

Scottish Government to Investigate Sutherland Spaceport Pause

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The Scottish Government has announced an investigation into the pause of the Sutherland Spaceport project, following concerns raised by opposition politicians.

The spaceport, located on the north coast of the Scottish mainland, received significant public funding, including £14.6 million from the Scottish Government and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE). However, the project has been put on hold by Orbex, the rocket manufacturing company developing the site.

Orbex has shifted its focus to launches from the rival SaxaVord Spaceport in Shetland, prioritizing rocket production over spaceport construction. This decision has raised questions about the future of the Sutherland Spaceport and the recovery of public funds invested in the project.

Scottish Labour MSP Rhoda Grant expressed concern about the impact on the local community and urged the First Minister to intervene. First Minister John Swinney has committed to investigating the matter, highlighting the existence of contractual arrangements for grant funding as a potential avenue for addressing the situation.

While the pause in the Sutherland Spaceport project is disappointing, it highlights the dynamic nature of the space industry. As the market evolves, companies may prioritize different strategies, including focusing on rocket production over spaceport infrastructure.