

**Buckinghamshire**

Thames Valley LOCAL ENTERPRISE  
PARTNERSHIP  
THE ENTREPRENEURIAL HEART OF BRITAIN



**YOUR LOCAL  
GROWTH HUB**

No. 018.16

13 July 2016

## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **National Space Propulsion Facility comes to Bucks**

Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) and partners, are delighted with this week's announcement that The UK Space Agency is investing £4.12m in a National Propulsion Test Facility at Westcott, near Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire, giving the UK a new facility for space technology testing.

The facility will allow UK companies and academia to test and develop space propulsion engines. The planned facility will be based at Westcott with its strong history of rocketry research for defence and space development, building on existing facilities.

Richard Harrington, Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership, said: "We are delighted with today's announcement by the UK Space Agency to invest in a National Propulsion Test Facility at Westcott Venture Park, which will not only help facilitate growth in the Buckinghamshire economy but also establish a global centre of excellence in space technology testing."

Richard added: "The Westcott site already hosts world leaders in space propulsion technologies and we are supporting the development of this sector at the site, which is also one of three locations in Aylesbury Vale where we have secured Enterprise Zone status. In addition, with the UK Space agency, we are looking to develop the research capacity at the site, including a Satellite Application Catapult and a 5G Innovation test facility, which together will help support a growing number of new jobs and business investment opportunities to the Buckinghamshire area." **more...**

## **National Space Propulsion Facility comes to Bucks: 2**

The UK Space Agency investment will add new capabilities for the UK space sector.

Government funding will:

- create a new vacuum facility at the Westcott propulsion test site. When used together with the existing industry owned rocket firing test cells, this will allow the simulation of high altitude testing of thrusters up to 2kN
- upgrade an existing industry owned test chamber to improve capabilities in the 25N thrust range
- open the facilities, alongside a smaller 1N thruster test chamber at the site, for the community to use

Additional to this, Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP are investing their own funding in an Innovation / Incubation Centre and a skills training hub – both of which will support the space sector. These investments have come about as a result of the work that the sector has carried out to raise awareness of space within Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP and demonstrates success of the Innovation and Growth Strategy aspiration for LEPs to use local funding to support the space sector.

This investment builds on what is already a world-class UK space propulsion sector. One of the industry stakeholders in the project, offering their facilities as part of the National Propulsion Test Facility, is Moog-UK. Moog-UK's LEROS 1b engine recently placed the NASA Juno spacecraft into orbit around Jupiter following a 5-year journey to the gas giant.

Martin Tett, Leader of Buckinghamshire County Council said: "This is fantastic news for Buckinghamshire. Being host to this leading edge sector is great for our local economy, and great for our global reputation. It reinforces the value of Enterprise Zone status and demonstrates the opportunity this provides for our skilled workforce."

**more...**

### **National Space Propulsion Facility comes to Bucks: 3**

Cllr Steve Bowles, Cabinet Member for Economic Development at Aylesbury Vale District Council, said: “Aylesbury Vale District Council has been heavily involved in identifying opportunities for Westcott to play a role in the future of the space industry and is proud to be a partner in the project. This investment really is great news, putting Westcott back on the map, and will create many fantastic job opportunities. This will not only help local residents but will attract new people into the area. No doubt there will be more positive developments for this Enterprise Zone in the future.”

Katherine Courtney, Interim CEO of the UK Space Agency said “Our investment in a National Space Propulsion Facility will add several new capabilities to the UK space sector and build upon what is already a world-class UK space propulsion sector. Opening these facilities up to UK companies and academia will allow them to develop and test future propulsion engines. We hope this will develop the UK’s competitive edge in space propulsion and produce the next generation of propulsion engines. We hope that UK companies will continue to make successful contributions to international missions, such as the LEROS 1b engine involved in JUNO.”

The new capability will allow cost-effective development and testing of even more impressive engines for interplanetary travel, as well as for the significant commercial telecommunications satellite market. Other UK users of the facility, via the Airborne Engineering test chamber, are expected to include Reaction Engines Limited, who are currently testing advanced rocket nozzle technology for the SABRE engine.

With the facility investment from the UK Space Agency, who will also chair the Steering Board for this national facility, and with STFC bringing a wealth of test facility management experience to the project, this is an excellent example of UK cross-government, industry and ESA collaboration which will benefit the immediate stakeholders involved in the project, as well as the wider propulsion community by opening access to the facility.

**more...**

## **National Space Propulsion Facility comes to Bucks: 4**

Buckinghamshire is the Entrepreneurial Heart of Britain where, for well over a decade, more businesses have started here than anywhere else in the UK. It is no accident that we are the Birthplace of the Paralympics at Stoke Mandeville, the creative film engine for James Bond and Star Wars at Pinewood Studios, and the joint home of the Silverstone Grand Prix Circuit.

**Ends**

### **Note to editors**

The [Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership](#) (BTVLEP) is a business-led 'partnership of equals' between local government and the private sector, building the conditions for sustainable economic growth in the County.

[Buckinghamshire Business First](#) (BBF), is the Growth Hub for Buckinghamshire and is backed by Buckinghamshire based entrepreneurs, thousands of SMEs and Local Authorities. BBF provides the link between public policy and the business community in Buckinghamshire and works with partners to create a dynamic business environment in the Entrepreneurial Heart of Britain.

For further information please contact:

Richard Burton  
Communications Manager

T: 01494 568933

M: 07866 492292

E: [richard.burton@btvlep.co.uk](mailto:richard.burton@btvlep.co.uk)