

Press release: £100m boost for UK space sector to ensure UK is equipped to stay ahead of the competition

- £99m of government funding for a National Satellite Testing Facility on the Harwell Campus in Oxfordshire
- additional £4m announced for a National Space Propulsion Facility to develop and test space engines
- space sector forms a key part of the Government's Industrial Strategy to spread economic growth across the UK

The £100m package includes £99m of Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund investment to create a National Satellite Testing Facility (NSTF) on the Harwell Campus in Oxfordshire, alongside a £4m investment for a new National Space Propulsion Facility to develop and test space engines at Wescott Venture Park in Buckinghamshire.

Part of the Government's Industrial Strategy, the significant funding boost will enable UK industry to competitively bid for more national and international contracts and ensure we remain a world-leader for space technologies for decades to come.

Visiting the UK Space Gateway on the Harwell Campus in Oxfordshire, where the NSTF will be based, Universities and Science Minister Jo Johnson said:

"From Cornwall to the Highlands and islands of Scotland, the UK space sector underpins industries worth more than £250 billion to the UK economy, and through our Industrial Strategy we will unlock the sector's potential to grow further.

"Located in a cluster known for research excellence, these new facilities will help UK companies be more competitive in the global market for space technology and support our ambition to capture 10% of the global space market by 2030."

Due to open in early 2020, the new NSTF will be a world-class facility for the assembly, integration and testing of space instruments and satellites, positioning the UK to capitalise on the estimated 3,500 -10,000 satellites that are due to be launched by 2025. It will also facilitate the build of bigger and more technologically advanced satellites and remove the need for UK companies to use test facilities located abroad.

The NSPF will allow companies and academia to test and develop space propulsion engines, alongside a new facility for Reaction Engines where the revolutionary SABRE air-breathing rocket engine will also be tested and built.

Dr Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, said:

This investment will enhance the capability of the UK space industry. Having access to a National Satellite Testing Facility will help companies develop and encourage new business to come to the UK, while the development of new facilities at Westcott builds on what is already a world-class UK space propulsion sector.

Dr Brian Bowsher, Chief Executive of the Science and Technology Facilities Council, said:

STFC's RAL Space team has been chosen as the delivery organisation for this investment and our staff will be responsible for the definition, design, building, fit out and operation of the facility. This is fantastic recognition of the strong reputation we have in the UK and overseas as the go-to team for the assembly, integration and testing of the incredibly complex and unique engineering involved in space payloads and satellites.