

Skyrora agrees multi-launch deal with Shetland spaceport

Skyrora's first agreement with Scottish Spaceport

British rocket company [Skyrora](#) has agreed a multi-launch deal with the SaxaVord spaceport on Unst, the most northerly of the Shetland Islands, as it moves closer to launching its XL rocket in 2022.

This is the first agreement Skyrora has made with a Scottish Spaceport. If successful, this could be the first rocket to go to space from the UK. The multi-launch agreement with SaxaVord will run for the next decade, giving Skyrora the ability to build towards its target of 16 launches a year by 2030.

According to [a study by Scottish Enterprise last year](#), forecast income from Scotland's space sector could reach over £2 billion by 2030 with plans to double income to £4 billion while providing data solutions to combat climate change. This launch agreement will build on the impressive development of the Scottish space sector in recent years, creating even more jobs in an industry that has already grown [12% year-on-year while the UK as a whole has grown 3%](#).

Beyond this, the move brings the supply chain of the sector all within Scotland, providing huge environmental benefits by addressing the sustainability and administrative issues around

exporting to different launch sites across Europe.

Once operational, the SaxaVord spaceport is expected to create 140 jobs locally, with an additional 70 jobs across the Shetland. Shetland Space Centre recently changed its name to SaxaVord Spaceport, rebranding to position itself at the heart of the new space economy in Europe.

Skyrora has been testing increasingly larger rockets with short high-altitude launches since 2018 in the build up to the proposed launch next year. Last year, it conducted the first rocket test on UK soil in 50 years as well as launched its Skylark Micro from Iceland. These preparations have been gradually moving towards ultimately launching the three-stage Skyrora XL rocket to orbit, standing over 22 metres tall and capable of carrying up to 315 kilograms to orbit. Skyrora's aim is to create over 170 jobs by 2030. In just the last few months, their company team has expanded by 30%.

Commenting on the deal, Volodymyr Levykin, Skyrora's founder and CEO, said: "We have made no secret of our ambition to be the first company to launch from UK soil so it's really exciting to agree to this multi-launch deal with SaxaVord. We are proud to be at the forefront of space innovation in the UK, deploying our assets and helping to unlock exciting opportunities as part of the new space economy. The UK is a world leader in space technology, and this latest move brings us another crucial step closer to offering a significant space service from our own soil."

Frank Strang, CEO of Saxavord Spaceport, said: "As we look forward to launches from Unst next year, this is yet another exciting development and we look forward to working with the Skyrora team to help them meet their goal of delivering their XL rocket into orbit.

"The SaxaVord Spaceport location and the can-do attitude of our team mean we are perfectly placed to support Skyrora's

endeavours.”

At the end of last year, Skyrora also successfully completed trials of the third stage of the Skyrora XL rocket, including its orbital transfer vehicle (OTV), a vehicle that once in orbit can refire its engines around 15 times to complete tasks such as acting as a space tug, maintenance, or de-orbiting of defunct satellites. The vehicle will be used to address the ever-increasing volume of space debris orbiting Earth, one of the biggest problems facing the global space industry.

The OTV is just part of Skyrora’s efforts to lead the space industry in sustainability. For the proposed UK launch next year, Skyrora plans to fuel Skyrora XL rocket with its own sustainable alternative to conventional rocket fuel, Ecosene. Made from waste plastic such as polystyrene, Ecosene could prevent more than 3,000 tons of unrecyclable plastic going to landfill by 2030, just through use on Skyrora’s planned flights.

Levykin added: “The space industry has a responsibility to commit to sustainability. Not just through enabling applications and services, such as through Earth observation, that can help pre-empt and mitigate the impact of climate change, but also by reducing the environmental impact of its own operations. With our OTV and Ecosene, we are contributing to this new space purpose, helping to tackle both the space junk problem and the impact of traditional fuels.”

