

Shetland enters new frontier as UK space industry leader



Minister Lamont meets Saxa Vord Space Port Project Manager Elizabeth Johnson

Shetland is set to be at the heart of Scotland's – and the UK's – space industry success story, UK Government Minister for Scotland John Lamont said as he visited the Saxa Vord spaceport on Unst.

Saxa Vord is on track to launch its first satellites in 2023 – part of UK-wide efforts to gain up to a £4bn share of the global space market by the end of the decade. The Minister visited the site's first, newly completed concrete launch pad, one of three orbital launch pads that will support up to 30 vertical launches a year from the former RAF station site, employing up to 200 people in connection with each launch.

Minister Lamont said:

There is a huge opportunity for Shetland to be a world leader in terms of space technology deployment; the spaceport at Saxa Vord has unique geographical advantages that we are keen to help them exploit.

We're working hard to become the first in Europe to provide end-to-end solutions – from design and build to lift-off – for small satellites, and the development of different launch sites is a crucial part of that.

This is a very exciting project, and the wider space industry has huge potential to create rewarding and skilled careers not just throughout Scotland but across the UK as a whole; Shetland can be at the heart of that.

John Lamont was undertaking his first engagements since being appointed as UK Government Minister for Scotland, and met with members of Shetland Islands Council to discuss opportunities and challenges for the islands.

Andrea Manson, Convener, Shetland Islands Council, said:

I am delighted that the Minister has prioritised Shetland for his first ministerial visit and I was happy to welcome him to Shetland. This was a fantastic opportunity to showcase the opportunities Shetland has in space, aquaculture and new energy. It was a positive chance to engage on fixed links and Levelling Up.

The minister also visited Scottish Sea Farms' salmon fishery at Burra and later met teams from Blueshell Mussels and Shetland Mussels, members of the Scottish Shellfish co-operative.

He added:

It has been great to explore Shetland's vibrant and diverse economy. One of the themes that has come up repeatedly throughout this visit has been connectivity – both in terms of technological infrastructure, and of fixed links to improve access to the outer islands.

Shetland has already benefited from internet connectivity improvements with UK Government help; it was helpful to discuss options for improving physical infrastructure too and I will be discussing with colleagues what we might be able to do, across Government, in terms of moving these proposals forward to the next stage.

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Removed factually incorrect para.

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