



News and Events #17, May 2026

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

1. News

a. Frontier Space Drives Breakthroughs in Space-Enabled Healthcare

Frontier Space, a graduate of the ESA Business Incubation Centre at Space Park Leicester, is helping lead a major European initiative exploring how microgravity research can accelerate breakthroughs in healthcare and life sciences. At a recent European Space for Health Alliance symposium in Berlin, the company joined leaders from the biotech, pharmaceutical and space sectors to discuss the future of space-enabled health research beyond the International Space Station.

The Leicester-based company is developing infrastructure to make biological research in space more routine and commercially viable. Through its UK Government-backed BRIDGE project, Frontier Space is working with international partners to create reliable systems for transporting and returning sensitive biological experiments conducted in orbit.

Frontier Space's growing role in space biomanufacturing highlights the strength of the Midlands' space innovation ecosystem and the support available through Space Park Leicester and ESA BIC UK. The company has already achieved successful in-orbit testing of its miniature "SpaceLab" platform, designed to support next-generation pharmaceutical and biomedical research in microgravity.

See the full news article [here](#)

b. GVL Advances CORE System Towards Commercial Deployment

Geospatial Ventures Ltd (GVL) has reached a major milestone in the development of its CORE platform, successfully completing the Critical Design Review and marking a significant step towards delivering a best-in-class solution for remote land and infrastructure movement monitoring. The system combines advanced InSAR capabilities with AI and machine learning analytics, alongside intuitive visualisation tools, to provide accurate, scalable insights designed for real-world operational use.

Recent months have also seen strong engagement with industry stakeholders through workshops, pilot discussions and collaborative exchanges, helping to shape the platform around genuine user needs. This continued feedback is ensuring CORE evolves as a practical, high-impact solution capable of supporting smarter infrastructure management and early risk detection.

As development progresses, GVL is now opening up opportunities for organisations to trial the system and explore commercial partnerships. A limited number of early adopters can access reduced-cost surveys and project data, offering a valuable opportunity to experience intelligent monitoring in practice — interested parties are encouraged to get in touch with GVL at operations@geospatialventures.co.uk to discuss trials or partnership opportunities.

c. CBE+ Secures New Space Sector Work with Astroscale

Midlands Space Cluster member CBE+ has marked a significant step in its expansion into the space sector, securing new business with in-orbit servicing leader Astroscale. The project sees CBE+ applying its advanced precision engineering and surface treatment expertise to manufacture critical components for next-generation spacecraft, supporting missions focused on satellite servicing and orbital sustainability.

This milestone reflects CBE+'s growing capability and reputation in delivering space-qualified hardware, as well as the increasing role of Midlands-based manufacturers within the global space supply chain. The collaboration not only strengthens CBE+'s position in the rapidly emerging in-orbit servicing market, but also highlights the wider opportunity for regional companies to diversify into high-value space technologies.

See details [here](#)

d. Leicester Team Achieves Global First in Space Nuclear Power

Researchers and engineers at Space Park Leicester, alongside spin-out company Perpetual Atomics and US partner QSA Global, have achieved the world's first production of an Americium-241 powered Radioisotope Heater Unit (RHU) core — a major milestone for future deep-space exploration. The technology provides a reliable heat source for spacecraft operating in extreme environments, including the Moon, Mars and beyond, helping missions survive freezing conditions and long lunar nights. ([Space Park Leicester](#))

Developed through the European Space Agency's ENDURE programme, the breakthrough builds on more than two decades of research led by the University of Leicester and demonstrates the Midlands' growing leadership in advanced space power systems. The project also highlights the role of Space Park Leicester in supporting commercial innovation and international collaboration in next-generation space technologies.

The technology has now successfully passed major qualification testing, including vibration and thermal vacuum tests that simulate rocket launch conditions and the harsh environments of space. This demonstrates that the RHU hardware is not only manufactured, but is also proving capable of surviving real mission conditions — an important step toward deployment on future lunar and Mars missions.

Read more [here](#) and [here](#)

e. Don't miss the **Size and Health of the UK Space Industry 2025** study

On behalf of the **UK Space Agency and DSIT**, we invite you to take part in the primary annual evidence base that UKSA and DSIT use to understand the scale of the UK space sector and direct funding across it. This evidence allows them to demonstrate the breadth and scale of the sector, justify public investment, and guide decisions on where and how funding should be allocated.

The study has been streamlined significantly to reduce burden on respondents, with **only 7 questions** that should take about **10 minutes** to complete with the relevant resources to hand (such as your space related income for FY 2023/24, employee numbers, supplier inputs, and investment and public support funding figures).

The survey window closes on **26th June** and can be accessed here [Size & Health of the UK Space Industry 2025](#) You can refer to the [know.space resources page](#) for all key information.

f. **Bridging the gap between engagement and opportunity in the UK–Spain space ecosystem**

Orbital Bridge is a space ecosystem consultancy working across the UK, Spain and Europe — supporting organisations in ecosystem development, the adoption of space-based solutions, and international collaboration.

Spain is currently mobilising over €4.5bn in aerospace investment — yet much of this potential remains commercially under-connected internationally. A recurring challenge is not a lack of capability, but a lack of conversion: strong initial engagement that doesn't translate into real opportunities.

Orbital Bridge are currently launching a small number of focused pilot engagements to better understand and activate this “conversion layer”, particularly across the UK–Spain corridor. As part of this, they are engaging with a small number of UK organisations to understand their priorities and areas of interest in Spain — helping ensure future engagement is more targeted and commercially relevant.

If you have a clear interest in international growth please contact lucia@orbitalbridge.co.uk You can also join the newsletter <https://orbitalbridge.co.uk/newsletters/>

g. **Space Ecosystem Commercialisation Programme Concludes with Strong National Impact**

The Midlands Space Cluster is celebrating the successful completion of the Space Ecosystem Commercialisation Programme (SECP), a UK Space Agency-supported initiative designed to help innovative companies accelerate their journey into the space sector. Delivered in partnership with six regional space clusters across England, the programme provided targeted R&D grants, commercial guidance and market development support to smaller businesses developing technologies with space applications.

Throughout the programme, participating companies advanced a wide range of innovations spanning advanced materials, launch systems, satellite technologies and space-enabled services, helping strengthen the UK's growing space supply chain. In the Midlands, projects included new deployer technologies, advanced spacecraft materials and innovative manufacturing solutions, demonstrating the region's strength in high-value engineering and commercial innovation.

The programme also created valuable new partnerships and commercial opportunities for participating organisations. To see one of the Midlands success stories in action, watch the SECP case study video here: [PGM Reball UK Space Agency Commercialisation Programme](#)

2. **Events and Networking - Midlands**

a. **Space Park Conversations: Aerospace, Business and the Environment**, Space Park Leicester, 14:00-15:00, Thursday 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
- Rob Barsby, display pilot with the internationally renowned AerospaX team

Get your tickets [now](#)

b. 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](#).

c. **Space Park Conversations: Imagining the Final Frontier** Space Park Leicester, 14:00-15:00, Tuesday 19th May

When we talk about space, we often focus on data, discovery, and technology. But what if the key to truly connecting people with space lies somewhere else entirely—in imagination, storytelling, and the psychology of fiction?

In this thought-provoking Space Park Conversations talk, delivered in collaboration with the Leverhulme Centre for Humanity and Space, Dr Valerie van Mulukom explores how science fiction and narrative shape the way we understand—and emotionally connect with—the cosmos.

Get your tickets [here](#)

d. **East Midlands Tech Week: Space Tech Session**, Space Park Leicester, 13:00-17:00, Thursday 18th June

This is an opportunity to present your SPACE TECH business at East Midlands Tech Week. Presenting the latest tech ingenuity and the innovators behind space tech dev, this event will add to the drive for growth and optimisation.

East Midlands Tech Week is a regional technology and innovation festival taking place across the East Midlands, designed to showcase the region's strengths, running over five days in various venues.

Delegate tickets are FREE. Event programme will be revealed soon at www.emtechweek.com

e. **UK–India Free Trade Agreement Roadshow 2026**, The REP, Birmingham, Wednesday 24th June

The UK–India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is one of the most significant trade agreements the UK has secured. The UK–India FTA Roadshow 2026 will visit cities across the UK to help businesses prepare and take advantage of the opportunity. The programme is designed to provide clarity, confidence and connections through practical sessions on market access, sector opportunities, exporting sessions, expert 1:1 advice and networking.

- Who should attend?
UK businesses looking to enter or scale in India, including those wanting practical exporting guidance and market insight.

- What will businesses gain?
Clear insight on the FTA, guidance to be more competitive, export support, expert access, networking and next steps.

Register [here](#)

f. **Space Park Conversations: Satellites, Astrophotography and Astronomy** Space Park Leicester, 13:00-14:00, Wednesday 29th July

This event brings together experts and enthusiasts to explore the fascinating worlds of satellites, astrophotography and astronomy. The session will offer insights into how space technologies are advancing our understanding of the universe, alongside discussions on capturing and interpreting images of space.

Open to both industry and the public, the event provides a relaxed and engaging opportunity to hear from specialists, ask questions and connect with others interested in space science and technology. Attendees can register via [Eventbrite](#) to secure their place.

g. **UK Earth Observation Conference 2026**, 15th – 17th September, University of Warwick

UKEO 2026 will bring together the UK's Earth observation community across research, industry, government and policy to share the latest science, applications and innovations shaping our use of Earth observation data and technology. The conference will provide a key forum to exchange ideas, build collaborations and explore how EO supports national and global priorities.

Why attend UKEO 2026?

- Engage with leading experts from across the EO ecosystem
- Discover cutting-edge research, tools, industry skills and applications
- Network with colleagues from academia, industry, research councils, space agencies and the public sector
- Take part in discussions shaping the future of Earth observation in the UK

Register now: <https://ukeo.org/>

The portal for abstract submissions shortly. In the meantime, please find information about themes, format and submission process here - <https://ukeo.org/abstracts/>.

Gala dinner tickets are limited this year. The [awards](#) will be announced during the gala dinner event and we encourage you to buy your ticket before they sell out!

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. **SmallSat Europe 2026**, 26th-28th May, Rai, Amsterdam

SmallSat Europe brings together more than 2,000 space professionals, 200 exhibitors and industry leaders from across 40 countries for Europe's largest dedicated small satellite conference. The event features business, defence and technical programmes covering commercial growth, sovereign space capability, satellite engineering, investment and next-generation space infrastructure.

See more details and register [here](#)

- c. **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](#)

- d. 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](#).

e. **Space Economy Congress**, 9th-10th July, Barcelona

The 6th Space Economy Congress brings together a mix of space, manufacturing, deep tech, institutional and non-space stakeholders exploring opportunities connected to the space sector.

The event is particularly relevant not only for traditional upstream space companies, but also for organisations working in areas such as:

- advanced manufacturing,
- engineering,
- electronics,
- applications,
- dual-use technologies,

and companies curious about how space technologies and capabilities could connect with their activities.

The second day is especially focused on cross-sector applications, commercial opportunities and ecosystem connections.

General event access is free, but organisations attending through our friends at **Orbital Bridge** additionally benefit from access to a personalised B2B matchmaking agenda.

Please contact Lucia Fonseca de la Bella lfdelabella@orbitalbridge.co.uk if you are interested.

f. **ESA Industry Space Days 2026**, 16th-17th September, Noordwijk, the Netherlands

Organised by ESA’s SME Office supporting SMEs working with ESA, this event facilitates networking and the establishing of new business contacts. It includes pre-arranged one-to-one meetings, exhibitions highlighting the innovations and expertise of selected SMEs, briefings on business opportunities by large groups and institutional organisations, and conferences on space perspectives and market trends.

Register [here](#)

4. Funding and Support Opportunities

a. **Cfl: Advanced Connectivity Technologies (ACT) – Call 1** Innovate UK

Closes: 3 June 2026, 11:00

This new funding competition is now open through the Innovation Funding Service, supporting UK organisations developing innovative technologies, products and services with strong commercial potential. The competition is designed to help businesses accelerate research and development, strengthen UK supply chains, and bring new innovations closer to market.

Funding is available across a range of sectors, with eligibility and collaboration requirements depending on the specific call.

See details and apply [here](#)

b. **Advanced manufacturing supply chain innovation: CRD funding competition,** Innovate UK, UKRI

Closes: 10 June 2026, 11am

UK registered businesses can apply for a share of up to £6.5 million for collaborative industrial research to make supply chains more productive, resource efficient and resilient.

Projects must apply one of the competition themes to at least two of the advanced manufacturing frontier industries identified in the [Advanced Manufacturing Sector Plan](#) and involve an end-user.

The competition themes are:

- measurement, sensing and instrumentation
- additive manufacturing
- digital manufacturing and industrial AI
- robotics and intelligent automation
- power electronics

Projects must have a total eligible grant funding request between £250,000 and £1 million, and last between 12 and 36 months.

Details can be found [here](#)

c. **National Materials Innovation Programme: Feasibility studies** round 2 funding competition

Closes: 24 June 2026, 11am

UK registered businesses can apply for a share of up to £2 million for feasibility studies. These studies aim to speed the translation of advanced materials innovations in three high growth opportunity themes, including

- Theme 2. Sustainable structural systems
- Theme 3. Power electronics and connectivity and a strategic opportunity theme
- Theme 4. Metamaterials and metasurfaces

This funding is part of the National Materials Innovation Programme, announced as part of the Advanced Manufacturing Sector Plan in the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy and delivered by Innovate UK and EPSRC on behalf of DSIT. It is designed to prime the materials community, support collaboration and accelerate the translation of new material innovations across the thematic areas.

Apply [here](#)

d. **Horizon Europe work programmes**

You can view available work programmes for 2026-27 now at [Horizon Europe work programmes - Research and innovation](#)

Work has been going on behind the scenes to make the opportunities more accessible for SMEs, start-ups and new applicants.

Of particular interest are - Cluster 4 which covers Digital, Industry and Space and Cluster 5 which covers Climate, Energy and Mobility.

e. **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.

f. **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

g. **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](#)

h. **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](#)

i. **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](#).

j. **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 here and on our website news page:

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

Get in touch!

Nicola Deards
Midlands Space Cluster Manager

Mobile: 07713 832217

Midlands Aerospace Alliance Tel: 024 7643 0256

nicola.deards@midlandsaerospace.org.uk

