



Manx on the moon: island surges ahead in space race

By Emma Haslett Tuesday, 07 September 2010

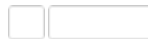
The Isle of Man is the fifth most likely country to reach the moon. Who knew?

Houston, we have a problem – in the form of the Isle of Man which, it turns out, is a front-runner in the race to reach the moon. According to a report from space and aerospace consultancy ASCEND, the island, more usually associated with its annual motorbike race, is the fifth-most likely country to land on the moon. Apparently, the island has a burgeoning space industry (a cosmic cluster, if you will), which has been busily working at launching a private craft to the moon. Not bad for an island with a population of just over 80,000.

The Space Intelligence Report ranks countries in order of the likelihood that they will make it to the moon – and while the Isle of Man trails superpowers including the United States, Russia, China and India, it's moon-sized leaps and bounds ahead of the rest of its European neighbours. The island's 12 space companies include cosmic tourism company Excalibur Almaz and manufacturer CVI, which made the laser optics that helped Nasa's Phoenix Lander spot snow on Mars in 2008. According to the report, the Manx space industry has generated almost £400m over the last three years. One of its inhabitants, Nicole Stott (wife of the island's space ambassador, Chris Stott), even spent four months at the International Space Station in 2009.

And it seems the world hasn't been slow to take notice. Google has announced it will launch its fourth Lunar XPrize Team Summit on the island during the UN's World Space Week. The summit will bring execs from the 22 teams competing for the \$20m prize together to discuss their plans to land a robot on the surface of the moon, make it travel 500m over its surface, and transmit data back to Earth. Google says it hopes the prize will encourage privately-funded missions into space.

Hmm. This is all well and good – but we wonder what the view of the Manx TT is like from space?



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