



News and Events #13, January 2026

Welcome to our Space sector news, events and funding opportunities update.

1. News

- a. Following our announcement last month that four Midlands companies had been successful in winning R&D grant funding under the **Space Ecosystem Commercialisation Programme (SECP)**, the UK Space Agency have published a full report on the grant awards across the country which you can read [here](#).
- b. Congratulations to the University of Leicester and the University of Birmingham who have been successful in receiving **National Space Innovation Programme** grants from the UK Space Agency.

University of Birmingham with partner Alan Turing Institute receives £610,000 to design an AI-powered satellite radar system to understand the shape and structure of objects in space.

University of Leicester with partner TWI Ltd receives £485,000 to build a robot-mounted welding system for in-space repair and structural joining, validated through vacuum and simulated-environment testing.

[Read the full announcement.](#)

c. International growth support: **India Market Opportunities**

Vinay Patel, Head of Commercial & Innovation - Space Park Leicester, recently met with the Invest India team, who are planning a visit to Space Park Leicester in the near future. Invest India supports UK companies looking to expand into India, offering guidance on market entry, regulation, partnerships, and investment pathways.

If any Midlands-based aerospace, space, or advanced manufacturing companies are considering India as a growth market, Vinay is happy to make introductions to the Invest India team and coordinate 1-to-1 meetings during their visit.

Contact vp118@leicester.ac.uk

d. Put your suggestions forward to shape the programme of the NCEO-organised **UK Earth Observation Conference**, which this year takes place at the University of Warwick, 15th-17th September.

NCEO are looking for oral presentations, workshops and posters that highlight emerging scientific priorities, evolving challenges and areas where interdisciplinary engagement can add significant value.

This is a high-profile opportunity to raise awareness of your work and/or field and engage a wide audience. The conference will strengthen cross-disciplinary and cross-sector communication and foster collaboration.

Complete the form [here](#).

e. GEO Business welcomes speakers

Applications are open for speakers at the **2026 GEO Business Conference for Geospatial Professionals**, being held at Excel, London, 3rd-4th June. The deadline to apply is February 20th. See more details of the conference focus and apply for a speaking space [here](#).

f. The **European Space Agency** has approved a new commercialisation programme aimed at businesses that combines the ScaleUp and BASS (Business Applications and Space Solutions) initiatives, called [ACCESS](#).

You can sign up for updates on the ACCESS themes: Bioeconomy, Energy, Green Activities, Maritime, Mobility, and Smart and Green Cities. The new ESA Phi-Lab UK comes under the ACCESS umbrella and the first chosen organisations were announced in late December: [read more](#).

The ACCESS funding offering is further enhanced to support businesses with frameworks targeted at their level of maturity and commercial readiness. New calls will start opening from January 2026, and details of the respective application processes will then be updated [here](#).

g. Do you know a school or youth group that would like a FREE **Moon Landing Coding Adventure**?

Thanks to funding from the UK Civil Aviation Authority and the Department for Transport, “Get with the Program” has funding to offer schools in England a FREE Moon Landing Coding Adventure that would usually cost each school £360.

The fun Moon Landing Coding Adventure helps 5-11 year-olds learn practical coding skills and create algorithms to program a robot to get to the moon, while covering the computing curriculum. Schools and youth groups will get free access to an online show and follow-up activities, plus some great additional resources. But you'll need to be quick - spaces are limited to 250 schools or clubs so act fast! Find out more and sign up [here](#).

2. Events and Networking - Midlands

a. **Barclays AI Event, Space Park Leicester, 10:00-12:00, Tuesday 12th January**

Space Park Leicester will be hosting a Barclays-led AI event focused on how artificial intelligence is enabling innovation across engineering, space, physical sciences, Earth observation, and advanced manufacturing.

The session will bring together regional businesses, researchers, and innovators to explore real-world AI applications, showcase local capability, and discuss how AI is accelerating engineering-led innovation in the Midlands.

Find out more and register [here](#).

b. **Help Shape the Next 3-Year LSIP for Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland**

Local employers are invited to take part in an important consultation webinar forming part of the next Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). This employer-led session will help define skills priorities, training provision, and investment across the region for the next three years.

The webinar will cover:

- Key achievements and lessons from the first LSIP
- Emerging skills needs based on employer feedback and data
- How businesses can influence future curriculum design and funding priorities
- Recruitment, skills development, and workforce planning challenges

Webinar dates:

Tuesday 13 January 2026, 10:00–11:00

Thursday 15 January 2026, 2:00–3:00

Who should attend: Business owners, directors, managers, HR teams, and anyone involved in recruitment or workforce planning.

Register [here](#). This invitation forms part of the LSIP programme led by Rick Blackmore, with University of Leicester representation on the board.

c. **ImplementSpace Business Development and Ecosystem Engagement Day, Space Park Leicester, 10:00-14:30, Thursday 5th February**

ImplementSpace Pty Ltd is an Australian space technology company advancing satellite hardware and integrated mission support services for the new space economy. ImplementSpace develops proprietary satellite hardware, ground operations and launch support solutions designed to simplify and accelerate access to orbit.

This day will include:

- A Presentation on who ImplementSpace is and what they offer

- A Roundtable on the Midlands ecosystem – our goals, challenges, and solutions, and collaborative discussions around aligned priorities
- One-on-one meetings to discuss mission requirements in confidence between ImplementSpace and interested parties

ImplementSpace are seeking to meet with organisations interested in technology partnerships, launch collaboration, or supply chain participation. If you would like to join us for this event, please contact Vinay Patel at Space Park Leicester vp118@leicester.ac.uk

d. **Midlands Space Cluster Engagement Day: Regional Facilities, Assets, and Opportunity** (Connecting Stakeholders to Capabilities That Support Research, Innovation, and Growth), University of Birmingham, 10:00-15:00, Monday 23rd February

Join us for an exciting event focused on building your understanding of Regional Facilities and Assets, and how they can support your Space Sector ambitions. We will be bringing together key stakeholders from academia, industry, organisations and government to explore opportunities for collaboration and innovation in the UK space sector.

This event will feature:

- Keynote Address by Professor Matt Angling, University of Birmingham
- Insights from the Satellite Applications Catapult
- Discussion on expanding knowledge of regional facilities
- Business Engagement Session: How funding works and spin-out success stories
- Networking opportunities over coffee and lunch

Book your place [here](#).

3. Events and Networking – UK and Europe

a. The European Space Agency - ESA will host an online **post-CM25 industry event** on 14 January, 09:00-18:00 CET

ESA Director General Josef Aschbacher and ESA directors will present the outcomes from the ESA Council at Ministerial Level 2025, held in Bremen last November, where European ministers shaped the future of Europe's space ambitions. The event will also highlight key follow-up opportunities for industry across ESA programmes.

Full programme and registration [here](#).

b. **EU Missions Information Days** on 2026/27 Horizon Europe Work Programme (Climate, Environment & Health), online, 8:00-16:30 GMT, 20-21 January

The relevant missions include:

- Adaptation to Climate Change Mission
- 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart cities by 2030 Mission
- Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030 Mission
- A Soil Deal for Europe Mission

The programme has been published [here](#).

c. **GeoAI Festival:** Unleash Innovation at the Intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Geospatial Satellite Data

Defra are working with Innovate UK Business Connect (and several other partners) to organise a 3-day hackathon running in January 2026 in Leeds.

This initiative will bring together innovators, businesses, academics, end users, and public bodies to explore and advance the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in geospatial applications with EO data that would create new products and services for Agri-Food Systems, spatial planning, sustainable land and ocean use, and nature-based markets.

The culmination of these activities will result in participation at the GeoAI Showcase at Space-Comm Expo Europe in March 2026 in London, as well as tailored Commercialisation Credits for SAC's Space Commercialisation Engine valued at up to £80k per winning team.

Find out more [here](#).

d. **Space-Comm Expo Europe**, 4-5 March 2026, London Excel

Space-Comm Expo is the UK's leading event for the space industry with over 200 exhibitors, 50 speakers and 5,000 attendees including global leaders and influencers from across government, business, aerospace and defence.

It's the largest event for the UK space industry with international delegations and visitors from NASA, ESA, NATO alongside Primes, SMEs and Start-Ups at the forefront of technology and innovation. Now entering its fifth year, the multi award-winning Space-Comm Expo is dedicated to supporting the space industry with a unique format including UK and international exhibitors, product demonstrations, keynote speakers, multiple conference theatres, roundtables and 1-2-1 networking opportunities.

Details [here](#). **Book now to get an early bird deal on passes.**

4. Funding and Support Opportunities

a. Accelerating Investment Export Pathway

This is a UK Space Agency programme, supported by KPMG, that is specifically designed to support high-potential, early-stage UK space businesses in expanding into international markets.

The programme offers:

- Targeted Training: Practical workshops on market entry strategies, international procurement, and export readiness, tailored for the space sector.
- Expert Guidance: Support from leading technical experts and international market specialists.
- Global Reach: Preparation for Department for Business and Trade missions and navigating complex international trade landscapes.

Further details on the programme can be found [here](#), including eligibility criteria and how to apply: [Unlock Your Global Potential: Accelerating Investment Export Pathway for UK Space SMEs](#).

Spaces are limited, and the application window is short, so we encourage interested companies to review the information promptly.

b. The ESA Proposal Advice Service (ESA PAS)

Designed to support UK-based organisations bidding for European Space Agency contracts and improve the quality, completeness, strategic alignment and consistency of bids - thereby aiming to strengthen the bidder's application for funding - by providing free, non-technical advice to organisations through a thorough review of their draft bid (before submission).

Organisations should apply as soon as they have taken a decision to bid for a specific opportunity. Read more [here](#).

c. Horizon Europe 2025: European Innovation Ecosystems

This funding is designed to create innovation ecosystems that support the scaling of companies and spur innovation across the EU, with up to €8m per project. The European Innovation Ecosystems work programme aims to create and expand more connected, inclusive, and efficient innovation ecosystems that support the scaling of companies and spur innovation.

The call closes on 20th January 2026. Read more [here](#).

d. UK Innovation Science Seed Fund (UKI2S)

UKI2S focuses on nurturing and adding value to innovative ideas that shape the future alongside investing in groundbreaking technology companies. UKI2S invests in innovations that are in the UKIS strategic priority areas or from the UK's publicly funded science and knowledge base. They focus on those with high growth potential at pre-seed and seed stages – to get the most groundbreaking technologies and ideas to market.

If you are interested in learning more and applying visit [UKI2S – Investing in innovations that transform our future](#)

e. Made Smarter

The "Made Smarter" program offers funding and support to UK manufacturers, particularly SMEs, to help them adopt digital technologies and improve their operations. This includes match-funded grants of up to 50% (with a maximum of £20,000) for equipment and/or advice to implement projects, as well as access to digital technology advice and workforce development

Read more [here](#).

f. Cyber security consultancy support, plus assessment and certification

Successful applicants can receive up to 3 days consultation from a cybersecurity professional funded by the UK Space Agency. This can be virtual or at a place of business (UK), depending on requirements.

Find out more at [Cyber security consultancy support, plus assessment and certification - GOV.UK](#)

Sign Off

If you have had a success or reached a milestone in your space sector project or business, we would love to share your news on our website news page:

[Latest News and Newsletters at Midlands Space Cluster](#)

Get in touch!

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