

Virgin Orbit mission success brings UK launch another step closer

Virgin Orbit's next satellite launch will take place from the UK, following the success of the "Straight Up" mission, which lifted off from Mojave in California earlier today (2 July 2022).

Science Minister George Freeman and the UK Space Agency welcomed the news that Virgin Orbit has successfully completed its fourth mission from California, and its first night launch.

With this mission complete, Virgin Orbit is on track for launch from Spaceport Cornwall later this year. The UK Space Agency and Cornwall Council are supporting the launch, with Spaceport Cornwall set to create 150 jobs in the local area.

Science Minister George Freeman said:

Congratulations to Virgin Orbit on another successful US mission, which demonstrates the ability of its innovative launch platform to put satellites into orbit day or night. With the countdown on to the first satellite launch from UK soil, it's incredible to see Cosmic Girl and LauncherOne in action before they head to Spaceport Cornwall.

We are in a strong position to capitalise on the growing global demand for small satellite launch and to do so in a way that will keep space and our planet sustainable for future generations.

Matthew Archer, Director of Commercial Spaceflight at the UK Space Agency, who joined the Virgin Orbit team for the launch from the Mojave Air and Space Port, said:

The success of the Straight Up mission is another exciting milestone on our way to seeing the first satellite launch from UK soil. We are working closely with Virgin Orbit and it was a privilege to be alongside our partners to witness another successful launch for the team.

The UK is home to some of the world's leading satellite manufacturers, which currently ship their products overseas for launch. We are supporting them by fostering a new domestic launch market, with spaceports and launch operators providing services across the UK and catalysing investment from all over the world.

Today's Virgin Orbit mission launched seven satellites on behalf of the U.S.

Space Force that will experiment in space-based communications, in-space navigation and climate change.

A number of national and international satellites have also been confirmed for the first UK launch later this year, with customers including Space Forge, Satellite Applications Catapult and Horizon Technologies, the MOD, DSTL and US National Reconnaissance Office, and the Sultanate of Oman.

Unlike many rockets, Virgin Orbit's Launcher One takes off horizontally, carried aloft by a modified Boeing 747 aircraft, named Cosmic Girl.

This was Virgin Orbit's fourth commercial flight. In January 2021 the company put its first satellites into space, after launching from California's Mojave Air and Space Port.

Melissa Thorpe, Head of Spaceport Cornwall, said:

The success of this last launch in California is extremely rewarding for Spaceport Cornwall and the UK space sector. It was amazing to see both the team from Virgin Orbit and our team working together to mirror the US operations in real-time – ensuring we're mission-ready for the summer. This gave us a taste of what is to come and our team could not be more excited.

The UK Government's [National Space Strategy](#) sets out how the UK will become the first country in Europe to launch satellites into orbit in 2022. Spaceport Cornwall is one of seven potential spaceport sites across the UK which will help to cement the UK's role as a science superpower and help unleash a wave of innovation across the country.

The launch name, "Straight Up," is inspired by American singer Paula Abdul's song of that title, from her album Forever Your Girl.

More disadvantaged students than ever will work or study around the globe through the government's Turing scheme

Around 20,000 disadvantaged students from schools, colleges and universities are set to travel all over the world for work and study as the Turing Scheme continues to deliver on the government's commitment to levelling-up opportunity across the UK.

Now entering its second year, 38,000 students, learners and pupils will have the lifechanging opportunity to study and work abroad – 52% of which will be

those from disadvantaged backgrounds, up from 48% last year.

Students taking part in the scheme, which replaced the UK's participation in the Erasmus+ scheme, will be given the chance to undertake study, school exchanges, and industry work placements in over 150 international destinations, including the USA, Japan, Canada, Thailand and South Africa.

More than 130 universities, 116 further education providers and 70 schools will be receiving a share of £105m worth of grants following a highly competitive application process across the sector.

Disadvantaged students will see more opportunities, helping to drive up social mobility for regional areas, which previously benefitted less under the Erasmus+ scheme. This includes the North-East of England, with 22 providers including universities, schools and colleges in this region set to receive a share of the funding.

This announcement builds on the success of the first year of the programme which has seen UK students embark on journeys to every corner of the globe – from Iceland to Indonesia.

Projects this year have included digital technology students from New Bridge College, Oldham – which specialises in supporting students with special educational needs – travelling to Chicago, USA to visit the Apple Headquarters office to inspire and support their career aspirations.

This week, Skills Minister Alex Burghart visited Newcastle College in Newcastle to hear from students who this year travelled to Malta and Northern Italy through the Turing scheme to support their studies in sport, uniformed public services, travel and tourism, and health.

Minister for Skills Alex Burghart said:

I am delighted that following a successful launch year, the Turing Scheme will now be giving more disadvantaged students than ever before the opportunity to embark on their own journeys across the world.

It was fantastic to hear directly from students at Newcastle College about how their placements in Malta and Italy not only helped them with their studies but also allowed them to travel outside the UK and gain a taste of independence.

This government wants to open these opportunities up to so many more students in regions that lost out under Erasmus+ so that students of all ages can embrace different cultures, make new friends and acquire new knowledge. I hope that next year's placements will be just as inspiring.

The funding is not capped per nation and will therefore benefit students in every level of the education system all across the UK, including thousands of students from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Other successful projects for next year include cultural exchanges being offered in Japan, Mauritius, South Korea and Nepal for a university with 83% of disadvantaged students within its population.

Jamie Arrowsmith, Assistant Director for Policy and Global Engagement and incoming Acting Director, Universities UK International said:

International experience has the power to change lives. The Turing scheme provides opportunities to students in all corners of the UK education sector to study, train, and volunteer abroad for short or long periods that can fit around existing commitments and programme requirements.

The key focus on widening access for students from non-traditional backgrounds is a real strength of the UK scheme and we are pleased to see the increase this year, in the grant funding allocation to support students from less advantaged backgrounds, which demonstrates the strong commitment from UK government and UK higher education providers to widening access.

Turing scheme funding allows universities to develop new and innovative partnerships with organisations all across the globe, as well as sustaining strategically important relationships internationally. It is important that future funding for the scheme supports the scale of UK students' appetite for international experiences, to maximise the transformative potential of the scheme.

Emma Meredith, Association of Colleges International Director, said:

In its first year alone, the Turing Scheme has delivered truly worldwide, once-in-a-lifetime opportunities for further education students across the UK.

Students' testimonials speak to the tremendous power of international mobility as an enabler of personal and technical skill development.

I am so pleased that even more students will benefit in year 2,

particularly those for whom work and study abroad would simply not be accessible without the Turing Scheme and the support of their college. Congratulations to all the successful projects.

Unscrupulous landlords who exploit vulnerable residents to be driven out of supported housing sector

- £20 million Supported Housing Improvement Programme will drive up quality in some of the most affected areas
- Programme builds on successful pilots in Birmingham, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Bristol and Hull
- Measures include minimum standards for support provided to residents to help their progress towards living independently

Unscrupulous landlords who exploit vulnerable residents by charging high rents for poor-quality accommodation and offering almost no help will be driven out of the supported housing market by a new £20 million government improvement programme launched today (2 July 2022).

Supported housing provides accommodation alongside care, support, or supervision, helping vulnerable people across the country. In short term supported housing, residents may have experience of homelessness, mental health issues or domestic abuse, and schemes should provide them with the skills and confidence to enter longer-term independent accommodation.

Many people in supported housing receive good quality, tailored support to help them get their lives back on track by assisting them to access health services or mental health support, manage their finances, find employment and/or sustain a tenancy.

But there are instances of supported housing landlords providing unacceptable levels of support while charging extortionate rents. For example, there have been reports of landlords providing as little support as dropping off a box of cereal while claiming £250 per week in an area where the average rent is £80.

This will be stamped out with a package of government measures that include:

- minimum standards for support provided to residents in order to help their progress towards living independently
- new powers for local authorities to better manage their local supported housing market and ensure no individual falls through the cracks
- changes to Housing Benefit regulations to seek to define care, support, and supervision to improve quality across all specified supported housing provision

Alongside this, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) are today opening the bidding round for local councils to apply for funding from a [£20 million Supported Housing Improvement Programme](#) to drive up accommodation quality in some of the most affected areas.

This follows successful pilots which saw DLUHC work with 5 local authorities around England to improve supported housing in these areas.

Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing Eddie Hughes MP said:

“We want vulnerable residents living in supported housing to have safe, appropriate accommodation, which meets their needs and can help them move onto more independent living.

“I’m pleased to open our Supported Housing Improvement Programme for bids today. This will build on the momentum from our successful pilots, helping councils in the worst-affected areas to tackle bad quality and poor value for money in supported housing, while preserving good provision by responsible providers.”

Minister for Welfare Delivery, David Rutley MP said:

“The welfare system acts as a safety net to help people, including those living in supported housing and the Improvement Programme further strengthens that.

“Having a settled home gives people the security to improve their lives by getting on the employment ladder or taking other steps towards financial independence.

“This, supported by changes we recently announced which will give people on benefits the choice of putting money towards a deposit, provides the chance to make progress on the pathway to home ownership.”

From October 2020 to September 2021, DLUHC funded 5 local authorities (Birmingham, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Hull and Bristol) to test interventions to raise standards of accommodation and support and improve local authority oversight of the local supported housing market.

The pilot authorities were able to drive up the quality of accommodation and support to residents. They also improved value for money through enhanced scrutiny of Housing Benefit claims to verify that costs were legitimate and reasonable.

The [independent evaluation of the pilots](#) was published in April 2022. It found that increasing local authority capacity and capability had a positive impact on their ability to improve quality and value for money in supported housing at a local level.

This [prospectus published today](#) provides detailed guidance that will assist local councils in considering whether and how to bid, and for those selected to go on to participate in the programme.

[Intervention to improve underperforming schools to begin from September 2022](#)

Underperforming schools will be the focus of new government powers to raise standards of education for young people locally.

The new powers will mean schools with two or more consecutive Ofsted ratings below 'Good' may be matched with a strong multi-academy trust, to support their improvement. The government laid regulations in Parliament yesterday, Thursday 30 June, to enable this to happen from 01 September.

The government's 55 Education Investment Areas, where education standards are currently among the weakest, have been prioritised as the focus of new intervention powers to help rapidly improve underperforming schools.

Strong multi-academy trusts have a good track record of improving underperforming schools as sponsored academies, with those academies on average improving more quickly than similar local authority schools.

Currently only schools with Inadequate Ofsted ratings are eligible for this type of intervention, but 900 schools across the country with consecutive Ofsted ratings below Good will now newly be eligible.

The government will initially look to contact around a third of the eligible schools about potential intervention, on the basis they have a recent Requires Improvement rating from 01 May 2021 or later.

Schools' individual circumstances including their existing capacity to improve will be considered before intervention goes ahead, but those in Education Investment Areas are expected to be prioritised during the coming

academic year.

Schools Minister Baroness Barran said:

For too long education outcomes, and therefore children's life chances, have been different depending where in the country they grow up.

We are rapidly increasing our delivery of support and investment to our Education Investment Areas to right that wrong and give every child the chance to fulfil their potential.

This is just one way in which the government is working to raise standards in Education Investment Areas. Other initiatives include:

- [Tax-free bonuses](#) to retain teachers of STEM subjects in their first five years of teaching, worth a maximum of £9,000 over three years for those teachers working in the most disadvantaged schools in Education Investment Areas
- Making up to £150 million available to the Connect the Classroom programme to install modern wireless internet throughout whole schools, including for all schools in the 24 Priority Education Investment Areas, and to schools below Good in the remaining 31 Education Investment Areas
- Up to £86m in funding to support strong trusts to expand over the next three years, heavily targeted towards Education Investment Areas and Priority Education Investment Areas, to grow the number of strong academy trusts and increase the number of schools that have the support of a strong trust

The government aims to provide 500,000 teacher training and development opportunities across the country by 2024, including two new specialist national professional qualifications in literacy and early years leadership, as well as a £30,000 starting salary for teachers to attract and retain the very best talent.

This work builds on the government's Schools White Paper released in March, which set a blueprint to radically raise education standards across the country and placed a significant emphasis on supporting teachers through strong multi-academy trusts and salary investment, to make sure that every child can be taught by an excellent teacher.

The government's mission is for the average GCSE grade in English and maths across the country to rise from 4.5 in 2019 to 5 by 2030; and for 90% of children leaving primary school to meet the expected standards in reading, writing and maths by 2030, up from 65% in 2019.

Ministerial appointment: 1 July 2022

Press release

Kelly Tolhurst MP is appointed Treasurer of HM Household (Deputy Chief Whip).



The Queen has been pleased to approve the appointment of Kelly Tolhurst MP as Treasurer of HM Household (Deputy Chief Whip).

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