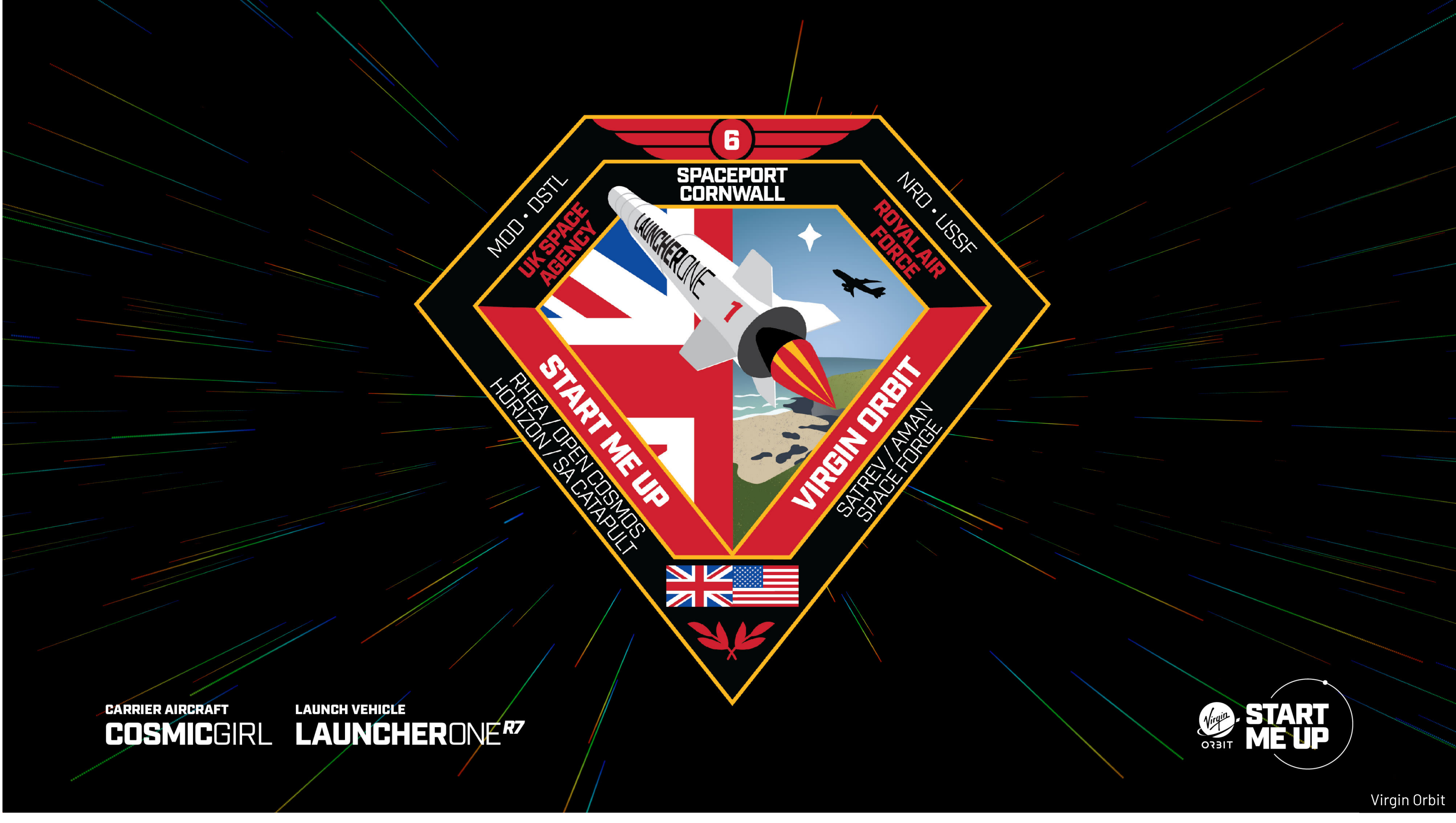


# Start Me Up: Virgin Orbit announces launch window for first UK orbital launch



by Natalie Clarkson

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**Virgin Orbit** has announced the initial launch window for the historic Start Me Up mission will officially open on Monday 9 January at 22:15 GMT, with additional back-up dates continuing into mid and late January.

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Start Me Up, named in honour of the Rolling Stones' 1981 hit, is a collaborative effort between the UK Space Agency (UKSA), Cornwall Council, the Royal Air Force and Virgin Orbit. It will carry satellites from seven customers into space, including commercial and government payloads from several nations, as well as a collaborative US-UK mission.



Virgin Orbit

Virgin Orbit's LauncherOne system that will conduct the mission is now mated to its carrier aircraft, a Boeing 747 named Cosmic Girl that was formerly used as a passenger plane by **Virgin Atlantic**. LauncherOne has now successfully completed an end-to-end launch rehearsal, taking the integrated system through to the loading of propellants and proceeding through terminal count, resulting in the verification of the health of the system and readiness of the team.

Given the historic nature of this launch – the first orbital launch from UK soil or from anywhere in western Europe – Virgin Orbit and its partners are maintaining a considered approach with regard to system health, weather and all other elements of scheduling.

Spaceport Cornwall received the UK's first-ever spaceport licence from the UK Civil Aviation Authority in November. In December, Virgin Orbit was issued first-of-their-kind launch and range control licences, which ensured all regulatory, safety and environmental requirements have been met. And this week, the CAA announced that all of the satellites flying on this mission have received their licences as well.



Spaceport Cornwall

Dan Hart, Virgin Orbit CEO, said: "After ensuring that every technical aspect is sound and every regulation and code has been satisfied, it is gratifying to see this historic endeavour on the verge of coming to fruition. This launch represents the opening of a new era in the British space industry and new partnerships across industry, government, and allies. Space is already responsible for tens of thousands of jobs across the UK, the global industry is growing quickly, and so is the potential. And this launch is demonstrating that with the Virgin Orbit LauncherOne system an airport can become a spaceport that sends humankind's innovations on their journey."

Melissa Thorpe, Head of Spaceport Cornwall, added: "This is a phenomenal moment with incredible international collaboration. Virgin Orbit, the UK Space Agency and all of our partners are breaking new ground to transform access to space across the world from right here in Cornwall. My team at Spaceport Cornwall have worked so hard to get this far and we wish everyone the best of luck as the launch window opens, we are ready."



Spaceport Cornwall

Start Me Up will be the fifth consecutive Virgin Orbit launch to carry payloads for both private companies and government agencies. The missions of the satellites being launched in the first orbital launch from the UK span a wide range of activities aimed at improving life on Earth, including reducing the environmental impact of production, preventing illegal trafficking, smuggling and terrorism, and a host of national security functions.

Visit **Virgin Orbit** to find out more.

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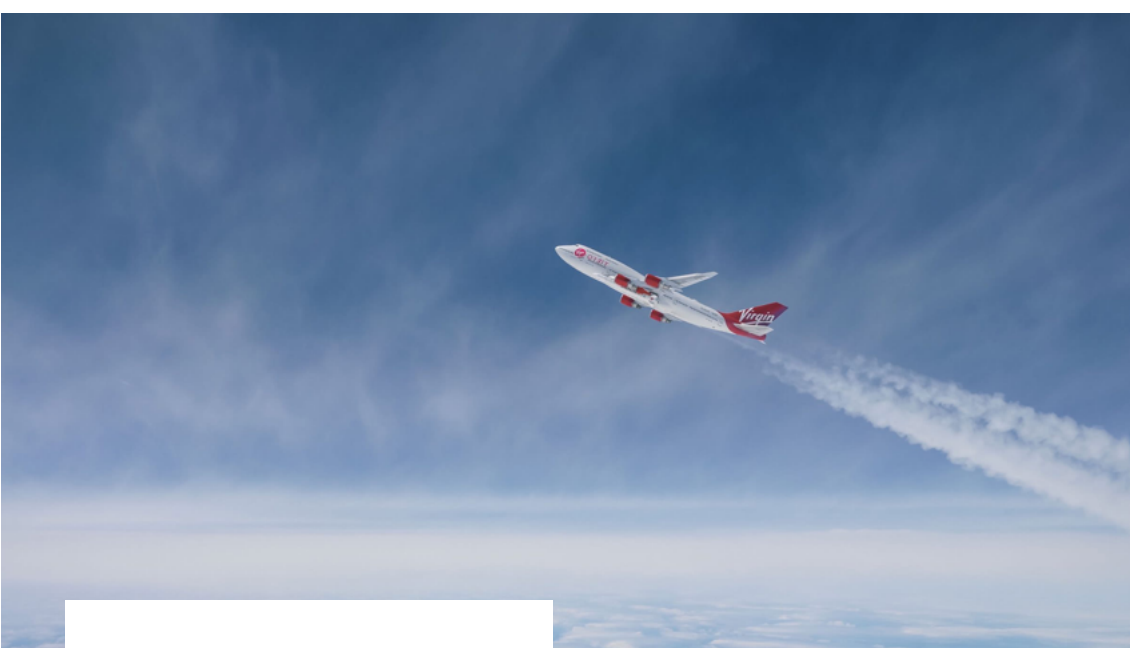
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