



Orlando Commercial Space Week

Event Summary

26-30 January 2026

Orlando, Florida, USA

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Schedule	5
Programme	6
Summary.....	10

Introduction

The UK Space Delegation to Orlando Space Commercial Week 2026 brings together a cohort of UK space companies, universities and sector representatives to engage with key stakeholders across Florida's space ecosystem. The programme spans engagements in Orlando and the Space Coast, including visits to the University of Central Florida, Space Florida, Kennedy Space Center and participation in SpaceCom at the Orange County Convention Center. Activities include academic roundtables, company showcase sessions, site visits and structured B2B meetings designed to facilitate commercial partnerships and knowledge exchange. The primary objectives of the delegation are to strengthen UK-US collaboration, generate tangible business opportunities, enhance inward and outward investment links, and promote the capabilities of the UK space sector within the North American market. The programme is coordinated by the UK Department for Business and Trade in partnership with the British Consulate-General in Miami.



Organising Partners

The UK Space Delegation to Orlando Space Commercial Week 2026 is organised and delivered by the UK Department for Business and Trade (DBT) in partnership with the British Consulate-General in Miami. The delegation is supported by DBT's Space Sector team in both the United Kingdom and North America, ensuring strategic alignment with the UK's international trade and investment objectives.

Key delivery leads include representatives from DBT North America and the British Consulate in Miami, who are responsible for programme coordination, stakeholder engagement, and facilitating business-to-business meetings throughout the week.

The programme is delivered in collaboration with host partners in Florida, including the University of Central Florida (UCF), Space Florida, NASA Kennedy Space Center, and SpaceCom / Commercial Space Week Orlando, who are providing venue access, site visits, networking opportunities and engagement with the local space ecosystem.



SPACECOM PRESENTS

COMMERCIAL SPACE WEEK

Figure 1: Organising partners

Schedule

Sunday 25 Jan	Meet and Greet with Miami Consulate & DBT Team
Monday 26 Jan	Visit University of Central Florida
Tuesday 27 Jan	Meeting with Space Florida at Space Coast
Wednesday 28 Jan	Visit Kennedy Space Center, NASA
Thursday 29 Jan	SpaceCom Exhibit Hall and Business Meeting
Friday 30 Jan	SpaceCom Exhibit Hall and Business Meeting

Programme

University of Central Florida

During the visit to the University of Central Florida (UCF), we had the opportunity to explore several world-class space research facilities and engage with faculty leaders advancing frontier science and engineering. UCF positions itself as “America’s Space University” by integrating long-standing partnerships with NASA and the U.S. Department of Defense across its space research ecosystem, encompassing planetary science, hypersonics, in-situ resource utilisation, and cross-disciplinary innovation.

One of the highlights of the visit was the HyperSpace Center, a leading research facility focused on hypersonic propulsion, materials, and aerospace innovation. Hosted within UCF’s research park and backed by substantial DoD funding, HyperSpace brings together academic researchers, defence partners and industry collaborators to address critical challenges in hypersonic flight and space access. The centre’s emphasis on faster, more efficient propulsion and materials for extreme environments provides an excellent platform for research that spans aerospace, defence and space exploration domains.

We also visited the Exolith Lab – Centre for Lunar & Asteroid Surface Science, which specialises in regolith simulant research and testing. This facility develops high-fidelity lunar, Martian and asteroid soil simulants and houses one of the world’s largest lunar surface test bins, enabling hardware demonstrations and in-situ resource utilisation (ISRU) studies crucial to sustained missions beyond Earth. The lab works closely with NASA and supports global research by providing simulants and consultation on dust mitigation, sample mechanics, rover testing and related technologies.



In addition to infrastructure, business engagement at UCF is extensive. Discussions with faculty and research leaders revealed active partnerships with NASA, Blue Origin, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and other commercial space entities as part of their broader research portfolio. UCF’s ecosystem fosters tech transfer, workforce development and industry collaboration through symposia, internships and joint R&D projects – exemplified by its multi-university hypersonics research initiative convened with major U.S. research institutions.

The visit demonstrated both significant research capacity and a strategic approach to translating academic research into real-world space technology impact. UCF’s integrated model – spanning materials, propulsion, planetary science, microgravity research and aerospace systems – provides a useful benchmark for collaborative international engagement.

Based on the insights gained, there are compelling opportunities for strategic collaboration between Yorkshire universities and UCF in the following areas:

Materials Science & Extreme Environment Materials: UCF’s work on advanced materials for hypersonic and space applications aligns with research strengths in materials science clusters in Yorkshire (e.g., composites, high-temperature ceramics). Joint R&D, student exchanges, and co-funded projects could accelerate innovation in thermal protection systems and space-ready materials.

Hypersonic Aerodynamics & Propulsion: The expertise housed at the HyperSpace Centre complements UK research in high-speed flight and space access. Collaborative programmes – including modelling, wind tunnel testing and shared experimental campaigns – could benefit UKRI and defence research agendas.

Artificial Intelligence & Autonomous Systems: Integrating UCF’s aerospace and planetary datasets with Yorkshire’s growing AI and data science research base could drive innovations in autonomous navigation, machine learning for spacecraft operations, and AI-enabled materials discovery.

Lunar & Martian Exploration Science: UCF’s Exolith Lab offers a unique platform for testing hardware and experimental protocols for lunar and Mars missions. Yorkshire universities engaged in planetary science and robotics could partner on simulant-based testing, ISRU experiments and upcoming NASA/ESA mission payload development.

Space Florida

During our visit to Space Florida, the state’s aerospace finance and development authority, we gained a comprehensive understanding of its foundational role in positioning Florida as a global leader in space commerce and spaceport development. Space Florida was established in 2006 through the merger of several state space entities to create a unique public corporation with broad powers to finance, incubate and grow aerospace ventures across the state. This structure allows Space Florida to offer innovative financing tools, infrastructure access, and strategic partnerships that attract both established aerospace companies and emerging space ventures.

A core mission of Space Florida is to maximise the capacity and capabilities of the region’s spaceport system, particularly around the historic Space Coast centred on Cape Canaveral and the Kennedy Space Center. Acting in close coordination with the Florida Department of Transportation’s Spaceport Office, Space Florida has driven infrastructure improvements, attracted major tenants and facilitated extensive capital investment in launch facilities, manufacturing and research campuses. This has transformed erstwhile government-centric infrastructure into a thriving commercial and multi-user ecosystem.



Florida’s record-breaking launch activity in recent years — reaching well over 100 orbital launches annually — exemplifies this success and points towards a future cadence that industry analysts project could approach 500 launches per year as demand for satellite deployment, human spaceflight, and commercial space activities continues to expand. The Space Florida pipeline now commands billions of dollars in aerospace projects, including satellite processing facilities, manufacturing campuses, and launch site enhancements that reinforce the Space Coast’s global competitiveness.

Space Florida’s stewardship has helped attract major space companies — from SpaceX and Blue Origin to Amazon’s Project Kuiper and others — which have established launch infrastructure, manufacturing, and operations on the Space Coast. This concentration of industry activity has created a vibrant commercial ecosystem underpinned by skilled talent, robust supply chains, and progressive policies that support rapid innovation and economic growth.

Given the density of launch activity, advanced infrastructure, and presence of major space companies on Florida’s Space Coast, we recommend that Yorkshire-based space businesses and universities actively explore collaborative opportunities within this ecosystem. Strategic engagement with Space Florida and its partners can unlock avenues for technology joint ventures, supply-chain integration, and participation in high-frequency launch operations — particularly in areas such as payload integration, ground systems support, materials development and space manufacturing. With the projected growth in launch rates and ongoing capital investment, the Space Coast presents a highly fertile environment for UK players seeking to expand their global footprint in the commercial space economy.

Kennedy Space Center, NASA

Our visit to NASA's Kennedy Space Center was led by a team of retired engineers from the Space Shuttle programme, whose combined experience and technical depth provided exceptional insight into both historic and current missions. Drawing on decades of operational involvement, they explained how knowledge gained from the Shuttle era directly informs today's deep-space systems. A particular highlight was seeing the Artemis II launch vehicle at close range. The Space Launch System (SLS) that will power Artemis II clearly demonstrates Shuttle heritage — including the RS-25 engines and aspects of the solid rocket booster technology — showcasing engineering excellence evolved for lunar exploration.



We were granted access inside the iconic Vehicle Assembly Building (VAB), an awe-inspiring structure that once housed the Saturn V and Space Shuttle stacks and now supports assembly of the SLS. Observing the integration activities within the VAB emphasised the immense scale, precision and coordination required for human-rated deep-space flight. We also saw the crawler-transporter and mobile launch platform — extraordinary engineering systems designed to carry fully assembled rockets from the VAB to Launch Complex 39. Witnessing this infrastructure up close highlighted the complexity and heritage underpinning NASA's return to the Moon.



The forthcoming Artemis II mission, expected to launch in the coming months, will be the first crewed test flight of the Artemis programme, sending astronauts around the Moon and preparing for sustained lunar surface missions. It marks a decisive step toward establishing a long-term human presence beyond low Earth orbit.

This unique experience underscored the significance of the renewed lunar exploration era. Looking ahead, the development of a cis-lunar economy — encompassing lunar infrastructure, in-space manufacturing, resource utilisation and advanced logistics — represents substantial opportunity for universities and industry. Research in high-performance materials, autonomous systems, robotics, AI, propulsion and in-situ resource utilisation will be critical to enabling future lunar bases. For Yorkshire's universities and businesses, active engagement in this emerging ecosystem offers a strategic pathway to contribute to — and benefit from — the next chapter of global space exploration.

SpaceCom

Florida's Orlando Commercial Space Week provided an important opportunity to engage directly with leaders across the U.S. commercial space ecosystem. Beyond the exhibition floor, the UK Department for Business and Trade (DBT) arranged a structured programme of B2B meetings, enabling in-depth discussions with companies and institutions shaping the next phase of space commercialisation.

Representatives from the Astraeus Space Institute at the University of Florida outlined their interdisciplinary approach to space research, combining engineering, policy and science. They highlighted workforce development as a strategic priority and noted that international academic collaboration, joint research bids and student exchanges would strengthen global capability in emerging space domains.

At BlackStar Orbital, the leadership team described their focus on innovative orbital platforms and data services. They emphasised agility in mission design and the development of new commercial use cases in orbit, noting that partnerships can accelerate technology validation and market access.

Representatives from Micross Components explained their expertise in radiation-hardened and high-reliability electronic components. They reported that increasing mission complexity and longer operational lifetimes are driving demand for advanced packaging and resilient microelectronics solutions.

During discussions with Nuview, the team outlined their ambition to deploy a space-based LiDAR constellation to generate persistent, high-resolution 3D mapping of Earth. They stressed that growth in climate monitoring, infrastructure resilience and environmental intelligence will require strong international partnerships in AI processing and data analytics.

The Orlando Economic Partnership described how the region has intentionally built a connected aerospace cluster integrating universities, primes and start-ups. They emphasised infrastructure expansion and workforce readiness to sustain projected increases in launch cadence, and welcomed collaboration with overseas companies bringing niche technologies.

Officials from Pinellas County Economic Development highlighted local incentives, industrial capacity and strong ties to Florida's advanced manufacturing base. They noted that aerospace and electronics companies are a key focus of their inward investment strategy.

In meetings with Sidus Space, executives reported that vertical integration — from design and manufacturing to mission operations — enables responsiveness in a high-frequency launch environment. They expressed interest in partnerships that enhance subsystem innovation and supply chain resilience.

Space Forge shared insights into their microgravity manufacturing model, explaining that regular access to launch services is essential to scaling advanced materials production. They indicated that transatlantic collaboration could accelerate technology demonstration and commercial deployment.

Finally, at Vast, the team presented their roadmap for developing commercial space stations to support NASA's transition to privately operated low-Earth-orbit platforms. They emphasised modular station architecture and highlighted opportunities for partners specialising in advanced materials, life-support systems and autonomous operations.

Overall, Commercial Space Week reinforced that Florida's ecosystem is characterised by high launch cadence, strong state-level coordination and an increasingly diversified commercial landscape. Across all meetings, organisations consistently underlined the importance of international collaboration, resilient supply chains and research partnerships. For UK universities and businesses — particularly those in Yorkshire — engagement with Florida's Space Coast presents a strategically significant opportunity to integrate into one of the world's most active and fast-growing commercial space markets.

Summary

The Florida visit provided a comprehensive view of one of the world's most advanced commercial space ecosystems. At NASA's Kennedy Space Center, a team of retired Space Shuttle engineers shared insights into the heritage and evolution of human spaceflight, highlighting how lessons from the Shuttle programme shaped the Artemis programme. Seeing the SLS rocket up close, touring the Vehicle Assembly Building (VAB), and observing the crawler-transporter illustrated the scale, precision, and infrastructure required for deep-space missions. The upcoming Artemis II mission exemplifies a shift toward sustained lunar operations and the emerging cis-lunar economy.

Engagements with Space Florida demonstrated the state's strategic approach to building a commercial launch and manufacturing hub. Infrastructure investment, innovative financing, and active cluster development have created a dense ecosystem attracting major launch providers and satellite manufacturers, with projected annual launch rates set to increase significantly. Orlando Commercial Space Week complemented this by providing a platform for business engagement, including curated B2B meetings with organisations such as Astraeus Space Institute, BlackStar Orbital, Micross, Nuview, Orlando Economic Partnership, Pinellas County Economic Development, Sidus Space, Space Forge, and Vast. These discussions highlighted opportunities in Earth observation, in-space manufacturing, orbital services, advanced electronics, AI, autonomous systems, and supply chain resilience.

The trip underlined that Florida's success stems from high launch cadence, integrated cluster development, and alignment between government, industry, and academia. For Yorkshire universities and space businesses, strategic engagement with this ecosystem could unlock partnerships in materials science, advanced manufacturing, AI, in-space systems, and cis-lunar infrastructure. Future focus should include structured collaborations, university-to-university research programmes, niche technology integration, and early participation in lunar and orbital markets. By leveraging regional strengths and building transatlantic ties, Yorkshire can position itself as a significant contributor to the growing global space economy.



SPACE HUB®
YORKSHIRE