

Case study

Lockheed Martin UK

Achieving excellence within Central Bedfordshire's high-performance technologies cluster

Lockheed Martin UK's base in Ampthill is home to some of the world's most advanced developments in defence technology. Operating in Central Bedfordshire for more than 80 years, the company is in its element. It's in an environment where it excels at what it does best and where its people-led culture finds a perfect fit.

As the UK arm of the Lockheed Martin Corporation, the world-leading security and aerospace company, Lockheed Martin UK employs 1,600 people at more than 20 sites across the country. There are circa 600 people working at its Ampthill site in Bedfordshire, involved in a broad and varied range of cutting-edge defence technology and capabilities.

As Lockheed Martin's owned site in the UK, covering an area of 64 acres with 20,000m² of state-of-the-art production facilities, the Ampthill site has five principal areas of activity: special (classified) projects; weapons capabilities; Space; Ground Based Air Defence, turret design and manufacture, and platform and systems integration. At the time of writing, the company is working on 50 different defence-related programmes.

Lee Fellows, the Vice President and Managing Director of Lockheed Martin UK Ampthill, is a long-serving veteran of the UK defence industry. Joining the company as a junior project manager in 2008, he previously spent 16 years with the Ministry of Defence, holding senior roles in engineering and programme management and being deployed in two active operational theatres.



Photo credit: Lee Fellows, Vice President and Managing Director of Lockheed Martin UK Ampthill with Simon Weston CBE

We spoke to Lee about Lockheed Martin UK Ampthill, the work it does, its people and the benefits he sees in its location at the heart of the Central Bedfordshire community.

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Innovation, driven by diversity

There's no doubt that the design, development and manufacture of solutions that strengthen security and keep people safe needs people capable of solving some of the world's most complex technical challenges. And Lee is quick to point out the vital role played by diversity in the kinds of work Lockheed Martin UK undertakes.

"It should go without saying, but a workforce made up of different backgrounds and experiences, with wider-ranging knowledge and skills, will always understand a customer better, have more original ideas and be more innovative than one that is always looking for a similar type with similar characteristics. As a global player in a highly competitive market, diversity and inclusion are therefore an essential part of our ethos and culture.

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Vice President and Managing Director
of Lockheed Martin UK Ampt Hill

"And in this regard, our location in Ampt Hill really does offer significant benefits. Not only has Central Bedfordshire always had a genuinely rich and diverse multicultural population, but its position within what is one of the UK's most multi-faceted high-performance technology clusters, between Oxford and Cambridge, means it attracts a lot more of the kind of people we need.

"Of course the local clustering can certainly mean that competition for the best people can be tougher. It does however mean that innovation-led companies like us really do have to be on our toes in offering a working environment that is both stimulating and rewarding – and that can only be a good thing.

"And that's not just for engineering and technical personnel, that's for all the other vital roles in the business, like material scientists, project managers, supply chain managers and so forth."

Photo credit: Lockheed Martin UK



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The value of collaboration

With project lead times in the defence procurement industry traditionally measured in many years rather than months, the speed and efficiency of operations are a key focus of attention for Lockheed Martin UK. Strategic collaborations with others can, though, yield more rapid advances that in turn help accelerate growth, as Lee explains:

“The great advantage of working within a concentrated technology cluster like that in Central Bedfordshire is that we get to form some great local partnerships, with some really clever SMEs and serious research-level universities, like Cranfield in particular, working together on advancing new ideas and technologies.

“Ground-breaking work on high-profile projects like the Mars Lander and the Thrust supersonic car for example are great public illustrations of what can be achieved through successful collaboration. And there does need to be a lot more collaboration between industry and university research centres. We need to work together to reduce timescales.



Photo credits: Lockheed Martin UK



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An ethos of volunteering and wellbeing

At the heart of the Central Bedfordshire community for more than 80 years, Lockheed Martin UK is also mindful of its social responsibility in the region. It very publicly cites volunteering as a key part of its DNA and proactively supports its staff in volunteering for local organisations on top of their day jobs.

Lee said, "The value and worth of our people is a lot more than just the 9 to 5, and where we operate is far more than just a place of work. Our positive openness to volunteering reflects this and also provides us all with an opportunity to give something back to a country that entrusts us with some very important projects.



"And I'm proud to say that the number of Lockheed Martin UK employees volunteering, and the number of volunteer hours they are putting in, just keeps on growing year on year, even in spite of the Covid-19 epidemic."

The positive impact of volunteering and constructive social engagement on mental health is also not overlooked by Lee. As the company's lead on mental wellbeing, he is keen to stress Lockheed Martin UK's proactive approach to this increasingly important issue.

"None of us are immune to the stresses and strains of life and particularly in the defence industry we are very mindful of our duty to look after mental health and ensure wellbeing. In tandem with our commitment to diversity and inclusion, we are very aware of the importance of self-awareness and self-identification.

"While our provision of healthcare packages can provide a route to professional support, our role in creating a corporate culture where mental health can be openly discussed and supported is paramount. Self-help is important too and we ensure wellbeing and mental health support is accessible to employees and their families."

Ground-breaking work on high-profile projects are great public illustrations of what can be achieved.

Lee Fellows

Vice President and Managing Director
of Lockheed Martin UK Ampthill.

Photo credit: Lockheed Martin UK

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Being in the right place

As a business offering careers for apprentices, placement students, graduates and professionals alike, Lockheed Martin UK is also well aware of the importance of education in ensuring access to the skills and talents it needs for future growth, as Lee emphasises when the area's science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) educational capabilities are discussed.

"I have to confess to being proudly biased in this regard. Not only did I do my technical apprenticeship in Central Bedfordshire, but I also went on to study at BEng and MSc level in the same region. This personal experience and strategic business relationships with Cranfield University, for example, means I am very aware of the high standard of education that's available on our doorstep."

He continued, "That's not to say that more work doesn't need to be done both here and nationally on STEM education, and in particular women in STEM, because it does. LMUK is committed to visiting local schools, colleges and careers fairs to promote STEM careers and the vast range of engineering jobs there are."

Quality of life

"It's difficult for me not to be a bit biased," Lee said, "but Central Bedfordshire is also a truly nice place to live and work. We are situated in an idyllic setting with beautiful market towns, cafes, and restaurants, and at the same time we also benefit from access to town and city life such as Bedford and Milton Keynes."

"Don't forget too that the region has unrivalled road and rail connections with the rest of the UK and internationally too. The rail network, the M1 and the A1 run straight through it, so you can be in the centre of London or at Heathrow airport within an hour, or Luton airport within 30 minutes. This saves an awful lot of time and stress both professionally and socially..."

Operating then at the heart of Central Bedfordshire, in the middle of a knowledge corridor stretching from Oxford to Cambridge, Lockheed Martin UK at Ampthill really is in its element; designing, developing, manufacturing and integrating the advanced technology systems we need to keep us safe in an increasingly unpredictable world.

Whether it's Land Environment Air Picture Provision (LEAPP), an early air defence warning system developed for the British Army, turret solutions for the AJAX next generation reconnaissance vehicle, or the artificial intelligence, directed energy or hypersonic systems of the near future, they're all in very safe hands.

To find out more about Central Bedfordshire as the ideal location for your high-performance technologies business investment, contact our inward investment team at

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