

National Microgravity Research Centre opens in Swansea

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The UK's first National Microgravity Research Centre has been completed at Swansea University, marking the successful delivery of a £13 million project part-funded by the UK Space Agency.

The centre, developed by space manufacturing company Space Forge, was supported through the UK Space Agency's Space Clusters Infrastructure Fund (SCIF), which invests in regional infrastructure to grow the UK's space economy.

The NMRC is located at the Centre for Integrative Semiconductor Materials (CISM), Swansea University, where Space Forge has become the centre's first incubation client. Operating from a dedicated clean room incubation bay, the company now has access to a full suite of semiconductor processing and characterisation tools, as well as CISM's wider community of semiconductor researchers, companies and innovators.

The facility forms the terrestrial anchor of Space Forge's hybrid manufacturing model, in which semiconductor seed wafers grown in the microgravity of low Earth orbit are returned to Earth and scaled at CISM.

UK Space Agency CEO, Dr Paul Bate, said:

The completion of the National Microgravity Research Centre is another concrete example of what our Space Clusters Infrastructure Fund is designed to achieve - tangible, lasting infrastructure that strengthens the UK's space economy and builds sovereign capability in strategically important technologies.

Space Forge has demonstrated real ambition, from launching the first British-built in-space manufacturing satellite to now establishing a world-class terrestrial facility at Swansea University. This investment is helping to cement Wales and the wider UK as a serious player in the future of semiconductor manufacturing.

The UK Space Agency's Space Clusters Infrastructure Fund has awarded more than £45.6 million for 13 projects since it launched in 2023. This funding is complemented by over £43.8 million in match funding from the sector, generating a total of £89.6 million of private/public investment in space research and development infrastructure.

In January the £20 million Westcott Space Hub opened in Buckinghamshire with £5.8 million in funding, providing testing facilities, training spaces and commercial workspace for space businesses.

The Airbus Launchpad - a new facility designed to help small businesses thrive in the UK space sector - has also opened at Airbus Defence and Space's Stevenage site, backed by £3.9 million from the UK Space Agency.

In February Magdrive opened the Disruptive Experimental Electric Propulsion (DEEP) Lab, at

Harwell, thanks to £1.8 million from the Agency. The lab gives British businesses access to specialist testing facilities for electric propulsion systems – the technology that allows satellites to manoeuvre, maintain their orbits, and travel further into space using less fuel than traditional chemical rockets.

The announcement follows a series of milestones for Space Forge. In June 2025, the company launched ForgeStar®-1 - the first British-built in-space manufacturing satellite - and by December 2025 had successfully generated plasma in orbit, demonstrating that the conditions needed for advanced crystal growth can be achieved aboard a commercial spacecraft.

Joshua Western, CEO and Co-Founder of Space Forge, said:

When we secured this funding in 2023 we set out to build something that would advance microgravity materials and open doors for other space companies to do the same. Being based at CISM gives us access to world-class semiconductor infrastructure and a community of researchers and talent that will help us move faster.

CISM is part of the CSconnected compound semiconductor cluster in South Wales - Europe's first such cluster - built with £55 million of UK and Welsh Government investment.

Space Forge's presence at the facility adds to Wales' growing role in the UK's sovereign semiconductor supply chain, with the company focusing on advanced materials including silicon carbide, gallium nitride and gallium oxide - materials with applications in power electronics and radiation-hard technologies.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-microgravity-research-centre-opens-in-swanea>