AIRBUS HELICOPTERS ACCELERATES INDUSTRIALISATION IN THE UK

News / Manufacturer

Airbus Helicopters, the **UK**'s leading turbine helicopter company, has received funding from the Department for Business Innovations and Skills (BIS) for two separate projects: one supported by the Aerospace Technology Institute (ATI) and the other through Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative (AMSCI). These projects, the first time Airbus Helicopters has participated in UK Government-led industrial development, demonstrate the company's growing commitment to the UK and its ambition to increase its UK-based research and manufacturing activities.

The first project, worth £2 million and part-funded by government through the ATI, will partner Airbus Helicopters with Cranfield University, BHR Group and SME Helitune Ltd. With the aim of developing technologies to measure blade deformations in flight, the project will create a unique tool for future research into rotorcraft blade dynamics and will allow engineers to actively monitor rotor blade performance during flight tests. This will have a major impact on flight safety, operations and maintenance, and will contribute towards reductions in point-to-point travel time (one of ACARE's Vision 2020 goals). It will also support the UK's skills and capability in the field of advanced aerodynamics, an area where the UK is a global leader.

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The second project, worth £1.2 million and supported by BIS' AMSCI, will see Airbus Helicopters partner with project lead NetComposites under the Dual Use Technology Exploitation (DUTE) cluster, to help develop and produce lower weight, lower cost helicopter armour at an increased rate and enable more flexibility in military helicopter design. This project will help bring maturity to existing technologies, shortening the time to market from up to 15 years down to three. The technology will also have the potential to be used more widely in areas such as personal protection and body armour, a global market estimated to be worth $2.4 billion in 2013.

Business Minister Anna Soubry said, "Airbus Helicopters is the largest turbine helicopter manufacturer in the world and these innovative projects backed by government can only strengthen our capabilities in this field. The government will continue to back our world leading aerospace sector to keep driving innovation, economic growth and creating skilled jobs."

Colin James, Managing Director for Airbus Helicopters in the UK said, "Unlike the rest of Airbus Group which has a balance of core business activities spanning France, Germany, Spain and the UK, Airbus Helicopters still has, by comparison, an underdeveloped industrial presence in Britain and we mean to change this."

Gary Elliott, Chief Executive Officer of the ATI, said, "The UK blade research programme with Airbus Helicopters is a good example of how a major global prime can be attracted to locate its R&D in the UK because of the strength of our research centres, supply chain and the Government's support for innovation".

Both these projects will provide significant value to the UK industrial and academic base by helping position the UK at the forefront of global rotor blade research and support advanced defence equipment manufacturing. This paves the way for potential future collaboration leveraging Airbus Helicopters' pedigree in design, engineering and manufacturing with the UK's advanced aerospace skills and capabilities.

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