



News and Events #16, April 2026

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

1. News

a. **New AI and Advanced Materials Project** at Space Park Leicester

Space Park Leicester are looking to collaborate with industry partners on a new project exploring how AI and advanced materials science can be combined to accelerate the development and optimisation of next-generation manufactured components.

The project aims to work with companies to apply AI-driven approaches to materials discovery, characterisation, and advanced manufacturing processes, helping reduce development time and improve performance for aerospace and space applications.

More details can be found [here](#).

b. **New Internships Portal** Launched at the Space Park Leicester

Space Park Leicester has launched a new Internships Portal — a dedicated platform designed to bring together ambitious students, graduates, and organisations shaping the future of space.

Already featuring roles from major players including Airbus UK, Leonardo, the UK Space Agency and the UK Atomic Energy Authority, it also showcases the University of Leicester's 2026 Graduate Internship Programme.

For organisations, it's a chance to access the brightest emerging talent. For students, it's a gateway into a thriving, future-focused industry.

Explore the portal [here](#).

Organisations which are interested in promoting their internship opportunities on the portal are invited to email: skills@space-park.co.uk

- c. Applications for the next cohort of **UK Space Agency Accelerator “Leo”** are now open

Leo is a 4-month accelerator programme for early-stage space ventures wanting to progress from early validation through to commercial growth. Whether you're shaping your initial concept, refining your business model, or building traction in the market, Leo supports founders in taking the next step in their journey.

Learn more and apply [here](#)

2. Events and Networking - Midlands

- a. **Space Park Conversations: Space Journal: Art, Science & Cosmic Exploration**, Space Park Leicester, 14:00-15:00, Thursday 16th April

Join us at Space Park Leicester for a special edition of our *Space Park Conversations* series, featuring one of the UK's most recognisable voices in science broadcasting.

Dallas Campbell – presenter, author, and storyteller of science – will explore the fascinating history and material culture of space exploration, drawing on insights from his latest book, *Space Journal: Art, Science and Cosmic Exploration*.

Blending science, art and human imagination, this talk will take audiences on a journey from early astronomical observations to the modern space age, revealing how humanity has envisioned – and pursued – life beyond Earth.

Get tickets [here](#)

- b. **Cosmic Coffee: Health, Space and Creativity**, Space Park Leicester, 14:00-15:00, Tuesday 5th May

Cosmic Coffee is our informal community gathering that brings together researchers, innovators, industry partners and creative practitioners to share ideas and spark new collaborations over tea, coffee and cake.

This session will be our first Cosmic Coffee focused on health, highlighting projects and perspectives that sit at the intersection of space research, healthcare, technology and creative practice.

- c. **Space Park Conversations: Aerospace, Business and the Environment**, Space Park Leicester, 14:00-15:00, Tuesday 14th May

Discover how aerospace, education and business can come together to tackle environmental challenges and inspire the next generation.

This special edition of the *Space Park Conversations* series features:

- Chris Desai, Global Project Director of UOCEAN 2050 (pictured below)
- Rob Barsby, display pilot with the internationally renowned AerospaX team

Get your tickets [now](#)

d. The International Academy of Astronautics (IAA) **Planetary Sunshade Workshop**, University of Nottingham, 13th – 15th May 2026

This event will bring together leading engineers, scientists, and policy experts to advance the emerging field of planetary sunshades. Those working in adjacent fields are also encouraged to attend.

With global average temperatures now exceeding 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and projections indicating that the coming years will remain at or near record highs, the exploration of planetary sunshade concepts offers a critical forum for advancing interdisciplinary strategies to mitigate climate risks and safeguard Earth's future.

Over three days, participants will:

- Share recent research and technical progress;
- Explore the scientific, engineering, and policy challenges of the planetary sunshade initiative; and
- Shape future proposals with scientific rigour to drive the field forward.

More information including registration can be found [here](#).

3. Events and Networking – UK and Europe

a. **UK Space Agency - ESA Bid Writing Workshop – Bristol**, The Bristol Hotel, 09:00-17:00, Friday 15th May

Master the art of comprehending and crafting compelling bids in response to European Space Agency (ESA) Invitation to Tenders (ITTs).

During the session, participants will gain valuable insights into the intricacies of ESA ITTs. They will learn to dissect and comprehend an example ESA Statement of Work and, more importantly, how to craft a compelling proposal that addresses it. With guidance from an experienced ESA instructor, participants will have the opportunity to consider an example proposal and the main aspects that would be assessed by an ESA Tender Evaluation Board (TEB).

This comprehensive experience will equip participants with a solid understanding of navigating the ESA ITT process successfully. They will learn to identify all the necessary elements expected in an ESA proposal and, equally important, how to avoid common pitfalls that may arise.

Book your place [here](#)

b. **The Hazels, the UK Space Skills Awards**, Cheltenham Town Hall, 24th June

Join the Hazels to bring glamour and aspiration to space skills. The central theme of the evening is the importance of building sovereign skills capability and long-term industrial strength in and for the UK Space industry.

One aim of the Hazels – the UK Space Skills Awards is to showcase how the UK Space industry is using traditional crafts and skills, such as sewing, knitting and bricklaying are repurposed to support space innovation, as well as celebrating excellence in engineering, data science and the many more skills used within the UK Space industry.

More details [here](#)

c. The **Space Corridor Workshop**, hosted by TWI’s Space team and ESA/UKSA Technology Broker colleagues, will be part of **WeldJoinEXPO26**, TWI HQ, Cambridge, 10:00-16:00, Tuesday 7th July 2026

The Workshop will highlight opportunities and capabilities across welding / joining / manufacturing for space applications and include a dedicated **“Meet the Buyer”** block to connect space organisations with UK suppliers and innovators.

See more details and register [here](#).

4. Funding and Support Opportunities

a. **GSTP: £14 million funding boost to power UK space technology innovation**

UK businesses can today apply for a share of up to £14.7 million in funding from the UK Space Agency, unlocking new opportunities to develop cutting-edge space technologies and strengthen the UK’s industrial capability.

The funding is available through the European Space Agency’s (ESA) General Support Technology Programme (GSTP), its flagship programme for maturing new space technologies from early-stage research to flight-ready demonstration.

This call follows strong demand from industry and new evidence showing that UK participation in GSTP is delivering significant economic and technological benefits. The UK has been involved in the programme for more than 30 years and committed £46 million at ESA’s 2025 Ministerial Council, helping organisations develop critical home-grown technologies, compete internationally, and secure future work from ESA and commercial markets.

For more information on the funding available and how to apply, see the guidance page here [General Support Technology Programme \(GSTP\) - GOV.UK](#) and the new Agency press release at: [£14 million funding boost to power UK space technology innovation - GOV.UK](#)

b. Advanced manufacturing supply chains: potential high growth SMEs funding competition

This new Innovate UK grant funding opportunity is for UK registered advanced manufacturing micro businesses and SMEs, who can apply for a share of between £50k - £100k to commercialise and scale a pre-commercial project.

Proposals must focus on delivering an improvement in the resource efficiency or resilience of the Advanced Manufacturing sector to deliver cross-cutting technologies as defined in the Advanced Manufacturing Sector Plan (automotive, batteries, aerospace, space, advanced materials, and agri-tech).

See details and apply [here](#) – call ends 22nd April 2026 11am

c. 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.

d. Mercia Ventures looking to invest up to £10m into Midlands companies

Mercia Ventures is a proactive venture capital investor focused on being the first-choice partner for growth. Mercia Ventures makes equity investments of up to £10million across all sectors, with specialisms in Software, Consumer, Healthcare and Deep Tech, and are looking to build their portfolio in the Space Sector.

Contact Amrit Sami at amrit.sami@mercia.co.uk

e. **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](#)

f. **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](#)

g. **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](#).

h. **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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