

By Ian Godden

The UK has a strong manufacturing tradition and the defence and aerospace industry is an unsung success story in continuing that history today. However, for the sector to be able to continue this success into the future then the right environment for it to flourish has to be created.

The SBAC therefore welcomes the Government's manufacturing strategy that was released today.

In particular we welcome the focus on low carbon technologies, skills and the global market. Defence and aerospace has a turnover that tops £20 billion and brings in over £2 billion net per year to the UK due to its success in exports as well as employing over a quarter of a million highly-skilled people. The UK industry will need more of such skilled people in the future to maintain its global position. The UK aerospace industry is also leading the way in delivering further reductions to aviation's impact on the environment. The strategy's focus chimes strongly with the priorities of the defence and aerospace industry.

The popular perception is that Britain is only a service sector nation these days. Defence and aerospace proves that this is mistaken. When I visit factories or related operations in this sector I see success and the potential for success everywhere I go. We look forward to working with the Government on securing tangible benefits from this strategy to ensure that defence and aerospace manufacturing success can continue delivering for the nation long into the future.

Defence and aerospace is a growing sector and a major part of UK manufacturing. It is a successful industry, representing over ten per cent of the manufacturing base and supports over 276,000 jobs in the UK. It is a sector that contributes a positive balance of trade of £2 billion and invests £2.5 billion in research and development per year.

The SBAC has recently been concerned that the Government, currently experiencing a financial squeeze, is in danger of letting this excellent position slip by not investing in its future. It is therefore very welcome that the Government has published the manufacturing strategy and it is essential that it is correctly focused and adequately supported by targeted funding. The SBAC will now review the content of the strategy to determine whether it will deliver for its members and for the future of UK manufacturing.

The UK still has a globally-competitive defence and aerospace industry and remains an aviation economy. The Government, industry leaders and unions must all play their part to maintain the UK's success by securing investment in the sector's future - not just by promoting good fiscal policy but also by investing in UK defence and security equipment, in high technology skills provision and in the next generation of aircraft and engines - thereby maintaining Britain as a high tech engineering economy.

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