

FINAL APPROACH |

Now more than ever

As Government seeks to redress the economic balance, market led technology strategies will ensure the success of industrial sectors, says Sameer Savani, operations manager, Aerospace and Defence KTN.



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While all sectors are being encouraged to innovate their way back to growth, the UK National Aerospace Technology Strategy (NATS) as the collaborative, industry-driven, Government-endorsed strategy is now more pertinent than ever since its conception in 2003.

As custodian of NATS, the A&D KTN is the portal for UK stakeholders to engage. My role connects organisations, people and content to enable delivery of NATS. This was exemplified recently by the KTN's contribution to AeroEngineering 09 in Manchester; through a combination of keynote address, introduction to NATS and detailed technology insight by six of the twelve National Technical Committees (NTCs) enabled by the KTN, we demonstrated the integration between the innovation climate, Governmental industrial policy and aerospace technology development.

NATS' strength lies in pooling UK capability to seize global opportunities. As these global trends evolve, NATS allows them to be captured, mapped and influence the pull-through of technology in a robust and communicable framework. I work with industry and Government to coordinate the collation of this content, and to create roadmaps that personify NATS. This means drawing input from a range of sources, most notably from the twelve NTCs.

These NTCs articulate the sector's R&T priorities in topics such as materials & structures and fluid dynamics. While these areas continue to bring forward priorities, we have seen increasing commitment and interest in other areas, such as air traffic management and electronic systems. We recently established an NTC for autonomous systems, which has attracted over 40 organisations to participate, demonstrating the UK's appetite in this area. Far from being mere strategy bodies, NTCs are breeding grounds for partnerships and launch pads for collaborative R&D. For example, the recently launched WiTNESSS project funded by the Technology Strategy Board was developed within the Health Management and Prognostics NTC, while the SAMULET programme emerged from the Advanced Design & Manufacturing NTC.

The evolution of Government industrial policy has shifted the sector-specific approach to R&D to a cross-

sector approach. This will be the direction of foreseeable travel as Government seeks to redress the balance of the economy across multiple sectors. Low Carbon Industry, Skills for Growth, New Industry – New Jobs and Advanced Manufacturing are at the heart of Government strategy, and aerospace R&D continues to benefit and contribute in this policy environment – NATS continues to deliver. I would argue that UK aerospace remains in pole position to seize opportunities to fortify its globally competitive position. The value of aerospace to Government's industrial strategy is evident from recent investments in R&T programmes such as SAMULET under the Advanced Manufacturing agenda; and the SILOET programme is being assessed to be supported under the Low Carbon Industrial Strategy. Along with the Repayable Launch Investments for civil aerospace projects within the New Industry – New Jobs programme, these represent a solid commitment by Government to partner with industry, to realise the vision of the UK being a global centre

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of excellence in aerospace offering the most innovative and productive supply chain to the global market.

NATS is undergoing a refresh to ensure the sector is able to face the future challenges and opportunities. This process will be a top-down regeneration including a new global market picture to delineate the opportunities for UK aerospace. This will identify the product requirements the UK has the capability to fulfil, which in turn will identify the research and technology development programmes needed to realise these products. This process is an opportunity for all innovators in the aerospace supply chain to benefit from future programmes launched under the umbrella of NATS. There has never been a more important time for the UK aerospace community to collaborate. |

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