

SIN promotes UK science excellence as British astronaut goes into space!



When British European Space Agency (ESA) astronaut Tim Peake launched into space last year at the start of his visit to the International Space Station, three members of our Science and Innovation Network (SIN) were on hand at key locations, taking part in the action and promoting the UK's world leading expertise in science and space technology.

Gareth Wynn Owen, head of SIN Russia, was lucky enough to be invited, along with our Ambassador in Russia, to the launch in Baikonur, Kazakhstan. He has known Tim from his training visits to Russia. He said: "It has been phenomenal being part of Tim's journey and he's a fantastic Ambassador for the UK. The launch was incredible. I stood 1km from the launch pad. I remember the noise and vibration as the five engines of the Soyuz rocket burst into life. We all watched in silence as the rocket disappeared into the clear blue sky hoping to catch a glimpse of the four booster rockets returning to earth. After the second stage of the rocket had jettisoned successfully in unison we cheered and hugged like a football crowd celebrating a winning goal. Tim was going to space!"

In the US Lauren George, head of the SIN Houston team, and Houston Consul General Karen Bell were invited to watch the launch and the hatch opening from Mission Control at NASA Johnson Space Center in Houston. Lauren said: "We had a fantastic vantage point from a glass walled viewing room that hovered directly over the Mission Control Operation Room and were able to watch all of the moving pieces unfold to ensure a successful launch".

Emma Hennessey, FCO Deputy Chief Scientific Adviser, attended a launch event at the Science Museum in London, along with several hundred very excited school children. Scientist Professor Brian Cox, Canadian astronaut Commander Chris Hadfield (the first Canadian to walk in space), Russian Major General Alexey Leonov, the first human to walk in space, and presenter Dara O'Brien were also there presenting live for the BBC.

This was the second time SIN has engaged with the Tim Peake Mission. At the beginning of 2015, SIN and the Houston Consulate PPA team partnered to host a live Google Hangout with Tim and ESA scientist Matt Taylor that reached a global audience and engaged viewers in real time via a twitter hashtag for questions. They talked about the use of robotics in space missions and how innovation in the field of robotics – which the UK is a world leader on - is closely tied to the expanding limits of human space exploration and our ability to go farther, and stay longer.

This time round we used the opportunity to promote the release of the UK Space Agency's National Space Policy and to showcase UK expertise in space and satellites (the UK is responsible for 25% of the world market in telecoms satellites). We used the occasion to promote UK expertise by launching a new "Science is GREAT" campaign (using #SciencelsGREAT on Twitter, for example) which was a real success – messages reached an estimated to reach 9.5million people! Tim Peake's mission in space has been a fantastic opportunity to tell the world about how innovative the UK is in space science and is developing the technology to enable further exploration and push the limits of what we can do.

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