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SCIENCE MINISTER ANNOUNCES NEW EXECUTIVE AGENCY FOR UK SPACE AND SATELLITE INDUSTRY

A new executive agency will be created to take the UK's recession-busting space and satellite sector into a new space age, Science and Innovation Minister Lord Drayson said today.

This new bureaucracy busting agency will replace the British National Space Centre, and bring together for the first time the six Government departments, two research councils, the Technology Strategy Board and the Met Office that currently oversee the organisation of UK space activities to enhance efficiencies.

The Government's ambitious plans to accelerate growth and jobs within our world-leading space industry were set out in Lord Drayson's speech at the Rutherford Appleton Space Conference.

Space has been one of the nation's unsung economic success stories in recent years – and a thriving sector will be vital in building Britain's future.

The UK space and satellite sector has grown in real terms by around 9 percent a year since 1999/00 – more than three times faster than the economy as a whole. These recession-busting trends are testament to the type of businesses that will generate the jobs of the future.

It currently contributes £6.5bn a year to the UK economy and supports 68,000 jobs. The UK is also currently second in the world only to the USA in space science.

The new agency will allow the UK to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by a world increasingly dependent on advances in space innovations and science. It will safeguard the nation's critical mass of skills and expertise and will bring together a range of budgets into one place improving strategic decision making.

Lord Drayson said:

"Our space sector hasn't missed a beat during this recession.

This is the classic story of outstanding UK science and entrepreneurship continuing to create jobs and achieve exceptional growth.

"The new space agency is about making sure that the UK fully exploits its competitive advantage in satellites, robotics and related technologies."

The announcement comes following a public consultation on how to fund and organise the civil space sector, so that it meets the challenges of the future and delivers the greatest benefit to the country.

As well as maximising the role of space technologies in driving economic growth in high tech, high skilled services, the new agency's responsibilities would include:

- strengthening the UK's relationship with the European Space Agency;
- agreeing with UK industry how to maximise the benefits of space technologies;
- working with the scientific community to provide a clear voice on decisions that affect the sector.

Ian Pearson MP, Economic Secretary at the Treasury, said:

"Establishing a UK space agency reinforces the Government's commitment to be at the cutting edge of innovation and science. Satellite telecommunications and applications affect all our daily lives. They provide high tech R&D and job opportunities which play an important role in the growth of the UK economy."

Lord Drayson also highlighted the publication of BNSC's Space Exploration Review in his speech. This examines the options for future UK participation in the exploration of our solar system, especially locations where humans will one day live and work such as the Moon and Mars.

It identifies several technological opportunities including developing advanced robotics to work in partnership with astronauts, a lunar communications and navigation service to support robotic and human exploration of the Moon and advanced launch vehicles such as Skylon to reduce the cost of getting into orbit.

The report recognises the importance of both robotic and human space exploration and will be used to inform future decisions and international discussions with other space agencies.

Notes to Editor

1. For more information, contact:

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2. Interview opportunities with the Minister:

There will be opportunities to interview the Minister at the Rutherford Appleton Space Conference. To bid for an interview, please contact Adrian Bradley on 020 7215 5080.

3. Lord Drayson's Speech

The Minister will give a speech today at the Rutherford Appleton Space Conference at 16.50 where he announced the creation of the new executive agency for space activities and the publication of the Space Exploration Review. A full copy of the speech is available on request.

4. British National Space Centre (BNSC)

BNSC is a cross-Government organisation that co-ordinates UK civil space activities and brings together representatives from Government, science, industry and education to promote advances in space technology and science. BNSC also supports efforts to use space within the teaching of maths, engineering and science to inspire young people.

BNSC is a partnership of six Government Departments, 2 Research Councils, the Technology Strategy Board and the Met Office. The partner organisations are; BIS, STFC, NERC, TSB, MoD, Met Office, Defra, DfT, DCSF and FCO.
www.bnsc.gov.uk

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