement.”

Durham Law School Dean Volker Röben said: “I am excited that our School will be engaging in a new field of cutting-edge legal development and help chart the path to regulating SETI as an activity to a standard which can be supported by all nations of Earth.”

Hub Coordinator Dr John Elliott added: “The highly renowned Law School of Durham University becoming a new joint host is a fantastic addition to the expertise assembled in the Hub and will greatly facilitate the Hub’s mission.”

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