

# Press release: Dstl Unveils First 'Searchlight' Event at Cranfield University

Searchlight aims to encourage small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to work with Dstl, and the first event will focus on Radio Frequency (RF) systems. Specifically, frequency-agile RF hardware, machine learning applied to modern communications standards (including Internet of Things) and novel manufacturing solutions to reduce size, weight, power and/or cost.

The free event includes: industry insight by leading experts; how companies can enter the market and work with Dstl; case study success stories; sample technical challenges and workshops. Staff from across various Dstl departments will be available throughout the day to offer technical and commercial guidance. Places are limited and restricted to one person per company. [Register at Team Defence](#)

SME Searchlight aims to engage with non-traditional defence suppliers and SMEs to meet the needs of a £40 million – £45 million increase in research, in line with the government's intent to increase external spending with SMEs. Companies benefit in turn from increased funding and being at the cutting-edge of research and technology.

Over the next 12 months, events, workshops and consultations run by Dstl will take place in partnership with Aerospace and Defence Suppliers (ADS), the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Team Defence Information and TechUK, to bring companies together from across industry sectors. An ambitious target of 60% of suppliers who may never have worked with defence before has been set to attend each of these events, with the aim of bringing these new companies into Dstl's supply chain.

The increase in demand for new research opportunities extends across Dstl, with a number of priority areas identified. In addition to RF these include artificial intelligence, synthetic biology and wargaming.

Rob Solly, Division Head for Defence and Security Analysis from Dstl, said:

SMEs possess tremendous ideas and innovation. Dstl has funds available to invest in cutting-edge research, and the commercial and technological clout to accelerate these ideas. Importantly, SMEs retain the Intellectual Property rights to any innovation in most cases, boosting their long-term prosperity as well as that of the UK.

Separately, Dstl is also a sponsor of Venturefest on 29 March at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton, which brings together top talent from the region to demonstrate technologies and innovations, allow start-ups to pitch for

investment, and match entrepreneurs with the right organisations to take their businesses to the next level. For more information email us at: [searchlight@dstl.gov.uk](mailto:searchlight@dstl.gov.uk)