



Solutions

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RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ON SUPPORTING COMMERCIAL SPACEPLANE OPERATIONS IN THE UK

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your consultation document.

SKEO is a compact Consultancy based in the United Kingdom, consisting of Associates all of whom have had substantial and successful careers at very senior level in the Defence, Aerospace, Maritime or Tourism industries.

The majority have also worked in both the public and private sectors. Several have led major public/private sector bids and/or formally reviewed complex capital investment opportunities and programmes often utilising private finance.

Summary of UK consultation

We understand that the consultation seeks views on the criteria identified by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) as key and whether there are other factors or criteria that should be considered in supporting a site for a spaceport in the United Kingdom.

Concurrently we understand that the UK Space Agency is also consulting on the contents of a new National Strategy for Space Environments and Human Spaceflight.

Response

In our informal discussions with ministers and leaders of the space industry Internationally, we noted that they see a spaceport is as a facility to enable satellite launches, rather than passenger space tourism. We have also talked to airport operators in UK and abroad to understand how they view spaceport operations as an integral part of their current activities or in the case of non-operational locations, as a standalone activity.

Whilst we believe that the creation of a spaceport is a hugely exciting opportunity for the location eventually selected to host the UK's first spaceport and the potential return on investment may be huge, with the promise of high skill jobs and significant opportunities for the tourism, research and development, and science and technology sectors we do not believe a stand-alone solution is viable. Nor will such an approach attract the right levels of investment to be sustainable.

The emphasis in the Consultation report is on the expected emergence of a new breed of low-cost rocket planes that can launch fare-paying passengers to sub-orbital altitudes and also satellites into orbit.

We understand that UK Minister's position is that if the UK gets its act together now, the nation can catch the first wave when it arrives. We support this contention. However we note that most of the vehicles referred to above are still quite a few years away from flying,

We would prefer to see an approach that takes account of the UK Space Agency strategy but also incorporates existing activities such as airport services, adjacent business park capabilities and Maintenance & Repair. We also consider that the Department of Transport should consider how current activities together with the establishment of a spaceport might generate adjacent sector business such as Technology visitor and demonstration centres and training enterprises.

Lastly, we believe that too much emphasis is placed on definitive runway length for an industry that is still in its infancy.

If this multi-faceted approach is accepted, we are concerned that the Assessment Criteria is insufficiently robust and tested to satisfy the aspirations of all the spaceplane operation contenders.

Evaluation of bids is arguably the most complex and significant part of any procurement process and central to evaluation is the formulation and application of suitable award criteria. The proliferation of complaints, both formal and informal, from bidders reflects the importance of award criteria and the difficulties they frequently produce. Contracting authorities face a delicate balancing act when weighing up the need to ensure legal compliance, technical ability, service delivery, sustainability of operation and transparency.

SKEO has considerable practical experience of initiating and managing public sector/private sector initiatives. We would be able to provide more evidence and recommendations on how appropriate evaluation criteria can be put in place for an integrated spaceplane requirement.



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