

Bird & Bird Satellite Bulletin

December 2015

Road to the Stars

Congratulations Tim!

I was one of the millions watching Major Tim Peake launch to the International Space Station (ISS) on a Russian Soyuz rocket at Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan yesterday. I watched with awe and wonder and a huge sense of pride; Tim is the first UK astronaut to fly under the banner of the European Space Agency (ESA) and quite simply because of the sheer feat of human engineering which carried him to the ISS.

Ten years ago I was one of two lawyers at ESA working with the Human Spaceflight Programme Board - perhaps rather incongruously as the UK was not contributing to the programme, and I'm a Brit.

But in 2015, the UK is back in the space race: inspiring the young to go into science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) careers; catalysing research and development; stimulating innovation and technological advancement; encouraging private investment; and attracting world leading companies to its shores and related foreign investment. The UK Government has done a lot to encourage this through financial support, regulatory change, a planned spaceport and our own astronaut.

The value of the space and satellite industry is now recognised; not just for achieving public objectives such as enabling critical infrastructure and providing services such as disaster response, remote communications, telemedicine and monitoring; but its contribution to the economy.

I am seeing an increasing number of innovative space companies land and grow in the UK (companies providing launch services; in-orbit servicing; manufacturers; space research and training facilities) and larger, world leading high-

growth companies. One thing that unites all these companies is the wish for senior Government engagement - or "customer service".

Yesterday was also the launch of the UK National Space Policy - a commitment by 26 UK Government organisations and partners to strengthen the UK's capacity to capitalise on the social and economic advantages resulting from space science and satellite technology.

Science and Technology Committee announced yesterday that it will be holding an inquiry into the space and satellite industry to ensure that the National Space Policy is providing the right support for R&D and the commercialisation of space technology. The aim is to grow the UK space sector to £40 billion by 2030. The inspiring and long awaited launch of Tim should not be a distraction from the achievement of the economic goals - but instead should be harnessed to be a catalyst to deliver them.

In 2016 I would like to call on the UK Government to show further leadership, and engage more closely with the UK space companies and those looking at landing in or launching services from the UK. There also remain some regulatory changes and clarifications which would be welcome.

In the meantime, I will be watching Tim's mission with interest and enthusiasm.

Happy Christmas!

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

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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.

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