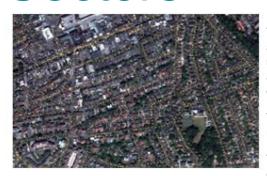# UK Space Agency Provides Free Satellite Data for Public Sectors

The UK Space Agency's [Smarter Government Programme (SSGP)](#) will provide access to archives of images and radar data for research and development projects. This will stimulate further growth in the UK's world-leading space industry, which already employs around 40,000 people, while benefitting the public sector in areas such as planning and development.

The images will provide an unprecedented level of detail of major British cities, transport networks, national parks and energy infrastructure.

This type of satellite data is already being used in several pilot projects. It has been combined with machine learning techniques to help Bournemouth Borough Council identify the best locations for electric vehicle charge points across the city. While the Environment Agency is investigating the feasibility of using satellite images as a tool to monitor plastic pollution off Britain's shoreline to support clean-up operations and protect wildlife.

With a vast amount of new images now available for free, there is significant potential for further innovations.

There is expected to be high demand for the images which offer sub 5m resolution with less than 15% cloud cover, for public sector research and development. The images have been procured from Airbus Defence and Space and Telespazio-Vega UK Ltd.

Sara Huntingdon, the UK Space Agency's SSGP Manager, said "Until now there has been a perceived financial barrier to the public sector, academics and start-ups accessing high-resolution data from satellites, so this is great news for the UK space sector. We hope it will break down barriers, enable rapid prototyping and stimulate the next wave of satellite-enabled application development."

Telespazio VEGA UK are providing high-resolution Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) data collected by the four-satellite COSMO-SkyMed constellation. Imaging radars on board the satellites transmit and then receive radar signals that can penetrate cloud cover and provide images of the Earth's surface day and night.

Michael Lawrence, Head of Marketing and Sales at Telespazio VEGA UK, said "Analysis of the additional information provided by high-resolution SAR data will allow the measurement of ground displacements and identify the precise location of changes to both the urban and natural environment."

The data will be available for up to three years to explore what role high-resolution satellite data could have in public sector delivery. The project will also feed into the recently established Geospatial Commission, set up by the government to maximise the value of all UK government data linked to location, and to create jobs and growth.

Simon Agass, from the Satellite Applications Catapult, which is working with the UK Space Agency to deliver this project, said "This could be transformational for government services in the UK and ultimately provide a platform for the export of satellite-derived services for governments across the globe."

Providing the public sector with this satellite data is an example of the government fully exploiting the power of technology and data to deliver world-class services. The #SmarterGov campaign has been launched to drive innovation, savings and public service improvement across the public sector.