**Press Release**

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5 October 2018

**Space cluster launch takes UK beyond the final frontier**

The space age has entered a new focus with the launch of a multi-million-pound site dedicated to engineering, research and innovation.

More than 250 delegates ranging from local business leaders to top global space scientists visited the Westcott Space Cluster to witness the official opening by Torben Henriksen, Head of the Mechanical Department at the European Space Agency.

They were able to see a static firing of Airborne Engineering’s rocket, the Lunar Hopper and enjoyed tours of two of Westcott’s newest facilities, the 5G Step-Out Centre and Business Incubation Centre, which are both run by the Satellite Applications Catapult.

The Space Cluster, based at Westcott Venture Park in Aylesbury and part of the Aylesbury Vale Enterprise Zone, is the result of a £30m investment at the site by government and industry and is particularly significant as it highlights how Westcott has come full circle in its importance as a research facility and developer of rocket propulsion.

Companies at Westcott play a key role in providing rocket engines for interplanetary missions such as the JUNO Mission, Rosetta probe and fueling the Galileo Satellites.

The site is already home to NAMMO, European Astrotech, Airborne Engineering to name just a few, while the event celebrated the creation of five new facilities:

* Reaction Engines SABRE Test Facility which is being built to demonstrate and test the revolutionary SABRE engine core. The firm recently announced a £26.5m investment including backing from global aerospace companies Boeing HorizonX Ventures and Rolls Royce and has also received over £20m in investment from BAE Systems.
* Westcott Business Incubation Centre which offers specialised business and technical support for up to 20 early-stage companies dedicated to the areas of rocket propulsion, 5G communications and autonomous systems. It recently signed up its first three businesses, Valerann UK, SteamJet Space Systems and Stratian. The Centre is supported by the European Regional Development Fund, Rockspring Hanover Property Unit Trust, Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) and the Satellite Applications Catapult which also runs and manages the centre.
* Westcott 5G Step-Out Centre, a 5G facility to test and develop new services and products by accessing the latest wireless applications service equipment and satellite data without the need to invest in expensive infrastructure. The site will be key to unlocking the potential of 5G technology across markets ranging from healthcare to entertainment.
* UK Space Agency’s National Space Propulsion Test Facility (NSPTF) – a £4m government investment giving the UK a brand new facility for testing rocket thrusters up to 1.5kN. This site is scheduled to be completed by late 2019.
* Westcott Innovation Centre – providing networking and office facilities to foster innovation and growth. It is anticipated to be in place by 2019.

Richard Harrington, Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP), said: “Westcott is an important development area for BTVLEP, one which encompasses our Aylesbury Vale Enterprise Zone and we enthusiastically support the launch of the Westcott Space Cluster.

“We are proud to provide Local Growth Funds to help establish the Westcott 5G Step-out Centre and Innovation Centre at the site. This investment links closely with the aims of our Local Industrial Strategy to act as a catalyst for working our economic assets harder with a view to creating more opportunity, more collaboration between sectors and more productivity.”

Stuart Martin, CEO of the Satellite Applications Catapult said: “The Satellite Applications Catapult is excited to be at the heart of the new Space Cluster at Westcott.  We are committed to providing innovative ways to stimulate the growth of the UK space sector and the Westcott site is a unique opportunity to achieve that goal.

“The Catapult has two centres at Westcott, our new 5G Step-Out Centre and the Westcott Business Incubation Centre, which is for companies working in 5G, rocket propulsion and autonomous vehicles.   Next year, we will open the Westcott Innovation Centre, which will enable companies that have been incubated on the site, to move into larger office space whilst still having access to the great range of business support that the Catapult can offer.

With all the support from our partners we are confident that Westcott will develop into a leading centre for space industry innovation over the next 5 years.”

Dr Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, said: “The launch of the Westcott Space Cluster is an exciting step for the growing space sector in Buckinghamshire and indeed the UK. This is a sector which underpins industries worth more than £250bn to the UK economy.

“Our £4m investment in a new National Space Propulsion Test Facility at Westcott will allow companies and academia to test and develop medium-sized space thrusters in an environment that replicates high altitude space. This new facility will help the UK be more competitive in the global market and support our ambition to capture 10% of the global space market by 2030.”

**Ends**

**Photo caption: “***Richard Harrington, Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership, highlighting the importance of the Westcott Space Cluster for the economic growth of Buckinghamshire.*

**Note to editors**

The [**Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership**](http://buckstvlep.co.uk/) (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**](http://www.bbf.uk.com/) (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.

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