

Airbus New Year's reception 2020

The Cinnamon Club is always a great venue.

Believe it or not, this isn't the first Indian restaurant to have caught Airbus's passion for aviation.

Several years ago, the story goes that a curry house in Filton spent £5,000 putting the cockpit of a Hawker jet inside the restaurant to attract Airbus staff in for dinner.

One to try for next year's reception, perhaps?

The Prime Minister is sorry he can't be here tonight – but sends his best wishes for the New Year.

And he'll see Guillaume (Faury, CEO Airbus) – as will I – at the Farnborough International Air Show in July – if not before.

Now – ladies and gentlemen – as Business Secretary, there are some firms that are easy to get excited about.

And Airbus is certainly one of them.

From flapping planes, to flying taxis. From chasing comets, to exploring Mars. No other company is quite like yours.

And while Airbus is undoubtedly a European company – it's also something of a national treasure.

For decades, the UK has had the privilege – and it is a privilege – of being one of Airbus's 4 'home nations'.

And it was great to hear Guillaume say that Airbus remains committed to the UK.

So please rest assured that we also remain absolutely committed to Airbus – and to the industry as a whole.

In November we increased our funding to the European Space Agency to record levels, signalling our commitment to international collaboration.

And – of course – we will continue to support the EU's efforts to negotiate a settlement to the current World Trade Organization (WTO) dispute.

Both now and once we've left the EU.

Yet, today, we should all be feeling optimistic.

UK aerospace continues to go from strength to strength – with new figures showing the number of people working in the sector rose by 2,000 in 2018.

I'd like to congratulate Guillaume – and Airbus – on another fantastic year for deliveries in 2019.

And 2020 promises to be even better.

A new year, a new decade, a new top team at Airbus, a newly elected government and – above all – a new sense of confidence in the future.

To me, it feels like that moment after take-off when you hear the 'ping' of the 'fasten-your-seatbelt' signs turning off.

We're rising out of the clouds of Brexit uncertainty and finally have a clear view of the political horizon.

Today, we have a real chance to build a stronger, greener United Kingdom.

And I – for one – can't wait to crack on with my department's priorities:

- leading the world in tackling climate change
- solving the Grand Challenges facing our society – from healthy ageing, to developing autonomous vehicles and space technologies
- and making the UK the best place in the world to work and grow a business

As we build a better future for our country – your contribution will be crucial.

We are immensely proud that Airbus's flagship Research and Technology programme 'Wing of Tomorrow' is taking place in the UK.

It's a great example of government and industry working, and investing, together, in the carbon fibre wings of the future.

A massive opportunity for Airbus – but also for the hundreds of companies in UK supply chains who help design and assemble the best wings in the world.

So that in 1, 2 or 3 decades' time, Airbus engineering will still be a UK icon.

Of course, in the future, it's not just the wings which will change – but the way planes are powered.

Today, we're just 8 days into a new decade of decarbonisation.

And Airbus already have a head-start.

Last month, they celebrated the first flight of one of their 'Beluga' Super Transporters with Sustainable Aviation Fuel.

An aircraft over 50-feet high and nearly 200-feet long being powered – in part – by recycled cooking oil!

In 2018, sustainable fuels covered just 0.1% of the industry's needs. So there's a massive opportunity to grow this – greening existing power sources

as we develop new ones.

On hybrid technology, Guillaume must have a certain sense of 'déjà vu'. At the start of the last decade, when he was Peugeot's Executive Vice-President for R&D in 2011, he helped launch the world's first diesel-electric hybrid.

And now, since becoming Airbus CEO, Guillaume has led a big push towards electrification – something Airbus can be proud of.

Having legislated for net zero emissions by 2050 and with COP26 taking place in Glasgow later this year, we need companies to find solutions on decarbonising transport.

And through the Aerospace Technology Institute, we are backing the E-Fan X hybrid demonstrator, developed by the 'dream team' of Airbus, Rolls-Royce and Cranfield University.

Its first flight next year will be a huge step towards one of Airbus's most ambitious goals: creating the technology to fly a 100-passenger aircraft based on electric and hybrid-electric technology within the 2030s timeframe.

A breakthrough which would literally change our lives – and help create the net zero world we all want to see.

Ladies and gentlemen, Lord Kings Norton, Cranfield University's first Chancellor, once wrote:

It is one thing to have an idea. It is another to have the technical ... ability to give it flesh. It is still another to have the tenacity of purpose to drive through to success.

He wrote these words about jet engine inventor Frank Whittle.

And, today – we're at the start of another aerospace revolution.

Airbus undoubtedly has the ideas and ability.

And under Guillaume's leadership – I believe you have the 'tenacity of purpose' to pull it off.

So please know that through the tests and trials, the demonstrators and development, the UK will stand firmly by your side.

Together, I know we can succeed. Thank you.