

Manchester Launches New Space Projects to Boost Economy and Security

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— Categories: Defence & Security



Manchester has become a focal point in the UK's expanding space sector following the announcement of a series of new government-backed projects. Revealed at the UK Space Conference on 16 July 2025, these initiatives aim to strengthen national security, boost economic growth, and position Greater Manchester as a leading hub for space innovation and advanced technology.

The UK Space Agency unveiled £4.5 million in new funding to support several cutting-edge ventures. These include the SkyPhi mission by MDA Space UK, which will deliver 5G and 6G satellite connectivity directly to mobile devices using low Earth orbit satellites. Orbit Fab's 'Radical' project will develop in-orbit satellite refuelling systems, while Surrey Satellite Technology SSSL) is working on a lunar communications system for deep-space data exchange. Meanwhile, Viasat's project will focus on creating a hybrid satellite network combining geostationary and low Earth orbit infrastructure to deliver global 5G Direct-to-Device coverage. An additional £1.6 million has been allocated to support the UK's space cluster network, fostering regional cooperation and innovation.

Space-enabled services currently underpin around £454 billions of UK economic activity, accounting for approximately 18 per cent of national gross domestic product. This marks a notable increase of £90 billion in just one year. The sector employs over 55,000 people directly, with another 81,000 jobs supported across the wider supply chain.

Greater Manchester was selected as the host of this year's conference due to its strengths in advanced materials, data science, cybersecurity, and manufacturing. Local officials, including Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, emphasised the region's long-standing scientific pedigree, highlighting assets like the University of Manchester and its pioneering work on graphene, as key to attracting investment and talent.

From a centre-right perspective, the initiatives reflect a sound approach to economic and industrial policy, one that encourages innovation, supports national resilience, and provides long-term returns on strategic investment. Backing frontier technologies such as satellite connectivity,

in-orbit services, and lunar systems signals a commitment to sustaining the UK's competitive edge in high-value engineering.

The conference also offered a platform to discuss the government's Modern Industrial Strategy, with speakers from the UK Space Agency and key firms advocating for coordinated policy around security, sustainability, and commercial growth. Looking ahead, the government is preparing a £75.6 million investment in orbital debris removal and expansion into In-Orbit Servicing, Assembly, and Manufacturing (ISAM), further cementing its ambitions to lead in the global space arena.

As these projects take shape, Manchester's emergence as a central space cluster promises regional economic gains, high-skilled job creation, and a stronger national industrial base.