

Defence giant Lockheed Martin invests £150k solar power project with Northumbria University

Aerospace firm Lockheed Martin has joined forces with Northumbria University to research space-based solar power.

The US-based contractor has invested £150,000 into the partnership that aims to “harvest” the sun’s energy and beam electricity wirelessly down to Earth. The process will use specialised solar panels that will collect and convert laser power into power for future space and lunar vehicles.

Lockheed says the technology could provide a new source of zero carbon power for homes and businesses, and would be operational at all times of the day, whatever the weather. The work builds on the firm’s prior experimentation with laser-based systems and is an extension of an existing partnership with Northumbria University.

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Paul Livingston, chief executive of Lockheed Martin UK, said: “Our collaboration with Northumbria University will advance the use of space-based solar power for satellites, space vehicles and potentially useable power back on earth. We are delighted to be helping grow the North East’s space economy and the overall industrial capacity and resilience of the UK’s space and manufacturing sectors.”

Professor John Woodward, faculty pro vice-chancellor for engineering and environment at Northumbria University, added: “Northumbria University is a UK front-runner in research into

photovoltaics and solar energy and our reputation for world-leading research in space and satellite technologies has grown exponentially in recent years. This exciting project with Lockheed Martin combines these areas of excellence and will enable us to innovate further to find new ways to generate and store renewable energy.”

There are hopes that Lockheed Martin could bring a [£50m space factory](#) to the North East after it hinted last year that the region is a frontrunner in its decision making about where to locate the 2,300-job facility. Speaking to BusinessLive at the time, Mr Livingston said the firm had looked at several sites in the North East.

Next week the North East Space Conference will take place in Durham, with more than 200 delegates from across sector signed up. The event will feature talks from Lockheed Martin engineer Pete Penegor as well as Harshbir Sangha from the UK Space Agency, John Bon of the North East Space Leadership Group and councillor Amanda Hopgood, leader of Durham County Council.

Mr Bone, who is also chief operating officer at e2E Group, said: “This year’s North East Space Conference will showcase some of the incredible work that is being undertaken by North East companies and universities in collaboration with UK and international partners to support the UK’s ambition to be a leading player in the space market. We continue to see the profile of the North East being raised in the space sector, this year attracting even more involvement from leading global experts and influencers from space companies, universities, the UK Space Agency and ESA (European Space Agency).”

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