

Employment and Skills

Westcott Innovation Centre

The vision for the Westcott Venture Park is to be recognised globally as an integral part of the UK Space sector growth strategy with an unrivalled reputation for supporting rocket and satellite enabled demonstrator projects for real world applications. Its mission is to develop a powerful ecosystem that accelerates the development of new technology and applications for high growth markets. As such, Westcott offers a unique opportunity to inspire and encourage the next generation of technicians, engineers and scientists that will be vital to achieve the UK's ambitious Space Innovation & Growth Strategy.

The nature of work undertaken at Westcott, and one of the characteristics of the ecosystem that will be developed there, is that it requires a range of skills across a broad set of disciplines. The span of expertise needed includes mechanical engineering, electronics, software, chemistry, operations, fluid dynamics, cryogenics etc., creating a range of opportunities to suit many different interests. To service this requirement and to stem the flow of talent from Buckinghamshire, the Satellite Applications Catapult (Catapult) will forge close links with local education and skills organisations to highlight Westcott Venture Park career opportunities as they develop.

Stakeholder Engagement

Researchers: A central purpose of the Innovation Centre will be to act as a focus for university-industry collaboration and a location within which university researchers can establish a physical base on site. This will result in a consistent throughput of researchers and students who will directly experience the benefits of Westcott Venture Park and broadcast them to others in their community. Ultimately, this will encourage researchers and their colleagues to reside in the local area as their careers, projects, and spin-out companies develop.

Apprenticeships: There is an urgent need for apprenticeships across the sector, and the Satellite Applications Catapult will take advantage of recent Government incentives in this area to grow the apprentice community at Westcott, including working with local and national training providers to offer higher apprenticeships.

Normally, small and start-up companies experience significant barriers of scale in taking on apprentices, despite the fact that it is in these kinds of organisations where new talent can often be most effective. To overcome these barriers, the Satellite Applications Catapult will coordinate and organise apprenticeships across the entire collective of companies at Westcott, encouraging apprentice mobility to broaden experience and respond to short-term development needs. This will reduce the financial risk to individual companies, and provide a more attractive training environment and better long-term prospects for the apprentice.

Work Experience: The broad ecosystem of organisations that will develop at Westcott will provide a varied and attractive environment for work experience and placement of students, exposing them to life at the cutting edge of technology, and the challenges and excitement of working in young, innovative and fast-paced companies.

The Satellite Applications Catapult will bring companies based at Westcott into our existing Space Placements in Industry scheme. This scheme is now in its fourth year, enabling over 120 students to undertake an eight week paid placement over the summer in a Space sector related organisation. We will give priority to developing close relationships with local schools and colleges in order to facilitate a continuing flow of young talent onto the site, showing them at first-hand the opportunities at both graduate and apprentice levels and encouraging them to consider a career in Space and related fields either at Westcott or nationally.

STEM awareness: Engagement with young people will extend across the full school spectrum, and we will work with the Westcott Venture Park operators to provide for visits from schools and other student groups through specific open days or bespoke tours. The Catapult already has considerable experience in this area and runs an active school engagement programme. We have ten STEM ambassadors within our team who regularly provide career talks and run bespoke space educational activities for schools at both primary and secondary level. In addition, we organise a number of larger events during world space week and British science and engineering week.

The Catapult has also developed the toolkit “**Satellites 4 Everyone**”, which is designed to explain to non-experts what satellites can do and how satellites are now being used for activities as diverse as farming, finance, transport systems, helping with natural disaster management, tracking wildlife, or helping to eradicate illegal fishing.

The Catapult sponsors regional STEM activities and works closely with the National Space Academy (NSA) and Science Technology Facilities Council (STFC) to bring the concepts of Space into the classroom via a co-funded regional STEM engagement manager. This enables us to maximise our interactions with students.

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