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SUPPORTING COMMERCIAL SPACEPLANE  
OPERATIONS IN THE UK

**Welsh Government Response  
to the Consultation on criteria to  
determine the location of a UK Spaceport**

**Just Ask Wales**





**Wales, at the heart of UK Space Technology**





Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

**Message from Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AM,  
Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, Welsh Government**

The Welsh Government is fully committed to helping the UK realise its vision to host Europe's first Spaceport.

We believe the compelling business case for Llanbedr means it should be shortlisted as a preferred location for the UK Spaceport.

Wales has existing strengths in Space Technology and the selection of Llanbedr as the preferred location for the Spaceport would provide a transformational opportunity and further embed and grow this technology base as part of the UK's vision for the sector.

On behalf of the Welsh Government, I have pleasure in submitting our response to the CAA's consultation on the conclusions and recommendations that formed part of the CAA Report of July 2014. We now look forward to receiving the outcome of your further deliberations.

Llanbedr is already being developed as an integral element of the unique Remotely Piloted Air Systems (RPAS) environment in West Wales and Master Planning continues to ensure the right infrastructure and supporting investment is identified to deliver against the UK's future requirements for RPAS. This process has now been extended to address the pre-requisites for a regulated, safe launch and operating environment for space tourism and scientific payloads.

**Edwina Hart MBE CStJ AM**  
Minister for Economy, Science and Transport



**Llanbedr**

**Mid Wales Airport**

**Withybush Airport**

**CARDIFF**

London  
2 hours  
from  
Cardiff



**Wales, at the heart of UK Space Technology**

## UK Spaceport – A Welsh Government Response

**Q1.** Do you agree with the CAA's high-level recommendation that, if a decision were taken to proceed, sub-orbital operations should preferably commence, either on a permanent or a temporary basis, from one (or more) of the following:

**An existing EASA-certificated aerodrome;**

**An existing UK CAA-licensed aerodrome; and/or**

**An existing UK military aerodrome, subject to approval from the MOD**

### Welsh Government Response

The CAA report into Spaceplane operations clearly and rightly identifies safety as the over-riding operating principle, not only for fare paying passengers but also for the 'uninvolved public'. It is therefore imperative that an appropriately regulated aerodrome and associated airspace environment is chosen that will meet these stringent safety standards. As Welsh Government we share the regulator's primary concern for safety and this would be uppermost in developing any solution at Llanbedr.

**Q2.** Do you agree that in order to make maximum use of existing infrastructure, the location should preferably still be active but at a low level of aircraft movements and should have existing and appropriate ground infrastructure/facilities and service provision?

### Welsh Government Response

Whilst safety remains paramount, use of an existing facility with low level of aircraft movements is wholly appropriate to fully utilise existing infrastructure and services while minimising the initial capital and revenue costs of such a venture. De-risking the project, financially and operationally, will increase a location's attractiveness to potential private sector investors and reduce the potential burden on the public sector. Llanbedr offers the dual benefits of an existing, established aerodrome coupled with very low levels of aircraft movements.

**Q3. Do you agree that green field sites should not be considered?**

#### Welsh Government Response

The Welsh Government's central organising principle of sustainable development would not support the consideration of a green field site. Furthermore, the extensive planning process for green field sites would add considerable uncertainty and potential delay to the Spaceport's challenging deadlines.

**Q4. Do you agree with CAA's analysis identifying the criteria to be considered in identifying a permanent location for a UK Spaceport? If not, please explain why.**

#### Welsh Government Response

Welsh Government fully endorses the analysis underpinning the criteria used for site selection.

**Q5. Do you think there are any other criteria that should also be taken into consideration? If so, please explain why.**

#### Welsh Government Response

The criteria refer to the requirement for relatively isolated aerodromes operating within a segregated airspace environment. Section 2.14 of the Consultation Document stresses the need to align wider socio economic – policies with the requirements for a Spaceport. Welsh Government is aware of the ongoing requirement to establish a UK test and evaluation environment for large, remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) to meet current and future demand from both the MOD and ultimately civil operators. In this context there is considerable synergy between RPAS and Spaceplane operations and from a UK Government perspective it would appear expedient to consider a location's capacity to meet both requirements.



**Q6. Do you agree that these are relevant criteria? What weight should be attached to them?**

#### Welsh Government Response

The criteria as outlined are wholly appropriate and relevant. As stated, safety is paramount and should therefore be the primary weighting. In this context the ability to operate safely is determined in part by favourable weather conditions and meteorology should consequently be given concomitant consideration. Similarly, environmental concerns and objections must be addressed to reduce risk and meet stringent government policies. Again, an existing airfield offers the benefit of minimising environmental impact while offering a 'path of least resistance' to the inevitable environmental and planning challenges that will be encountered.

**Q7. If more than one location closely meets the essential operating criteria, safety, meteorological, environmental and economic criteria, do you agree that we should also consider factors around the contribution to local and national growth? If so, what weight should be given to these factors?**

#### Welsh Government Response

The Spaceport offers a real catalyst for scientific advance and economic benefit in regions of the UK that have historically struggled to attract high quality projects and associated jobs. In this respect any decision on location should be made in the context of broader UK and devolved government policies for both regional and national growth. However, it is also important to acknowledge the need for reasonable proximity to existing industry and academic clusters of excellence.



Llanbedr – focus the mind









Wales, stunning from any angle



**Q8.** Do you agree with the CAA's analysis and strong recommendation that until there is a better understanding of sub-orbital spaceplane safety performance, spaceplane operations should only take place in areas of low population density and the resulting view that only a coastal location is suitable to protect the uninvolved general public?

#### Welsh Government Response

Welsh Government entirely agrees with this recommendation and would add that the 2000 square miles of segregated airspace over Cardigan Bay offers a significant margin for the safe deployment of spaceplanes together with a fifty year track record of operating experimental aircraft in segregated airspace.

**Q9.** What are your views on the CAA's shortlist of eight potential sites?

#### Welsh Government Response

Welsh Government is delighted that Llanbedr has been selected as one of the eight sites.

**Q10.** Are there any locations on the CAA's shortlist which you consider should be disregarded? If yes, please give your reasoning.

#### Welsh Government Response

Welsh Government respects the initial findings of the CAA in determining the sites chosen to date and would not wish to see any disregarded without appropriate rigorous evaluation.

**Q11.** Are there any additional locations that you consider should be on the CAA's short list? If yes, please explain why.

#### Welsh Government Response

None identified.

**For further comment or clarification on any aspect of this submission please contact:**

**Dickie Davis**

Head of Advanced Materials and Manufacturing,  
Department for Economy, Science and Transport,  
Welsh Government,  
QED Centre,  
Main Avenue, Treforest Industrial Estate,  
Treforest, CF37 5YR

[dickie.davis@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:dickie.davis@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

Tel: +44 (0) 300 061 5801

Mob: +44 (0) 7772 630686



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Welsh Government**



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