



News and Events #19, July 2026

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

1. News

a. ESA Seeks Industry Views on Future Commercial Space Markets

The European Space Agency is inviting organisations to respond to a Request for Information on how to scale commercial space markets. The call is open to companies, start-ups, SMEs, investors, research organisations and other stakeholders working in or alongside the space sector, with a focus on health and life sciences, advanced materials and in-space manufacturing, agri-food, and space resources.

Responses will help shape ESA's future commercialisation strategy and identify the barriers and opportunities for growing these emerging markets. The submission deadline is 10th July 2026, and selected respondents will be invited to participate in a dedicated workshop at ESA's Space for Inspiration 2026 conference in Copenhagen on 1st–2nd September.

Read more and submit your proposal [here](#).

b. Defence Investment Plan: Summary for the UK Space Industry by UKspace

The Defence Investment Plan (DIP) is billed as the most significant uplift in UK defence investment for a generation, committing £298 billion over the next four years. While direct investment in space totals £3.2 billion, the Plan makes clear that space is no longer viewed as a niche capability, but as the foundation that enables almost every major defence investment across all domains. The document heralds a move to a more sovereign approach in the delivery of UK capability.

You can read the UKspace summary of the plan [here](#).

c. The Royal Society Explores the Future of Space to 2075

The Royal Society has published Space: 2075, a new report exploring how space science, technology and commercial activity could transform society over the next 50 years. The report examines future opportunities ranging from in-orbit manufacturing and lunar exploration to space sustainability and governance, while

calling for the UK to take a long-term strategic approach to ensure it remains a global leader in the rapidly evolving space economy.

Read the full report [here](#).

d. **Deadline Extended: Size and Health of the UK Space Industry 2025 Study**

There is still time to contribute to the Size and Health of the UK Space Industry 2025 study, with the deadline now extended to 17th July. Commissioned by the UK Space Agency and DSIT, the annual survey provides the evidence used to understand the scale and impact of the UK space sector, helping to inform future policy, investment and funding decisions.

The survey takes around 10 minutes to complete. If you haven't yet taken part, please consider contributing to ensure the Midlands space sector is well represented in this important national study.

[Size & Health of the UK Space Industry 2025](#)

e. **Leicester Scientists Secure €2.5 Million ERC Grant for JWST Research**

University of Leicester scientists have secured a prestigious €2.5 million European Research Council Advanced Grant to lead a five-year James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) programme investigating the atmospheres of Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. The project will use JWST to build the most comprehensive chemical inventory yet of the giant planets, helping scientists better understand the formation, evolution and weather systems of our Solar System.

Read more [here](#).

f. **MTC Showcases Breakthrough in Additive Manufacturing for Space**

The Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC) has published a new case study highlighting the CufAM project, which has demonstrated how additive manufacturing of copper alloys can transform space propulsion and thermal management systems.

Working with European partners and supported by the European Space Agency, the project successfully developed and validated advanced manufacturing processes for rocket engine components and high-performance thermal systems, paving the way for lighter, more efficient spacecraft hardware and future space missions.

You can read the full case study on the [MTC Insights](#) page.

2. Events and Networking - Midlands

a. **National Astronomy Meeting (NAM) 2026**, 20th-24th July, University of Birmingham

Organised by the Royal Astronomical Society, NAM is the UK's largest annual astronomy conference, bringing together up to 1,000 delegates from across academia, research institutions and the wider space science community to present new discoveries, discuss emerging challenges and explore the latest advances in astronomy, astrophysics and space research.

The five-day event will feature scientific sessions, keynote talks, networking opportunities and specialist community meetings covering topics ranging from planetary science and cosmology to solar physics, instrumentation and space weather. Registration has been extended to 9th July 2026 – link [here](#).

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

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.

c. **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.

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

3. Events and Networking – UK and Europe

a. **ESA Ecodesign Policy Webinar**, 8th July, 10:30-12:00 CEST, Online

Sustainability requirements are becoming increasingly relevant for organisations involved in space activities, particularly in how projects are designed, procured and delivered. To support this transition, ESA - Responsibility and Sustainability is introducing its Ecodesign Policy, aimed at integrating life-cycle thinking into space projects and reducing their environmental impacts.

This online webinar will outline the policy and its practical implications for the European space ecosystem. Delivered by ESA's Strategic Sustainability and Clean Space teams, the session will present the policy context, explain its relevance for industry, and provide clarity on what it means for current and future contracts.

Details [here](#).

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

The 6th Space Economy Congress brings together organisations from the space, manufacturing, engineering, deep tech and wider industrial sectors to explore new commercial opportunities and collaborations. The event is particularly relevant for companies interested in how space technologies and capabilities can support their business, even if they are not currently operating in the space sector.

Attendance is free, with the second day focusing on cross-sector applications and business opportunities. Organisations registering through Orbital Bridge can also benefit from a personalised programme of pre-arranged B2B meetings. Please contact Lucia Fonseca de la Bella lfdelabella@orbitalbridge.co.uk if you are interested.

c. **Farnborough International Airshow Space Zone**, July 20th-24th, Farnborough

The **Space Zone** returns to FIA for 2026, providing a dedicated hub for the global space community within one of the world's leading aerospace events. Alongside a dedicated exhibition area, the five-day Space Zone Theatre programme will cover topics including space infrastructure, national security, Earth observation, sustainability, investment, regulation and the future of commercial space. Trade tickets start at £65.60 - book [here](#).

The Midlands Aerospace Alliance will be presenting an **Aerospace Supply Chain Conference** at FIA 2026 on the Tuesday, 11:00-12:45, Hall 1, Ground Floor, Room Pioneer 1A showcasing four successful rapid innovation projects delivered by SMEs in the aerospace and space sectors. You can register for this [here](#) now.

d. **Space for Inspiration 2026**, 1st-2nd September, Copenhagen

ESA's flagship conference to spotlight the future of commercial space brings together companies, researchers, investors and space agencies to explore the next generation of commercial opportunities in space. The event will focus on scaling research and production in space, with sessions covering microgravity life sciences, advanced materials and in-space manufacturing, agri-food technologies, and lunar space resources.

Early-bird tickets available for a limited period [here](#).

e. **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](#).

f. **Aerospace & Defence Meetings 2026**, 16th –17th September, Brno, Czech Republic

Organised by BCI Aerospace, this international business convention brings together aerospace, defence and space companies for two days of pre-arranged one-to-one meetings, expert conferences and networking, helping organisations identify new customers, suppliers and collaboration opportunities across the European supply chain.

Registration is now [open](#).

g. **UK Space Power Conference**, 23rd -24th September 2026

Space has never been more important for our defence and economy. At this inaugural conference UK Space Command will outline plans to keep the UK secure in space, and prosperous at home. This new conference is the UK Ministry of Defence's flagship conference for space, bringing together industry, academia, government, and the military.

Read more and buy tickets [here](#).

h. **EU Access to Space Conference**, 23rd September, Brussels

The 2nd EU Access to Space Conference will bring together policymakers, launch providers, industry leaders and researchers to discuss how Europe can strengthen its independent, resilient and cost-effective access to space. Organised by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS), this year's event will focus on three key themes: aggregating institutional launch demand, accelerating innovation in next-generation launcher systems, and developing the critical ground infrastructure needed to support Europe's future launch capabilities.

Registration is now open [here](#).

i. **ESA Open Days 2026 are coming: mark your calendar!** 10th October, ESA ECSAT, Harwell Campus

This free public event offers a rare opportunity to go behind the scenes of ESA's UK centre, meet space scientists and engineers, and discover the missions and

technologies shaping the future of space exploration. Visitors will be able to enjoy interactive exhibits, talks, demonstrations and family-friendly activities covering everything from Earth observation and telecommunications to planetary science and human spaceflight.

Registration will open later this year - mark the date in your calendar and watch for further announcements.

j. **NEXT Space**, 9th November, Gothenburg, Sweden

Next Space 2026 will bring together international space industry leaders, entrepreneurs, investors and policymakers for a major new conference focused on the commercial future of space. The inaugural event will examine how nations and businesses can better leverage space technologies and services to create new capabilities, accelerate innovation and strengthen economic competitiveness.

The one-day conference will feature discussions on national strategy, commercialisation opportunities, cross-sector collaboration and emerging business models across the global space economy. Designed to showcase real-world applications of commercial space services while helping build stronger international partnerships and investment opportunities within the rapidly evolving space sector. Read more and register [here](#)

4. Funding and Support Opportunities

a. **Up to £985k Available Through UKDI Space Innovation Competition**

UK Defence Innovation (UKDI), in partnership with the UK Space Agency and Dstl, has launched the latest **Space to Innovate: Delta Drop** competition to support innovative technologies that will strengthen the UK's future space defence and security capabilities.

The call is seeking proposals in three challenge areas:

- improving sensor-to-response capabilities for space operations,
- developing self-protecting space platforms, and
- enhancing resilience against ground-based electromagnetic threats.

Projects can last up to 18 months and should target Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 3-6.

The competition is open to organisations from industry and academia through a two-stage application process. Stage 1 proposals must be submitted by 28 July 2026, with successful applicants invited to submit a full proposal in Stage 2. A **launch webinar will take place on 8 July**, followed by one-to-one technical sessions for prospective applicants.

Read more [here](#).

b. Commercial Climate Services Call 4

The UK Space Agency's Commercial Climate Services Call 4 is now open for applications. The UKSA are looking for forward-thinking proposals that use satellite-based EO data to develop services that help decision-makers navigate a changing climate - whether that's in water resources, agriculture, urban heat, human health, wildfires, and beyond.

Up to £500,000 in total funding is available to support innovative, market-ready climate services. The deadline to apply is 7 August. Find out more and submit your application [here](#).

c. DeepTech Catalyst Quantum

Applications are now open for the next cohort of DeepTech Catalyst Quantum, an STFC programme supporting early-stage UK companies developing quantum technologies, including quantum computing, sensing, imaging, networks, cryptography and simulation. Eligible start-ups can receive up to £50,000 for minimum viable product (MVP) development, up to £10,000 in R&D vouchers, and tailored business support including investment readiness, market validation and intellectual property advice.

The programme is open to UK-registered companies less than 10 years old with technologies at TRL 3–6. Expressions of interest for the next cohort must be submitted by 9 August 2026.

Apply [here](#).

d. ESA Launches Twin Open Calls to Shape Future Lunar Exploration

The European Space Agency (ESA) has launched two complementary opportunities through its Open Space Innovation Platform (OSIP), inviting the space community to help shape future lunar exploration. A **Call for Scientific Instruments** is seeking innovative concepts for payloads and technologies to support future lunar missions, with submissions closing on 3rd September 2026. Alongside this, a Request for Information is inviting ideas for **commercial lunar data products** that could support science, exploration and future lunar services, with a submission deadline of 29th September 2026.

Both opportunities are open to industry, academia and research organisations, providing a chance to influence ESA's future lunar exploration strategy and develop technologies for upcoming missions. Midlands Space Cluster members with expertise in lunar science, instrumentation, Earth observation, mapping or commercial data services are encouraged to review the calls and submit their ideas before the respective deadlines.

Scientific instruments [call](#) and commercial lunar data products [RFI](#).

e. ESA Opens Funding Call for Space-Enabled Innovation Projects

The European Space Agency (ESA) has launched an open funding call supporting organisations developing innovative space-enabled applications and services across any sector. Through its Business Applications and Space Solutions (BASS) programme, ESA is offering support for both Proof-of-Concept Studies, which help validate market opportunities and develop minimum viable products, and Pilot Projects, which test solutions with customers in real operational environments.

The call is open to companies, universities, research institutes and public sector organisations in participating ESA member states, including the UK. Proof-of-concept projects can receive funding for activities up to €600,000, with SMEs eligible for up to 80% ESA co-funding in some cases.

Feasibility studies (9-12 months) and demonstration projects (18-24 months) will receive project funding at 50% match. The programme operates as a continuously open call, allowing organisations to submit proposals throughout the year.

Themed calls will be launched during the year. Read more [here](#).

f. Demystifying the Space Funding Landscape

KI Bid Consulting, with funding from Space West, have published a report which explains the various Space Sector funding streams which you can read [here](#).

g. 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.

h. 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](#).

i. **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@merciam.co.uk

j. **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](#)

k. **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 [Space – UKI2S](#)

l. **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](#).

m. **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:

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Get in touch!

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