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The space economy: what are the socio-economic impacts? (3)

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DEVELOPING HARWELL, OXFORDSHIRE AS A FOCAL POINT FOR THE UK SPACE SECTOR

Abstract

Since 2010, the United Kingdom has revitalised its focus and support for the space sector in recognition of its impressive track record and its potential for significant economic growth. The UK sector has expressed ambitious targets for economic growth to £40bn per annum by 2030 (from a current level of circa £9bn), with the creation of an additional 100,000 new jobs.

The UK Government has responded positively with the creation of the UK Space Agency, increasing support for national and international space programmes (including a significant uplift in the UK's subscriptions to the European Space Agency) and by identifying space as one of the UK's "Eight Great Technologies" that Government should recognise with further capital investment and technology support because of their potential to grow significantly.

The Harwell Oxford Science & Innovation Campus has been established to house and support high-technology companies that will see benefit in co-locating alongside the world-class activities and facilities on site. These include the expertise available through, for example, the Diamond Light Synchrotron, the ISIS Neutron Spallation Source and the myriad of skilled staff working within the Science & Technology Facilities Council and other public bodies.

Harwell has a particular focus for the space sector through the longstanding heritage offered by RAL Space, one of Europe's largest space research groups. Since 2010, Harwell has seen the establishment of ESA's UK presence (soon to be consolidated with the establishment of ECSAT – the European Centre for Satellite Applications & Telecommunications) and the creation of the Satellite Applications Catapult – one of a new UK network of research & technology organisations. The Catapult builds upon the development of the International Space Innovation Centre, previously described at the 62nd International Astronautical Congress.

The UK's renaissance of interest in space has provided a focal point to develop the Harwell campus and to use Harwell to showcase wider UK capabilities. In July 2013, the UK Space Agency established the UK Space Gateway programme to co-ordinate local and national stakeholders with twin objectives of:

- Significantly growing the space presence at Harwell from 250 staff to 5000 by 2030, across multiple organisations in the research base and in industry; and
- To develop an enhanced "hub-and-spoke" network that links not only to research centres of excellence but also engages regional economic development bodies across the UK.

The ambition is to align national and regional economic and sectoral policies to drive growth.