|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Press Release**  **10th July 2023** |
|  |  |

**UK students set world record for most rocket engines fired in one week**

Students from across the UK came together for the ‘Race to Space’ competition where they set an unofficial world record for the number of different hybrid/liquid rocket engines hot-fired for the first time on one site in one week.

The students’ rocket engines all underwent their maiden test firing over a busy four days at [Westcott Venture Park](https://www.westcottvp.com/), as part of a new national competition to boost UK space skills.

The competition organised by the [University of Sheffield](https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/), took place last week and was the first competition worldwide to specifically focus on the testing of bi-propellant and hybrid rocket engines. Students from 10 UK universities took part the UK Race to Space event, where the rocket engines they had designed and built were fired up on a test stand at [Westcott Space Cluster](https://westcottspacecluster.org.uk/) to test how much thrust they produced.

The overall winners of the competition were Southampton University, with their engine producing the most accurate thrust (1493N vs their design thrust of 1500N).

Sheffield students also broke national records, by successfully testing the first 3D printed, first regen-cooled and most powerful (3400N) student built liquid rocket engine in the UK.

Prizes were also awarded to Leeds, Sheffield and Cambridge for best team spirit, best presentation, and best documentation respectively.

The week ended last Friday with a Student Rocket Engine Symposium - a space sector education networking event where academics, students and industry came together to see the results of the competition. The [Satellite Applications Catapult](https://sa.catapult.org.uk/) aided competition planning and hosted the networking event.

Alistair John, Deputy Director of Aerospace Engineering at the University of Sheffield, who organised the competition, said: “UK Race to Space is about showing we have top class students who are willing, able and prepared to grow the space sector in the UK and we have more than proved that this week.

“We know we have the talent but to compete on the world stage we need to increase the number of passionate, highly skilled graduates with hands-on skills entering the sector. This initiative is helping to provide the critical training and access to practical testing needed to fill the high-level skills gap and provide world-class expertise.”

It is also hoped the competition will inspire a more diverse range of students from school age upwards to choose science, technology, engineering, and mathematics subjects and aim for careers in the rapidly growing £15bn UK space sector.

UK Race to Space was funded by sponsors including the University of Sheffield, [Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership](https://www.buckslep.co.uk/), [Frazer Nash Consultancy](https://www.fnc.co.uk/) and [Element Digital Engineering](https://www.element.com/digital-engineering).

Matt Peachey, Head of Enterprise Zone Development at Buckinghamshire LEP, said: "We are pleased to provide sponsorship to support this event which is an important step towards increasing the skillset and knowledge of students to generate a pipeline of talent for the space industry.

“This sponsorship demonstrates our commitment to developing the skills of the next generation of engineers and inspiring them to pursue space science and engineering careers in Buckinghamshire.

The Westcott based companies who were critical to helping the students test fire their engines were [European Astrotech](https://www.europeanastrotech.com/), [Protolaunch and](https://www.protolaunch.co.uk/)[Airborne Engineering](https://www.ael.co.uk/).

Chris Smith, Managing Director of European Astrotech, said: “It’s fantastic to be involved in something that increases the skillset and knowledge of students to generate a pipeline of talent for the industry.

“There is a critical shortage of people entering the industry in specific areas and this competition has equipped students with practical educational experience solving real-world, complex, open-ended engineering problems through hands-on experience of designing, manufacturing and testing rocket engines.”

As well as being able to hot-fire their rocket engines, students were also able to network with other academics and industry leaders, having already been mentored throughout the year by representatives from companies such as [SSTL](https://www.sstl.co.uk/), [Frazer Nash Consultancy](https://www.fnc.co.uk/) [Rolls Royce,](https://www.rolls-royce.com/products-and-services/defence/aerospace.aspx)and [Lockheed Martin](https://www.lockheedmartin.com/)along with experts including Charles Simpson and Adam Baker.

Charlie Muir, Propulsion Lead at the Satellite Applications Catapult said: “This competition provides a fantastic opportunity for exceptionally dedicated and ambitious student teams to learn from seasoned industry professionals, establishing important knowledge transfer and affording students invaluable hands-on experience in the crucial and rapidly expanding domain of rocketry.”

Nigel MacKenzie, Development Manager at Westcott, said: “This is a fantastic initiative providing mentoring, links and knowledge transfer between industry and academia.

“It is another example of Westcott rocketry companies coming together to provide students with hands-on experience of space science and engineering, showing them the range of opportunities out there. For the students it is also a great opportunity for meeting potential employers.”

It is hoped the competition will expand in future years with the aim of using the engines developed to power high-altitude rockets from UK soil. Anyone wanting to sponsor next year’s competition should contact Alistair John at [a.john@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:a.john@sheffield.ac.uk)

**ENDS**

**For further information, contact:**

Claire Thompson Papa Romeo PR, M: 07811339577 E: [claire@paparomeopr.com](mailto:claire@syncropr.com)

**About Westcott Venture Park:**

Westcott Venture Park, owned by PATRIZIA Hanover Property Unit Trust, is a 650-acre business park, home to over 80 companies employing over a thousand staff.

Westcott sits at the heart of a vibrant technology hub with easy access to Bicester, Oxford, Thame and Aylesbury offering a range of industrial, warehouse and office space with units from 120 sq ft – 30,000 sq ft and design and build opportunities for buildings between 10,000 sq ft to 65,000 sq ft.

It is home to the Westcott Space Cluster and the National Space Propulsion Test Facility and a thriving nucleus of space companies and is recognised globally as an integral part of the UK Space sector growth strategy.

Major occupiers apart from the Satellite Applications Catapult include: One Web, UK Space Agency, Green Retreats, Nammo (UK), the Falcon Project, CS Group, Ecopac, Total Carbide, Olleco, Mobile Mini, Portakabin, and Bucks Recycling.

For further information, visit: [www.westcottvp.com](http://www.westcottvp.com)