LSST:UK

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Dumfries and Galloway physics teacher gets the inside track on groundbreaking sky survey

Moffat Academy teacher to use data from the world's largest camera to inspire a new generation of scientists.

Sibyl Kadel, who teaches physics to students in years P7 to S6 at Moffat Academy, is back in the classroom after an out-this world experience among the high peaks of Arizona. Having won a prized place on the Vera C. Rubin Observatory's Summer Stars Program, Sibyl travelled to the United States in July to learn how a global astronomy project – the Vera C. Rubin Observatory – can help pupils in Scotland and beyond learn more about the Universe and acquire important STEAM skills.

The annual 'Summer Stars Program: Teaching with NSF–DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory' is open to educators who teach astronomy as part of their curriculum. Sibyl's place was sponsored by LSST:UK, the UK's scientific contribution to the Rubin Observatory. Named for the pioneering American astronomer Vera Rubin, who provided the first convincing evidence for the existence of dark matter, the Rubin Observatory houses the world's biggest digital camera, which will take detailed images of the southern hemisphere sky for 10 years. This sky survey is known as the Legacy Survey of Space and Time (LSST). After more than three decades of planning – and collaboration by thousands of people around the world – the LSST officially launched on 30 June 2026.

As the only participant from outside North America, Sibyl joined middle-, high-school and college teachers to get to grips with open-access learning resources developed by the cutting-

edge, US-led Rubin project. The group also spent time at the U.S. National Science Foundation Kitt Peak National Observatory, located at the highest point in the Arizona-Sonoran Desert. The site has one of the largest collections of astronomical instruments in the northern hemisphere and is home to the Rubin Control Room.

Visiting the Control Room was one of the highlights for Sibyl, who was able to meet scientists working with data that arrives directly from Cerro Pachón in Chile, the site of the Rubin Observatory. The Chilean mountaintop was chosen for its perfect conditions for astronomy – high, remote and dry. *"It was great to meet some of the people involved in Rubin and learn about their different roles," she said. "I remember giving a talk on dark matter when I was at university, so it was exciting to meet people who are putting theory into practice. Throughout the week, there was a real emphasis on the breadth of expertise needed for a project like Rubin, and how STEAM careers can be available to people with a wide range of skills and knowledge."*

The summer school participants had a chance to work with open-access classroom tools developed by the Rubin Education Program; covering engaging topics, the 'Investigations' include *Exploding Stars*, *Hazardous Asteroids* and *Stellar Safari*.

Now that Sibyl is back in Moffat, Europe's first Dark Sky Town, she is looking forward to sharing what she's learned. *"The resources are really accessible,"* she said. "*They'll help my students learn in a visual way to understand common astronomy topics while working with genuine Rubin data."*

For Sibyl, one of the most commendable aspects of the Rubin Observatory is how the project is sharing the information it captures: *"It's so impressive that the data has been made public so that anyone can use it,"* she said. "*It's incredible – given all the work that's gone into creating Rubin – that it's being given back to humanity. That fills me with hope and awe."*

Bob Mann, Professor of Survey Astronomy at the University of Edinburgh, is the Project Leader for UK participation in the Rubin LSST: He said: "*The Rubin LSST should have an impact beyond the small community of professional astronomers. The public can participate in LSST-based research through citizen science initiatives using the UK-led Zooniverse platform and we really hope that Sibyl is just the first of many UK teachers to use the educational resources produced by the Rubin Observatory in their classrooms. It would be great if these activities using LSST data inspired a few of Sibyl's pupils to study astronomy, but I am sure that they will help many more develop skills that could benefit them in a range of future careers*."

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Notes to editors

About LSST:UK

Through LSST:UK, the UK is a major international partner in the Vera C. Rubin Observatory. LSST:UK is facilitated through a multi-million-pound investment by the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC). Formed in 2014, the LSST:UK Consortium is made up of 36 partner institutions* representing all major UK astronomy research groups. Researchers and software developers across the UK are addressing scientific and technical challenges posed by this revolutionary observatory.

To date, UK participation in the Rubin LSST has been funded by £23 million of investment by the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), part of UK Research and Innovation. Computational resources used by LSST:UK are provided through the STFC-funded IRIS project.

The LSST:UK Consortium has created the LSST:UK Science Centre (LUSC), a distributed team of researchers and software developers addressing scientific and technical challenges that will enable astronomers to make discoveries within the multi-Petabyte dataset produced by LSST.

Website: lsst.ac.uk

**Armagh Observatory; Cardiff University; Durham University; Imperial College London; Keele University; Lancaster University; Liverpool John Moores University ; Newcastle University; Open University; Queen Mary University of London; Queen's University Belfast; University of Bath; University of Birmingham; University of Bristol; University of Cambridge; University of Lancashire; University of Edinburgh; University of Exeter; University of Glasgow; University of Hertfordshire; University of Hull; University of Kent; University of Leicester; University of Leeds; University of Manchester ; University of Nottingham; University of Oxford ; University of Portsmouth; University of St Andrews; University of Sheffield; University of Southampton; University of Surrey; University of Sussex; University of Warwick; University College London; UK Astronomy Technology Centre.*

About Rubin Observatory Education

The third annual *Summer Stars Program: Teaching with NSF–DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory*, took place from 13 to 17 July 2026 in Tucson, Arizona.

All the Rubin classroom materials and online investigations are free and available under a Creative Commons license. They require only access to the internet and a modern browser. Each investigation is designed to be classroom-ready. There are no external materials to acquire or handouts to print. The goal is to help teachers engage their students in learning with minimal time and effort.

For more information about the Rubin Observatory Education visit
rubinobservatory.org/education

LSST:UK education and public outreach activities will be available at lsst.ac.uk/resources/engagement as they become available

About the NSF–DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory

The NSF–DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory is jointly funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Science. Rubin Observatory is a joint Programme of NSF NOIRLab and DOE's SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory.

During its 10-year survey, the Vera C. Rubin Observatory will catalogue an estimated 17 billion stars, 20 billion galaxies, and millions of events that change in the sky – more objects than there are living people on earth. With the survey expected to create up to 500 petabytes of data in its lifetime, the UK is playing a significant role in the management and processing of this unprecedented dataset. The UK's LSST data facility will process 25% of the data from Rubin, turning raw images of the sky into the calibrated data products with which astronomers can do science, and will operate a science platform capable of supporting analysis of those data products by 20% of the international LSST community.

Visit rubinobservatory.org for more information.

Images

Use the links to download a high res-image and use credit details provided.

	**Sibyl takes a selfie at Kitt Peak with the Nicholas U. Mayall Telescope in the background.** Credit: Sibyl Kadel Download a press image

	**Moffatt Academy physics teacher Sibyl Kadel (pictured far left) travelled to Arizona to join the Vera C. Rubin Observatory's Summer Stars Program 2026.** Credit: NSF–DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory Download a press image
	**This image shows the Rubin Observatory's power to capture the awe and wonder of the Universe.** **It combines 678 separate images taken in just over seven hours of observing time.** Credit: NSF–DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory Download a press image

Sibyl's pupils will work with data produced by the NSF–DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory which is located in Chile.

In this image:

Mesmerising star trails spin above Cerro Pachón, a mountain in northern Chile and home to NSF–DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory.

Credit: NSF–DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory/NOIRLab/SLAC/AURA/H. Stockebrand

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