

eCube Solutions – Enterprise Zone evidence

Brief history of the business

eCube Solutions was formed in November 2011, and became operational at St. Athan airfield on 1 April 2012. It is an aerospace business, particularly addressing the fast growing 'end-of-life' management sector, with core activities to store, re-use and recycle commercial aircraft and their components. The services are provided to an array of international clients; typically investment funds and aircraft leasing companies. The business is based in one of the original hangars at St. Athan which had been unoccupied for 8 years and had fallen into a state of dis-repair, but has proven to be an excellent base from which to operate a business of this nature. The start-up phase has been successful with the first year financial performance exceeding budget, and a very strong projection for the second fiscal year.

Support and incentives

eCube became operational prior to the formal creation of the Enterprise Zone, although we were made aware of the prospect at the time that we entered a dialogue with the Welsh Government over a potential tenancy at St. Athan. Since the business was initially unable to avail of the EZ benefits, we were guided to apply for Welsh Economic Growth Funding support, which provided grants against capital expenditure based upon employment created during 2012. eCube received £82,500 from that fund. It has also subsequently received rate abatement of £20,000 per year, based upon the EZ scheme. While we have limited exposure to the detailed benefits of the Enterprise Zone, we typically are guided to identify relevant opportunities for business support by the on-site Welsh Government team, who understand our growth needs and match them to appropriate government schemes.

Outputs

On average, eCube Solutions has employed 15 staff since start-up 14 months ago. Of these, 9 are permanent employees. We are currently bidding for a strategic contract which, if successful, would double the staffing levels by early 2014.

Improvement potential

Due to the limited direct association with the Enterprise Zone, it is difficult for us to provide constructive inputs on improvement opportunities. However, there is no doubt that the location would be very attractive to both us and our customers if it was a free trade zone, in which goods may be imported, processed, and re-exported without the intervention of the customs authorities. It would also be of substantial benefit if the operation of the airfield was transitioned from the MoD to a commercial service provider, who would be more in tune with the needs of commercial businesses.