

Maintaining a World Class Commercial Aerospace Industry

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Unite, Britain's biggest private sector union, will today call on the government to initiate a commercial aerospace strategy similar to the governments' successful Defence Industrial Strategy.

The union will also urge the government to set up an Aerospace Investment Board, which would act as a leaner and more transparent approach to investment in research and development than currently exists.

In a report launched today by Unite, the union will claim that the UK's capabilities in the aerospace sector has strengthened and it has become a supplier, provider and partner of choice. But Unite is urging the government to give the sector the right support to maintain the UK as a world class player in the commercial aerospace sector.

The union is asking the government to develop a Commercial Aerospace Strategy aligned to the UK's strengths including composite wing manufacture and propulsion systems. The strategy would have the full involvement of the aerospace companies and the unions and would inform the government on a coherent and strategic research and development investment fund (Aerospace Investment Board).

Unite is asking the government to create an Aerospace Investment Board, a one stop shop to draw down investment funds for research and development. The current complexity of applying for government research and investment grants is becoming an obstacle to the growth of new technologies in the sector. One company applied for investments to develop more environmentally friendly processes and systems. The company had to apply to six government departments and it took two years for initial approval.

Unite National Officer, Bernie Hamilton, says:

"The commercial aerospace sector is a UK manufacturing success story. But the government needs to prime pump this sector to ensure the UK remains ahead of the game and does not befall the same fate as other UK manufacturing industries.

"This means the government should work with companies and unions to devise a coherent commercial aerospace strategy which plays to the UK's strengths and informs a transparent investment strategy. The UK is a world class player in this industry and it is imperative that the government does everything it can to support the commercial aerospace sector."

The aerospace sector employs 124,000 people and supports a total of 276,000 jobs across the UK economy. In 2006, turnover in the sector increased by 25% to GBP 19.81 billion. The main companies with UK operations in the commercial aerospace sector include, Rolls Royce, Airbus, Bombardier, Goodrich and GKN.

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