

Bird & Bird Satellite Bulletin

February 2017



UK Spaceflight Bill

The UK Government published the thought-leading and ambitious Draft Spaceflight Bill on 21 February 2017.

This is perhaps the single most important development for the growing smallsat industry in the UK. Low cost access to space will be the game-changing technology which will open up the market and commercial opportunities.

For many years the UK has been a world leader in satellite technology, services and applications, particularly in designing and manufacturing small satellites. Companies such as Clyde Space and SSTL are world leaders in the industry. What UK industry has been missing is the UK's own launch capability to avoid the reliance and dependence on foreign suppliers for launching its spacecraft.

The draft Bill will enable the launch of small satellites from the UK, as well as sub-orbital spaceflights and scientific experiments.

Securing low cost access to space

The Queen's Speech on 18 May 2016 featured the proposal for the first commercial spaceport in the UK. The Modern Transport Bill announced in Parliament set out the aim to "secure low-cost access to space for our world-leading small and micro satellite industry". The Bill mentioned "enabling a first UK space port... within the life of the parliament"; which would mean before 2020 when the current parliamentary term ends. It is expected that licences for launch and sub-orbital activities will be granted by 2020.

Safety, sustainability and support

Offering proportionate regulation, the draft Bill has three main objectives:

- facilitate and support the international development of the UK space sector;

- manage long term risks and liabilities for sustainable sector growth; and
- minimise risk to uninvolved third parties, and keep those involved as safe as possible.

Next steps

Through the publication of the draft Bill, the Department for Transport, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the UK Space Agency (UKSA) wish to "stress test" the proposed legislation and ensure that it strikes the right balance between: (a) stimulating the commercial market for space activities, primarily small satellite launch, and sub-orbital spaceflight activities; and (b) ensuring safety.

Comments on the draft Bill should be submitted to these organisations.

Attracting investment

This announcement is all part of the UK Government's plan to grow the UK's share of the global space sector to 10% by 2030. An important part of this ambition is for the UK to be the European centre for sub-orbital spaceflight. The draft Bill should attract potential investment in spaceplane operations and spaceports and thus create more highly skilled jobs in the sector and spark further innovation.

If you have any queries or would like to receive further information please contact:

Joanne Wheeler

Partner, UK

Tel: +44 20 3017 6847

joanne.wheeler@twobirds.com

Bird & Bird's Satellite Group

Bird & Bird's satellite group are international specialists with a unique reputation and track record in the industry. Through many years of experience working in-house, at regulators, in international institutions (EC, ESA, ITU, UN) and in private practice, we have built an extensive footprint of expertise and knowledge. Possessing a genuine interest in the sector, our team assist clients in many areas including: regulatory advice, industry specific commercial contacts, competition, corporate, finance, dispute resolution, employment, and insurance.

Our international team offers clients a one-stop shop to address the issues they face, with expert lawyers across Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and strong experience in Africa.

Our satellite group fits neatly within Bird & Bird's world leading Tech & Comms sector group, which offers advice in related sectors such as: energy and utilities, life sciences, transport and maritime, aerospace, defence and security, aviation, financial services, and healthcare. Bird & Bird also house a team focused on SMEs and the needs of start-ups.

Get in touch



Joanne Wheeler
Partner, UK

Tel: +44 20 3017 6847
joanne.wheeler@twobirds.com



Graeme Maguire
Partner, Global Head of Tech & Comms, UK

Tel: +44 20 7905 6218
graeme.maguire@twobirds.com



Hamish Fraser
Partner, Australia

Tel: +61 2 92269815
hamish.fraser@twobirds.com



Marjolein Geus
Partner, The Netherlands

Tel: +31 70 353 8806
marjolein.geus@twobirds.com



Anne Federle
Partner, Belgium

Tel: +32 2 282 6088
anne.federle@twobirds.com



Frédérique Dupuis-Toubol
Partner, France

Tel: +33 1 42 68 6023
frederique.dupuis.toubol@twobirds.com



Michelle Chan
Partner, China and Hong Kong

Tel: +852 2248 6111
michelle.chan@twobirds.com



Michel Matas
Partner, France

Tel: +331 42 68 6360
michel.matas@twobirds.com



Sven-Erik Heun
Partner, Germany

Tel: +49 69 74222 6158
sven-erik.heun@twobirds.com



Jenni Tapio
Senior Associate, Finland

Tel: +358 96 226 788
jenni.tapio@twobirds.com



twobirds.com

@TwoBirdsTech

Aarhus & Beijing & Bratislava & Brussels & Budapest & Copenhagen & Dubai & Dusseldorf & Frankfurt & The Hague & Hamburg & Helsinki & Hong Kong & London & Luxembourg & Lyon & Madrid & Milan & Munich & Paris & Prague & Rome & Shanghai & Singapore & Stockholm & Sydney & Warsaw

Bird & Bird is an international legal practice comprising Bird & Bird LLP and its affiliated and associated businesses. Bird & Bird LLP is a limited liability partnership, registered in England and Wales with registered number OC340318 and is authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority. Its registered office and principal place of business is at 12 New Fetter Lane, London EC4A 1JP. A list of members of Bird & Bird LLP and of any non-members who are designated as partners, and of their respective professional qualifications, is open to inspection at that address.