

UK to invest in 10 'space clusters' to support industry's growth

Hundreds of thousands of pounds are being invested in Britain's so-called "space clusters" – areas of the country where the space industry is flourishing.

Ten organisations across the UK have been given a boost, including in Cornwall, Scotland and the West Midlands.

The UK Space Agency said the cash would support new and growing companies; build on local expertise; and catalyse investment into the sector, which is now worth £16bn a year to the economy.

More than £600,000 will go towards supporting activities that create jobs and growth, it said, including recruiting "pace cluster managers", to strengthen local space sector leadership groups, and developing new business opportunities.

According to the UK Space Agency, each organisation will use the funding to support locally led space sector activities in their region, including business case development and evidence gathering for local authorities and economic development bodies.

Dr Paul Bate, chief executive of the UK Space Agency, said: "We are building on our strengths in space such as satellite manufacturing, while supporting emerging markets like in-orbit servicing, to unlock the growth in the UK space sector and help level up the economy," he said.

The funding follows the unveiling of the government's 'Levelling Up White Paper' [which sets out a plan to close the gap between rich and poor parts of the country.](#)

There are now around 45,000 people employed in the space sector in the UK – from space scientists and researchers to engineers and satellite manufacturers. By 2030, the global space economy is projected to grow from an estimated £270bn in 2019 to £490bn.

Will Whitehorn, president of the trade association UKspace, said: “Additional grants of this nature are hugely important in helping to communicate the potential for the growing ‘new space’ economy.

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“Monitoring and understanding our world from space has already become crucial to our survival.”

Mr Whitehorn said industrialisation in space would be driven by the need to reach net zero and mitigate climate change by shifting more carbon-generating digital activities outside the atmosphere – and even producing solar power in space.

“The opportunities these activities will bring to the UK should not be underestimated, from space launch to digital services and even infinity and beyond,” he added.

The 10 ‘space clusters’ to receive funding

Cornwall Development Company (CDC) – £51,000

Cornwall’s space cluster will use grant funds to hold a series of workshops and events to showcase local business capabilities to academic and industry partners across the UK to stimulate new opportunities for research and innovation. The CDC will also use funds to create a new cluster website, undertake research for a local skills strategy and refine the local space proposition for the region.

West of England Combined Authority – £97,500

The West of England Combined Authority region, which covers Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, and South Gloucestershire, will use grant funds to build and deliver on the recommendations from the West of England Space Strategy. Funding will support a range of activities to raise the profile of the region’s space sector, including attracting inward investment and hosting a regional showcase event.

Northern Ireland Space Office – £72,000

Northern Ireland will use grant funds to undertake a series of cluster development activities that build on the recommendations from the NI Space Market Insight Report. Activities include the formation of a NI Space Leadership Council, undertaking stakeholder engagement to further mature the cluster and define a business case for sustainable cluster development.

Aerospace Wales £34,000

Wales was funded to appoint a Space Wales Development Manager. The individual appointed will lead the implementation of the Wales space sector strategy as embodied in the document “Wales –a sustainable space nation” and development of the Space Wales network and cluster.

Midlands Aerospace Alliance £64,000

West Midlands region will use grant funds to promote the West Midlands cluster, identify business opportunities, connect businesses to academia and space suppliers including non-space companies that can pivot into both the upstream and downstream sectors. The MAA and the University of Birmingham will also use funds to hold workshops to showcase the expertise within the region.

Leeds University £73,000

Space Hub Yorkshire will use grant funds to appoint 2x Cluster Development Managers that will drive and take forward recommendations from Yorkshire’s regional space strategy. Funding will also be used to initiate and deliver a programme of events, which will be continued and sustained beyond the lifetime of this grant through in-kind support from regional universities.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise £38,000

Space Hub Sutherland will use grant funds to undertake cluster development activity around the proposed site of a spaceport and launch facilities at Sutherland.

Open University £43,500

As part of the Arc for Space Group, the Open University will use grant funds to support and coordinate regional space sector growth ambitions in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Work will be delivered in close collaboration with industry, academia and regional organisations. World-leading research programmes will be mapped to develop commercial and funding opportunities for the region to enable businesses to participate and commercialise R&D projects.

Scottish Space Group (Space Scotland) £64,500

Scotland will use grant funds to appoint a cluster development manager to build and deliver on recommendations from the Scottish Space Strategy. Other activities will include identifying opportunities in the downstream sectors, scaling of regional STEM activities and undertake a series of stakeholder engagement activities to promote the cluster.

Science and Technology Facilities Council (part of UK Research and Innovation) Daresbury Laboratory £61,000

This grant funding is being used to establish a North West of England space cluster.. It brings together all five bodies of the North West (Cumbria, Cheshire and Warrington, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Liverpool City Region) with local, regional and national stakeholder organisations. Hosted by STFC, a North West Space Cluster Leadership Group has been established, to enable and ready this cluster for launch later in 2022.