



N-ACT Summit 2026

Event Summary

11th March 2026

Bradford Arts Centre, Bradford

Contents

Introduction.....	2
Organising partners.....	3
Schedule.....	4
Programme.....	7
Audience.....	8
Impact & Feedback.....	10
Summary.....	11

Introduction

The N-ACT Summit 2026, held on 11 March at the Bradford Arts Centre as part of the West Yorkshire Innovation Festival, brought together leaders from government, industry, defence, academia, and regional innovation clusters for a full-day exploration of the future of Advanced Connectivity Technologies (ACT).

With a core focus on Radio Frequency (RF) and microwave technologies, in which Yorkshire and the wider Northern UK regions have an internationally recognised expertise, the summit highlighted both the region's strengths and its role in being a significant contributor to the Government's Industrial Strategy ambition of the UK becoming a world leader in Advanced Connectivity Technologies.

The summit opened with remarks from Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire, and featured contributions from DSIT, Tech UK, Satcom Innovation Group, Airbus, the UK Space Agency, the Yorkshire & Humber Defence & Security Cluster, DASA, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, the Universities of Bradford and Leeds, and a range of SMEs across RF, microwave and adjacent ACT sectors.

Keynotes and panel discussions examined how terrestrial and non-terrestrial networks, future telecoms, and space-enabled connectivity intersect with the UK's Industrial Strategy, the Digital & Technologies Sector Plan, and the Defence Industrial Strategy. Speakers emphasised the critical role of regional clusters—particularly across Yorkshire and the North—in translating national ambitions into practical outcomes by driving commercialisation, skills development, and international growth.

A major milestone of the event was the launch of the N-ACT Network (Northern – Advanced Connectivity Technologies). Designed as a unifying identity for RF and Microwave companies across the North, the network strengthens the region's shared branding, expands collaboration into adjacent sectors such as photonics, semiconductors, quantum, cybersecurity and sensors, and aligns with global defence and aerospace primes located in the region. The N-ACT identity deliberately extends beyond the Yorkshire & Humber geography to complement the Space North initiative and support wider pan-Northern ecosystem development. The N-ACT logo, unveiled at the summit, was positively received and will serve as the focal point for network building over the next 12 months.



Organising Partners

The Summit was organised and funded by Space Hub Yorkshire with support from Halston Group around promotion, marketing and logistics on the day of the event. The event was held as part of the West Yorkshire Innovation Festival.

Additional input was provided by Spiral who were commissioned by SHY to produce a logo for the N-ACT Network and the venue hosts, Bradford Arts Centre.



Schedule

Registration from 8:30am

8:30am – 9:15am

Registration, coffee & networking

9:15am – 9:20am

Welcome from Space Hub Yorkshire & Introduction to Tracy Brabin (Glenn McCauley, Co-founder, Space Hub Yorkshire)

9:20am – 9:30am

Welcome speech & conference 'opening' from Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire.

9:30am - 09:40am

SHY, Introducing N-ACT, the Northern – Advanced Communications Technology Cluster (Ken Brockbank, Cluster Development Manager)

Session 1

UK Industrial Strategy - Advanced Connectivity Technologies (ACT)

9:40am - 9:55am

Speaker 1.

Adam Lowes, Head of Advanced Connectivity Technologies, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

10:00am – 10:45

Panel session 1

ACT and UK Industrial Strategy as a vehicle to drive regional economic and cluster growth.

Panel members:

- Adam Lowes, Head of Advanced Connectivity & Future Telecoms, Dept of Science, Innovation and Technology.
- Paul Connell, Co-founder & Exec Chair, The Data City.
- Callum Whittaker, Inclusive Economy Lead, West Yorkshire Combined Authority
- Chair/moderator – Pamela Knoll, UK Space Agency Ecosystem Champion.

10:45am – 10:55 am

Presentation

Gareth Preece, Ecosystem Champion, UK Space Agency & Space Hub Yorkshire.

10:55am – 11:25am

Break / refreshments & networking

Session 2

Innovating Emerging Space Technologies and accelerating the pace of innovation

11:25am – 11:35am

Speaker 1

Rory Daniels, Program Manager, Emerging Tech, Tech UK

11:35am – 11:50pm

Speaker 2

Professor Raed Abd-Alhameed, Professor of Electrical and Electronic Engineering University of Bradford.

11:50pm – 12:35pm

Panel session 2

Supporting and accelerating the pace of Innovation

Panel members:

- Professor Raed Abd-Alhameed, Professor of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, University of Bradford
- Rory Daniels, Programme Manager, Emerging Technologies, Tech UK
- Andrew Johnson, BSC Filters
- Chair / Moderator, Helen Weedon, Managing Director, Satcomms Innovation Group.

.....

12:35 pm – 1:35pm - Lunch & Networking

.....

1:35pm – 1:50pm

Speaker

Professor Kevin Morris, Professor of Radio Frequency Engineering and Head of School at University of Leeds

Session 3

Secure & resilient communications for Defence & Security

1:50pm - 2:10pm

Speaker 1

Peter Gibson, Head of Commodity: Service Support & Maintenance, Airbus

2:10pm – 2:20pm

Speaker 2

Clare Green, Innovation Partner, DASA - 'UKDI - latest developments and opportunities'

2:20pm - 3:05pm

Panel session 3

The need for secure, resilient comms for defence & national security

Panel members

- Pete Hardcastle, Technical Director, BSC Filters
 - Joseph Wilson, Head of Strategic Innovation, Optalysys,
 - Clare Green, Innovation Partner, DASA
 - Peter Gibson, Head of Commodity: Service Support & Maintenance, Airbus
 - Chair - Andy Butt, Chair of Yorkshire & Humber Regional Defence & Security Cluster
-

3:05pm - 3:35pm

Break / refreshments & networking

Session 4

The vision for a connected future

3:35pm - 3:45pm

Speaker 1

Tales Gaspar, Tech UK

3:45 - 4:30pm

Panel session 4

Creating the 'network of networks' through the integration of terrestrial and non-terrestrial technologies.

Panel:

- Dr Viktor Doychinov, University of Bradford
- Sarah Gregory, Commercial Director, Slipstream Engineering Design
- Tales Gaspar, Tech UK
- Gavin Cox, Satcom Innovation Group
- Chair / moderator – Ken Brockbank, Cluster Development Manager, Space Hub Yorkshire.

4:30pm - 4:40pm

Wrap Up

Glenn McCauley, Co-founder, Space Hub Yorkshire

4:40pm – Refreshments & Networking

5:30pm event closes

Programme

Speakers, panel Chairs and panellists came from many organisations from across the UK



Audience

Despite only having 4 weeks for promotion, there were over 80 registrations and the event itself was attended by over 70 people with delegates from a broad spectrum of industry, academia, local and regional government and professional services. Attendees included those from the RF and microwave ecosystem across Yorkshire and also a wider geographical area such as the North-West and Lincolnshire.



Impact & Feedback

Overall, the summit was very well received and established a strong foundation for ongoing collaboration, signalling the North's unique position to lead the UK's next wave of advanced connectivity innovation.

In follow up to the event, several attendees, speakers and panellists have asked if there will be another N-ACT Summit next year with a number of organisations expressing an interest in providing sponsorship and these organisations will be approached to gauge their level of interest in the next few months.



Adam Lowes, Head of Advanced Connectivity, DSIT:

"I found the day really interesting, the community you've built is really strong and I'm looking to seeing how they can continue to benefit from the upcoming funding and other activity on ACT."

Sarah Gregory, Commercial Director, Slipstream Design:

"The Northern RF Cluster's voice has grown significantly in recent years and we're now being invited to government led conversations to share our experience. It's a strong signal that the region has global potential and the opportunity it represents for the UK economy is there. We're really excited to see where Space Hub Yorkshire and N-ACT will take the region next"



Summary

We consider the event being a success based on:

- The number of attendees, given there was only 4 weeks available to SHY and Halston Group to promote the event and drive registrations, especially as the registration process, Eventbrite page and timings were out of our control.
- The positive feedback we have received from delegates, speakers and panellists whom have expressed their interest to speak at any future N-ACT Summits.
- Several organisations and businesses expressing an interest in sponsorship opportunities at a future N-ACT Summit.



