

# [Press release: Dstl Announce Swarming Drone Hackathon Challenge](#)

Using a bespoke synthetic environment from AFRL, this hackathon is going to develop new and innovative ways to use unmanned aerial systems (UAS) to assist the emergency services to deal with wildfires.

This pioneering initiative aims to find new ways of using UAS for global search and rescue in defence and the public sector. Scenarios will be run in parallel with the US via a continuous video link with the WBI in Dayton, Ohio who are hosting the same event in the US.

The hackathon will explore innovative ways to plan missions using multiple systems to assist in the identification and prediction of how wildfires will spread and subsequently find preventative solutions, minimise damage and save lives. Teams will use a range of collaboration platforms to explore different fire scenarios with an increasing level of complexity, working with experts from the Fire Service, Dstl and the wider Ministry of Defence. Dstl and AFRL are using this innovative approach to find the best Artificial Intelligence or Machine Learning algorithms that embody efficiency and resilience.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

Collaboration in innovative research between the UK and US continues to push the boundaries of advanced technology. This hackathon will bring together the best and brightest from academia, industry and the public to discover new ways to utilise life-saving drone technology.

Tim Wright, Dstl's Aerospace Systems Group Leader, said:

The speed and ferocity of the devastating wildfires in California demonstrated the need to develop new ways of using science and technology to assist the emergency services wherever possible. Small unmanned air systems or 'drones' – in the right hands – could offer a way of reducing the burden on the emergency services by mapping and tracking a wildfire in real time, autonomously, so efforts can be focussed rapidly where they're needed to save more lives.

[Tim Wright, Dstl's Aerospace Systems Group Leader explains](#)

We are reaching out to industry, academia, tech start-ups, coders, anyone with new ideas and an interest in drones, artificial intelligence or autonomy to help us find and develop new concepts

of controlling drones in the most efficient and effective ways to give as much assistance to the emergency services as possible. This event will be a fantastic opportunity to spend a weekend with some of the best minds in the business from the UK and US, collaborating simultaneously with the Wright Brothers Institute's hackathon.

Mick Hitchcock from the US Air Force, said:

It is fantastic to be able to work with Dstl on this project. The activity fits right into both countries' desire to approach research differently, and involves non-traditional innovative thinkers as partners and most importantly get results faster. The competition is not between the two countries, but to highlight the ability to rapidly work together on tough problems.

The winning team from the UK hackathon will be offered a unique opportunity to present their winning ideas and proposal for further exploitation at the British Embassy in Washington DC. Costs for travel and accommodation will be provided where appropriate. The winning teams from both the US and UK hackathons will also be recognised at the AUVSI XPONENTIAL 2019 unmanned and autonomous systems trade show.

The UK and US hackathons take place simultaneously from 29 to 31 March 2019 with the UK event taking place at the 'Spark' Facility at Southampton Solent University.

To register for this unique event, visit [Eventbrite](#) and see all the latest updates [here](#)

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