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South West Regional Development Agency

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The Aerospace and Defence

Industries

The UK's aerospace industry is second only to that of the United States. Within the UK, the South West region is home to the largest and most diverse aerospace cluster.

There is a wide range of aerospace capabilities in the region, both within businesses and within universities. From advanced composite wing design, complex component manufacture, helicopter design and product support to developing capabilities for emerging markets such as unmanned air vehicles and autonomous systems, the South West has extensive expertise. This is supported by innovative university-based research in areas such as aerodynamics, computational fluid dynamics, composites, additive layer manufacturing and metrology.

Business

A large number of aerospace prime contractors are based in the region, including Airbus UK, Agusta Westland, Rolls-Royce, BAE Systems, GE Aviation and Thales. In addition, QinetiQ has significant test and evaluation facilities at Boscombe Down.

It is estimated that roughly 30% of the UK's aerospace industry is located in the South West and there are approximately 900 supply chain companies serving this sector, many of which are small-to-medium sized enterprises.

The aerospace industry employs 43,000 directly in the region and it is estimated that a further 100,000 are employed indirectly and investments in collaborative R&D over the past five years total more than £20 million.

Regional expertise

A number of universities in the region – Bristol, Bath, Exeter, and UWE - have significant aerospace, engineering and manufacturing technology expertise. The MoD logistic and procurement support organisation is located in Bristol and employs a total of 600 people, the majority of whom are graduate level (or

above) engineers and scientists.

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