

News story: Funding to link space industry innovation and university research

UK and Ireland pictured from the International Space Station. Credit: Andre Kuipers/ESA

The Government's Industrial Strategy set out ambitions to work with industry and academia to grow the UK space sector.

The Universities of Leicester, Southampton, Surrey, Edinburgh and the Open University, which together form the Space Research and Innovation Network for Technology (SPRINT), have received the £4.8 million Connecting Capability Fund (CCF) grant. This will support small and medium-sized businesses to engage with these Higher Education institutions, providing them with unprecedented access to university expertise and facilities.

The UK Space Agency is one of the partners involved in SPRINT, along with the Satellite Applications Catapult, Seraphim, SSTL and the Science and Technology Facilities Council.

Dr Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency said:

Our growing space sector depends on the success of technology and expertise that comes from the world-class research carried out in the UK.

The UK Space Agency is working hard to ensure the benefits of space are felt across the whole of the country, as part of the Government's Industrial Strategy. The SPRINT programme has our full support – it will help smaller businesses tap into the world-class knowledge of some of the UK's leading universities, giving them a real boost and creating new jobs.

Research England's funding of SPRINT will act as a catalyst to transform the ways that universities and broader partners collaborate and share best practice in how they work with businesses. The programme will boost economic growth, jobs and prosperity across the UK by delivering market-led solutions to the space and space enabled economy.

The SPRINT funding is part of an investment of £67 million through Research England's Connecting Capability Fund (CCF) in new collaborative projects, between universities and other partners, to drive forward world-class university commercialisation across the country.

David Sweeney, Executive Chair of Research England, said:

These projects demonstrate the commitment of universities to work together to strengthen the R&D and technological capabilities of the UK, building upon our successful Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF). In the Industrial Strategy, the Government asked us to improve our ability to turn exciting ideas into commercial products and services. Universities have stepped forward in these projects to show that they can do world class commercialisation, alongside world class science.

I believe these projects present important innovations that should inform our strategic approach to commercialisation in UK Research and Innovation for the future.