

# Britain launches first space agency

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Business Secretary Peter Mandelson (L) speaks with astronaut Major Timothy Peake in London. Britain has launched its own space agency with the help of home-grown astronaut Peake, aimed at boosting the country's multi-billion-pound space technology industry.

Britain launched its own space agency Tuesday with the help of home-grown astronaut Major Timothy Peake, aimed at boosting the country's multi-billion-pound space technology industry.

While Peake may be its only astronaut, Britain is a world leader in areas such as robotics, satellites and telecommunications, which contribute about six billion pounds (nine billion dollars, 6.7 billion euros) a year to the economy.

The new [UK](#) Space Agency, complete with a logo depicting the Union flag morphed into a soaring arrow, will manage what is now a loose partnership of government departments and research councils dealing

with space.

About 68,000 people are employed directly or indirectly in the industry and Business Secretary Peter Mandelson said it was "exactly the kind of high value-added industry we need to support".

Officials said it could grow to 40 billion pounds a year by 2030.

Peake, who is trained to fly Apache attack helicopters with the British army and was one of six astronaut recruits chosen by the [European Space Agency](#) last year, said the new agency was "a very positive move".

"Britain has an enormous amount of talent in areas such as telecommunications and robots," he said.

"It's extremely important that we do try to encourage our younger generations to take up these sorts of careers, and today goes a long way towards achieving this."

Mandelson also announced Tuesday the creation of a new 40-million-pound International Space Innovation Centre, based at the [European Space Agency](#) facility in Harwell, central England.

Funded with a mixture of private and public funds, it intends to bring together businesses, academics and governments to promote space technology.

The new agency will replace British National [Space](#) Centre (BNSC) and initially operate out of the BNSC headquarters in Swindon, west of London.

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