

UK space sector working together on response to coronavirus

The Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency and the President and Chair of the UKspace trade body met virtually last week to discuss the space sector's response to Covid-19.

The UK space sector employs 42,000 people and generates an income of £14.8 billion each year, while supporting £300 billion of wider economic activity through other industries with satellite services such as navigation, communications and Earth observation. Space is part of the UK's Critical National Infrastructure and has in-built resilience due to the autonomous nature of many orbital operations, the relatively low number of specialist staff required for ongoing operations, and multiple contingencies.

During the meeting the UK Space Agency and UKspace agreed to:

1. Maintain an effective flow of information between the space sector and government during the COVID-19 crisis.
2. Establish dedicated teams from the UK Space Agency and UKspace to direct companies towards the support available from government.
3. Identify any further actions that the government and trade body can take to minimise the disruption of COVID-19.
4. Broaden the engagement with space businesses beyond members of UKspace.

Graham Turnock Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency said:

While we know the UK space sector is strong and resilient, we have been engaging regularly with representatives from industry and academia to fully understand the challenges they are likely to face over the coming months.

We have agreed an initial plan of action with UKspace to ensure the whole UK space sector has access to the unprecedented package of government support already available, and are carefully considering the need for any further, more targeted measures to secure high-skilled jobs and safeguard our world-leading space capabilities.

Graham Peters, Chair of UKspace, the trade association, said:

UKspace members have an extraordinary wealth of technical and scientific expertise and many provide critical services in areas of telecommunications, position navigation and timing and Earth observation.

We are working closely with the UK Space Agency and our members to ensure critical space enabled services remain operational; to find

ways our members can support the national effort to fight the virus; and in helping the government take actions that will make the sector resilient to the economic challenges so it can take advantage of future opportunities once the virus has been defeated.

There is an unprecedented package of government-backed and guaranteed loans to support businesses, making available an initial £330 billion of guarantees – equivalent to 15% of GDP.

This includes:

- The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme providing government-backed loans of up to £5 million to small and medium-sized businesses.
- The Bank of England's COVID Corporate Financing Facility will provide a quick and cost-effective way to raise working capital for those large firms who need it.

More details about business support schemes can be found at:
businesssupport.gov.uk