

UK's first space launch from Cornwall 'strategically significant' for Britain

A mission to launch the UK's first orbital satellite into space from Cornwall will be a "strategically significant" moment for the country, according to the president of industry trade association UKspace.

A specially adapted Boeing 747 is [due to take off from Spaceport Cornwall](#) at Cornwall Airport near Newquay on Monday night (January 9). The Virgin Atlantic plane will take off horizontally from the airport while carrying the rocket which will blast nine satellites into space while over the Atlantic.

The launch was initially planned for December but was pushed back after delays in [obtaining Civil Aviation Authority \(CAA\) licences](#).

Dr Alice Bunn, UKspace president, said the so-called 'Start Me Up' mission, if successful, would signal a "major milestone" for the UK space sector.

"Tonight's planned first orbital space launch from the UK is a historic moment," she said. "The industry is at a critical stage of development as we are on the cusp of an industrial revolution in space.

"Small satellites provide essential services for every single one of us; they are the invisible enabler of our modern lives, and the UK already has a global lead in their manufacture. This trend is increasing, which is why having a launch capability in the UK is so strategically significant."

According to UKspace, Britain's space sector is now valued at around £14.8bn a year and provides 42,000 jobs – but could

double to £30bn by 2030 and a further 30,000 jobs in the next decade.

“Many of [the jobs] are ‘green jobs’ in areas like climate change monitoring, smart transport routing and flood prevention,” added Dr Bunn. “These jobs are spread across the UK including Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales, the Midlands and the South West.”

The ‘Start Me Up’ mission is a collaborative effort between the UK Space Agency, Cornwall Council, the Royal Air Force and Virgin Orbit.

Launch proceedings are set to start between 9.45pm and 10:45pm on Monday, when the Cosmic Girl 747 will take off from Spaceport Cornwall. Between 10.54pm and 11.54pm, the LauncherOne rocket will be released, with Cosmic Girl returning to Cornwall between midnight and 1am on Tuesday.

Virgin Orbit will be broadcasting a [live stream on YouTube](#) from 9pm tonight.

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