

Airbus Defence and Space Portsmouth: A Global Space Leader with Deep Roots in Hampshire's High-Skill Economy

Airbus Defence and Space is one of the engines powering Hampshire's high-tech economy. From its Portsmouth base, around 1,000 highly skilled engineers, technicians and specialists design and deliver world-class space technologies, making Airbus the city's second-largest private-sector employer and generating an estimated £300 million each year for Hampshire's economy.

Often described as a hidden gem, the operation combines a 70-year heritage locally with global reach and deep regional impact, playing a significant role in shaping the county's advanced engineering economy.

Located at Anchorage Park in the Hilsea area of the city, Airbus Defence and Space delivers advanced satellite and communications technologies that support critical missions around the world. Designed, built and tested there, these complex space systems underpin applications ranging from climate monitoring and disaster response to secure communications and national capability.

As one of Hampshire's most advanced engineering employers, Airbus is helping to shape the future of space and satellite technology while strengthening the county's position as a centre for innovation, exports and specialist employment.

A Centre of Excellence for Space Technology

The Portsmouth site is Airbus Defence and Space's UK hub for small satellites and advanced electronic payloads. It is home to the UK's largest clean-room complex and the country's only space-certified processor factory, capable of manufacturing radiation-hardened digital processors. This capability represents a vital national asset, supporting secure civilian, commercial and defence missions.

These processors form the digital heart of modern communications satellites. Airbus UK's Hyperion processor, developed and manufactured locally, can process extremely large volumes of data and is enabling a new generation of flexible, reconfigurable satellites. Every television signal delivered to the UK from space passes through a satellite built in Portsmouth.

A defining strength of this operation is its end-to-end approach. Space systems are designed, manufactured, assembled and tested entirely on site. This depth of integration is rare internationally and unique within the UK, placing the facility among a small number worldwide capable of delivering sophisticated space technology at scale.

Strengthening Hampshire's Export Economy

Airbus Portsmouth is a major contributor to Hampshire's export performance. Around 90 per cent of output is exported, with the operation accounting for approximately a quarter of the global market for large geostationary satellites, alongside Airbus's Stevenage facility.

This strong export focus reinforces Hampshire's reputation as a county that delivers complex, high-precision engineering for international markets. It also embeds the local economy within global supply chains, supporting long-term resilience and growth.

Driving Economic Growth and Regional Collaboration

The economic impact of Airbus Defence and Space extends well beyond the city boundary. The company spends more than £5 million each year with local suppliers and supports a further 1,000 jobs across its wider supply chain. Around half of Airbus UK suppliers are small and medium-sized enterprises, helping to anchor advanced manufacturing, electronics and engineering capability across Hampshire and the wider Solent region.

Airbus has also played a leading role in strengthening collaboration across the defence and security ecosystem. The company was instrumental in establishing the South Central Regional Defence and Security Cluster, which brings together industry, academia, the public sector and SMEs. The cluster supports innovation, supply-chain readiness and skills development, reinforcing Hampshire's role as a strategic location for defence, space and security-related activity.

Specialist Jobs for a High-End Future

People are central to Airbus's success. Engineers, technicians, software specialists and project managers work together on complex, mission-critical systems where accuracy, reliability and resilience are essential.

The skills developed locally, including advanced electronics, robotics, automation and digital systems engineering, are highly transferable across the wider economy. This creates a strong pool of specialist expertise that benefits Hampshire's defence, manufacturing, digital and clean-technology sectors, supporting long-term productivity and innovation.

Investing in the Next Generation

Airbus Portsmouth plays a leading role in workforce development and early-career training. The operation hosts the UK's largest dedicated space early-careers centre

and currently supports its biggest intake of apprentices and graduates for a generation, with more than 40 apprentices and graduates and 25 interns in training.

Apprentices gain hands-on experience working on live satellite programmes while achieving industry-recognised qualifications. These pathways provide access to specialist careers without reliance on traditional academic routes alone, supporting Hampshire's ambition to build a strong and inclusive STEM talent pipeline.

The company is also active in education outreach, working with schools and training providers, supporting University Technical College Portsmouth and contributing to curriculum development to ensure young people are equipped with skills aligned to future industry needs.

Innovation with National and Global Impact

Innovation is embedded across the operation. Significant recent investment has resulted in a production line operating at up to 90 per cent automation, improving efficiency, consistency and quality while reducing production times.

The business also plays a vital role in national resilience, delivering secure military communications and contributing to the UK's sovereign space capability. Alongside this, Airbus Earth observation technologies support climate science, environmental monitoring and disaster response around the world, ensuring that innovation developed in Hampshire delivers benefit far beyond the region.

A Hampshire Success Story with Global Reach

Airbus Defence and Space in the city demonstrates how global industry and local capability can combine to deliver lasting economic, social and strategic value. Through sustained investment, strong export performance, leadership in regional collaboration and a long-term commitment to skills development, the operation stands as a flagship for Hampshire's advanced economy.

As the space and defence sectors continue to grow internationally, Airbus's presence in the city ensures that Hampshire remains firmly positioned at the forefront of the technologies that shape national capability and global connectivity.

To find out more about Airbus Defence and Space click [here](#).