

Rolls-Royce backs remain in EU vote

Aircraft engine maker says company’s customers, suppliers and workers benefit from Britain being in European Union

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Rolls-Royce has written to staff to say the company wants Britain to stay in the European Union.

The aircraft engine maker told employees that Brexit would put the company’s future investment plans in the UK at risk and hand its American rivals a competitive advantage.

Warren East, the chief executive, said a planned new £65m engine testing plant was a “good example” of the kind of investment that might be put at risk if Britain voted to leave the EU on 23 June.

He told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme: “We believe it is much better for our employees, our customers and our suppliers if Britain remains part of Europe.

“This is because we are a very interconnected operation across Europe. If Brexit occurs there will almost inevitably be a period of uncertainty and uncertainty is what we can’t cope with.

“We’re making investment decisions all the time about where to place different parts of our operation, and uncertainty created by Brexit puts a lot of those decisions on hold and that pause is something that our US competitors don’t have to cope with. That’s why it’s not so good for us.”

Rolls-Royce employs more than 50,000 people around the world, with three-quarters of the workforce based in the EU. Major customers include the European aircraft maker Airbus.


Its largest UK plant is in Derby, where it designs, tests and assembles Trent jet engines.

“We have to deal with whatever the outcome happens to be,” East said. “All we’re saying today is, a Brexit result would likely lead to a period of uncertainty.

“We need to make investment decisions throughout that period, we’re going to be held back by uncertainty, and we could do without that. But we’re going to continue to be a global leader no matter what.”

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