NEWS RELEASE

Unmanned civilian flights draw nearer

UK's National Aeronautical Centre announces US partner

14 November 2012 - The National Aeronautical Centre (NAC) based at West Wales Airport has today announced a strategic partnership with Oklahoma State University's Multispectral Laboratory (UML) to advance the operation and regulatory development of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS).

The partnership will provide data and experience necessary to establish national safety standards for the construction, testing and control of civilian UAS that will enable them to operate in civilian airspace under regulated conditions.

The idea is that both parties will exchange their development and operational experiences with the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the UK's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). The aim is to establish a framework for internationally accepted regulation at the earliest possible date.

Success in this venture will be a significant step in enabling UAS operating companies on both continents to gain the necessary clearances to access a market forecast to be worth $51 billion a year by 2020.*

For the past eight years West Wales Airport has been extending its capability of operating large UAS beyond visual line of sight, and now finds itself at the forefront of this leading edge aerospace sector. The privately owned site, near Cardigan, Wales, is the cornerstone of the NAC that was launched at the Farnborough International Airshow earlier this year. Some of the main players in the UAS industry use the NAC's unique facilities, including Thales UK and Selex Galileo. More are set to follow in the coming months.

West Wales Airport is also home to the UK Ministry of Defence's Watchkeeper UAS, which is undergoing an extensive test and evaluation program prior to going into service with the British Army. Weighing in at 500kgs, Watchkeeper is one of the more sophisticated unmanned systems that have enabled the airport to advance its experience and knowledge base to benefit the development of the industry in general. This knowledge base is set to be greatly enhanced through the work to be undertaken with Oaklahoma UML.

Oklahoma's UML, meanwhile, supplies research and development as well as test and evaluation services in support of UAS at federal, state and commercial

levels. Operating airfield facilities near Fort Sill, OK, the UML has established considerable competences working with UAS at many levels. Now, with the combination of its inherent intellectual capability and strategic partnership with West Wales Airport, the institution is perfectly placed to assist the UAS industry gain access to an extensive and valuable civilian market.

Ray Mann, managing director of West Wales Airport said, “This is an extremely important development that will deliver many benefits, as well as maintaining both our facilities at the leading edge of this burgeoning sector of aerospace. I am very pleased this special working relationship has been created with Oklahoma and believe our experiences at the NAC will be a major contribution to our work together.”

He added, “There are many very capable UAS companies from around the world who know the material and financial benefits that will arise once it becomes possible to operate unmanned systems in civilian airspace. The opportunity that has now arisen for us to work with Oklahoma’s UML will be a significant step towards establishing the long awaited criteria for that to happen.”

Dr Stephen McKeever, secretary of science and technology for the State of Oklahoma said, “This announcement is further proof of our determination to establish the state of Oklahoma as a major centre of excellence for UAS development in the US. Along with other partners, the knowledge and experience that West Wales Airport brings will add significantly to the already high level of capability at the UML. I believe we now have the range of partners, facilities and competences to make Oklahoma the ‘fly-to state’ for UAS development and operations.”

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Notes to Editors:

The NAC offers development and evaluation facilities, as well as a platform for companies to demonstrate their products to customers. It is also a forum where operators can build confidence with the regulatory authorities when producing a new product to enter the market and achieve sales and profits.

West Wales Airport, located at Aberporth, is at the heart of the NAC. The airfield offers segregated airspace extending inland 40nm miles to the east, covering an area of 499 square miles. The airspace is only activated when required, and subject to stringent safety requirements, regulated by both the Civil and the Military Aviation Authorities.

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Ray Mann's company The Mann Organisation owns West Wales Airport, which was established as a CAA licensed airfield in 2002. It lies within the existing Danger area D201 and the recently established D202, and is the only airport in the country with a CAA accredited UAS operations manual that allows the flying of unmanned systems.

www.flyuav.co.uk

* 'Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS): Market Shares, Strategy, and Forecasts, Worldwide, 2012 to 2018' the global unmanned aircraft systems market is anticipated to reach $51 billion by 2018.

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