Shetland spaceport boosts UK's plans for launch

- Lockheed Martin to develop UK launch operations from Shetland Space Centre on the island of Unst.
- Orbex and Highlands and Islands Enterprise continue to advance launch plans from Space Hub Sutherland.

Hundreds of space jobs will be created in Scotland following the approval of plans for Lockheed Martin to transfer its satellite launch operations to Shetland Space Centre by the UK government.

Shetland Space Centre anticipates that by 2024, the spaceport site could support a total of 605 jobs in Scotland including 140 locally and 210 across the wider Shetland region. A further 150 jobs will also be created through wider manufacturing and support services.

Following a thorough process of due diligence, the UK Space Agency has confirmed that Lockheed Martin's plans to move its UK Pathfinder Launch to the Shetland site at Lamba Ness on Unst would continue to deliver long-term value and help establish a sustainable, commercial launch market as part of the UK's spaceflight programme – LaunchUK.

Lockheed Martin is in discussions with a preferred partner to provide launch services for its UK Pathfinder Launch, which would take place from Shetland Space Centre.

UK Government Amanda Solloway, Science Minister, said:

> We want the UK to be the best place in Europe to launch satellites, attracting innovative businesses from all over the world and creating hundreds of high-skilled jobs.
>
> The potential to have multiple spaceports in Scotland demonstrates the scale of our ambition, and I want to support industry by pressing ahead with our plans during this challenging time.
>
> This government is committed to backing our growing space sector, developing a comprehensive space strategy and supporting transformative technologies that will benefit people and businesses across the country.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said:

> The UK Government is committed to cementing the UK's position as a global leader in the space sector. The creation of the Shetland Space Centre is incredibly exciting news and a real boost for the

> local economy.
>
> Our investment in Scottish spaceports is creating hundreds of secure and skilled jobs for people in Scotland.
>
> The Shetland Space Centre a huge step forward for our ambitious UK Spaceflight programme.

The Shetland launch site at Lamba Ness on the island of Unst. ©Shetland Space Centre Ltd

Just as an airport can handle a range of different airlines and aircraft, Space Hub Sutherland has been designed as a multi-user site able to cater for the needs of multiple launch providers. This ensures it will be able to continue to compete for a wide range of exciting vertical launch opportunities.

The UK Space Agency will also continue to fully support Space Hub Sutherland through grant funding to Highlands and Islands Enterprise to develop the spaceport infrastructure and to UK-based launch partner, Orbex, to prepare its innovative Prime rocket to launch from the site in 2022.

An economic assessment of the Spaceport Sutherland site reported in 2019 that the site is due to create over 60 high-skilled jobs in Sutherland and Caithness, and 250 jobs in the wider area.

Ivan McKee, Scottish Government Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation said:

> This is an extremely exciting time for the emerging space sector globally, and Scotland is situated at the very forefront of this.
>
> The transfer of Lockheed Martin’s UK pathfinder satellite launch to Shetland Space Centre will enhance Scotland’s existing vertical launch capability and enable us to target a wider market base through a complementary offer across multiple spaceports.
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> This will provide an economic boost not only to the Shetland Isles but also maximise the commercial opportunity across the wider region, with Highlands and Islands Enterprise leading the delivery of Space Hub Sutherland alongside Scottish-based launch partner, Orbex.

Developing domestic spaceflight capabilities will play a key role in levelling up the UK economy, driving investment, fostering growth and creating new jobs.

Scotland is already home to some of the world’s most innovative satellite

manufacturers, and its ability to host complementary launch sites puts the UK firmly on the map as Europe’s leading small satellite launch destination.

The economic benefits of launch will be shared across the Highlands and Islands region and both Space Hub Sutherland and Shetland Space Centre have already attracted significant commercial interest in their plans. In 2019, Orbex opened a rocket design and manufacturing facility in Forres, near Inverness, which is anticipated to bring 130 highly-skilled jobs to the region.

Nik Smith, UK Country Executive at Lockheed Martin said:

> The UK has a vibrant space sector, which can stimulate the national as well as regional economies. As a long-standing strategic partner to the UK, Lockheed Martin is committed to building on its proud heritage to support the UK government’s role of growing capabilities in space, exciting imagination and advancing the frontiers of science.
>
> From the outset our focus has been on realising the greatest economic benefit for the UK through the Spaceflight programme. The transfer of our UK spaceflight operations to Shetland will not only broaden launch options available in the UK, but also ensure the economic benefits of these endeavours are felt more widely.

Space has a significant role to play in generating economic growth, creating high-skilled jobs and tackling global challenges, from climate change to the spread of infectious diseases. The ability to launch small satellites for Earth observation and communications will boost UK efforts to tackle these challenges by providing valuable tools and data that can help analyse and predict impacts and support effective decisions and mitigation strategies.

The UK’s spaceflight programme – LaunchUK – is working with a range of additional partners to establish commercial vertical and horizontal small satellite launch from UK spaceports including Spaceport Cornwall and Virgin Orbit.