

[Press release: SpaceX launches pioneering UK maritime communications satellite](#)

The first of its kind satellite was launched this evening (03 December) into a 575 km sun-synchronous orbit as part of Spaceflight's SS0-A SmallSat Express mission on-board a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Vandenberg Air Force Base, USA, at 18:30 GMT.

VESTA ('VdES Transmitting sAtellite system) will support new two-way maritime information services between ship and shore. The payload was designed and built by [Honeywell UK](#) in Aylesbury and the spacecraft by [Surrey Satellites](#) (SSTL) in Guilford.

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

There are still vast areas of the Earth where communication remains difficult, none more so than out at sea.

Satellites can bridge this gap, however testing new technology is risky and expensive. That's why the UK Space Agency is helping to fund promising UK technologies like VESTA as part of the government's Industrial Strategy, to kick start innovation and growth, while delivering safety at sea and jobs back home.

The mission was made possible through £1 million flagship funding from the [UK Space Agency's National Space Technology](#) programme which aims to accelerate innovation and better position UK organisations to enter and expand within both institutional and commercial space markets, growing the UK space economy.

Chris Bee, a Business Manager at Honeywell Aerospace UK said:

While leading the way in demonstrating small data packet transfer from a small payload into remote maritime locations beyond our phone networks, this mission is also leading us into an even broader range of remote communication scenarios to increase the connectivity of our world.

VESTA will demonstrate:

- Broadcasting vessel traffic information, such as the delivery of ice-maps to shipping in the polar regions and;
- two-way communications to support commercial fleet monitoring by relaying real-time ship engine, emissions and fuel data to operators as

well as provision of specific meteorological data.

Spaceflight's SS0-A mission is the largest single rideshare mission from a U.S.-based launch vehicle to date. The company has contracted with 34 different organisations to launch 64 spacecraft on just one rocket.

The UK's space sector is going from strength to strength, employing around 40,000 people and carrying our world-class science while growing the economy.

Last month (19 November) a [contract worth several hundred million-pounds](#) was signed for Eutelsat to procure two innovative new telecommunications satellites from Airbus, with much of the work taking place in the UK, at manufacturing sites in Portsmouth and Stevenage.

This is all supported by the Government's Industrial Strategy, with major initiatives such as the National Satellite Test Facility at Harwell and the development of the proposed commercial spaceport in Sutherland, Scotland.