**Date: Embargoed until 7 March 2018**

**Opportunity for Early Stage Businesses at Westcott**

**The new Westcott Business Incubation Centre (BIC) located in the Westcott Venture Park, near Aylesbury, will provide incubation support for early-stage businesses and entrepreneurs looking to develop a new business venture in rocket propulsion, 5G communications, drones and autonomous systems, and associated services.**

The Westcott BIC is funded through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and supported by the Satellite Applications Catapult, Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP), Rockspring Hanover Property Unit Trust and the UK Space Agency. It will support up to 20 start-up companies situated in the heart of a testing ground for rocket propulsion, 5G communications, drones and other autonomous systems.

Westcott BIC is seeking early-stage companies with innovative technologies, products or services that will benefit from a specialist business and technical support package. The package on offer includes:

* Free accommodation in a shared office space
* Specialist business and technical support tailored to individual company needs, which includes business sprints to help companies accelerate product and service development, and expert clinics offering access to technical and business expertise
* Help with investor readiness and links to the finance community
* Access to specialist test facilities, including rocket testing and a 5G testbed providing access to the latest generation of networking equipment
* Access to mentors, industry and academic networks.

To help attract new business ideas, and as part of the incubation package, the UK Space Agency is also funding competitively-awarded grants to enable the use of Westcott’s specialist facilities or technical effort and help with prototyping and proof of concept.

Richard Harrington, Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership, said: “Westcott is an important development area for BTVLEP, one which encompasses our Aylesbury Vale Enterprise Zone, and we enthusiastically support the creation of the Westcott Business Incubator Centre through the European Regional Development Fund. We are also providing Local Growth Funds to help establish the Westcott 5G Step-out Centre and Innovation Centre co-located at the site. New entrepreneurial companies are an essential component of the vibrant innovation ecosystem needed in the local area and we are keen to support and encourage the development of new companies working in high value businesses sectors.”

Stuart Martin, CEO of the Satellite Applications Catapult, who are responsible for the day-to-day management of the Westcott BIC said: “The Catapult has five years’ experience in running business support activity and we are excited to be involved in this great new venture. Westcott provides the perfect environment to help early-stage businesses interested in rocket propulsion, 5G communications, autonomous systems or other related activities to get off the ground. This facility reinforces the UK Government’s plans to replenish the supply chain for rocket propulsion activities in the UK and support the development of new applications that exploit the economic potential of 5G networks, drones, autonomous systems and the general space infrastructure.”

Westcott is already home to a thriving nucleus of space companies. The Westcott BIC will work together with existing expertise on the site and other planned investments, including the UK Space Agency’s National Propulsion Test Centre, the 5G Step-out Centre, Innovation Centre and Reaction Engines’ new test facility which will enable tests of critical subsystems along with the testing of a SABRE engine core, planned to commence in 2020.

Rod Mordey, Associate Partner at Rockspring says: “For the last 72 years Westcott has been the base for UK Rocketeers and is now home to a thriving nucleus of space companies.  Rockspring’s investment in the creation of the Westcott Business Incubation Centre, 5G Step-Out Centre, Innovation Centre, UK Space Agency’s National Propulsion Test Centre and Reaction Engines’ new test facility, is set to ensure that Westcott remains at the forefront of propulsion and innovation. It will add further growth opportunities to the Park, create the environment for universities and industry to collaborate on high profile projects, and help to develop and grow key areas of the UK economy.”

If you think your organisation could benefit from this great opportunity, or to find out more, simply visit: [www.wbic.org.uk](http://www.wbic.org.uk) or email [support@wbic.org.uk](mailto:support@wbic.org.uk)

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To find out more please visit [www.wbic.org.uk](http://www.wbic.org.uk)

**About Westcott Business Incubation Centre**

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