# Britain completes first cross-country flight of VX4 flying taxi with government backing for 2028 launch



Britain is taking significant strides towards the future of transport with the successful inaugural journey of its first-ever flying taxi, the VX4, which marks a pivotal moment in the nation’s aviation history. The aircraft, developed by Bristol-based start-up Vertical Aerospace, undertook a cross-country trip from the Cotswolds, demonstrating its capabilities in normal airspace outside of controlled testing conditions. This milestone sets the stage for commercial services aimed for launch by 2028, as the UK government throws its support behind this innovative sector.

The VX4 is designed to carry one pilot and up to four passengers, capable of cruising at speeds up to 150 mph over a range of 100 miles. In a bold move, the government has allocated £20 million in funding to propel the development of flying taxis and related drone technologies. This investment not only aims to support cutting-edge transportation options but also strives to integrate flying taxis into the fabric of public services and logistics, thereby fostering a more efficient infrastructure for healthcare and public safety.

Speaking on the experience of piloting the VX4, chief test pilot Simon Davies emphasised the aircraft's enjoyable handling, describing it as “responsive” and “a pleasure” to fly. This positive feedback highlights the vehicle's design integrity and operational potential. Experts in the transport sector suggest that flying taxis could drastically transform travel across the UK; for instance, a journey from Brighton to Heathrow could potentially take just 20 minutes, offering a significant improvement over traditional road transport.

Parallel to the developments in the UK, international companies are also making strides in the electric air mobility space. US-based Joby Aviation, in collaboration with Virgin Atlantic, is poised to offer zero-emission journeys beginning with routes from major airports like Heathrow and Manchester. These initiatives not only showcase a shared vision for urban aviation but also underline a competitive landscape among companies striving for safety and efficiency in air transport.

The UK's ambitious Future of Flight action plan reinforces these aspirations, projecting a transformative impact on aviation that could inject £45 billion into the economy by the decade's close. This strategy envisages the introduction of pilot-operated flying taxi services by 2026, with fully autonomous drones anticipated to hit the skies by 2030. Such advancements have the potential to bolster the UK’s status as a leader in emerging aviation technologies.

Vertical Aerospace is not resting on its laurels. The company has secured 1,500 pre-orders for the VX4, valued at $6 billion, from prominent airlines like Virgin Atlantic and American Airlines. This robust interest underscores confidence in the viability of the flying taxi market. Also, Vertical’s partnership with Honeywell is a strategic move to certify vital systems necessary for operational safety and efficiency.

Recognising the environmental challenges of the aviation sector, Vertical Aerospace is also exploring a long-range hybrid-electric variant of the VX4. This future model aims to extend its operational range to 1,000 miles, addressing the increasing demand for sustainable and quiet air transport solutions across defence, logistics, and urban transit sectors.

As the UK prepares to embrace this new era of aviation, the journey from prototype to commercial success remains fraught with challenges. Nonetheless, the combination of government backing, technological innovation, and growing industry interest positions flying taxis as a transformative force in the evolution of public transport, potentially reshaping how we navigate our cities in the near future.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/flying-taxi-electric-uk-britain-b2759978.html), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/over-20-million-to-help-drones-and-flying-taxis-take-to-uk-skies)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/flying-taxi-electric-uk-britain-b2759978.html), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/over-20-million-to-help-drones-and-flying-taxis-take-to-uk-skies), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-age-of-the-flying-taxi-draws-closer-with-the-future-of-flight-action-plan)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/flying-taxi-electric-uk-britain-b2759978.html), [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/air-taxi-maker-vertical-completes-phase-one-testing-prototype-2024-09-12/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/vertical-aerospace-honeywell-deepen-ties-take-key-air-taxi-systems-certification-2025-05-08/), [[6]](https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/vertical-aerospace-plans-long-range-hybrid-air-taxi-variant-widen-market-reach-2025-05-12/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://www.flightglobal.com/aerospace/vertical-pushes-back-vx4-until-2028-but-promises-first-upgrade-in-2030/160705.article)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/flying-taxi-electric-uk-britain-b2759978.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/over-20-million-to-help-drones-and-flying-taxis-take-to-uk-skies> - The UK government has announced over £20 million in funding to support the development of drones and flying taxis, aiming to make these technologies a reality by 2028. The investment is intended to advance aviation technology, support healthcare for the NHS, assist police forces in combating crime, help inspect and survey critical infrastructure, and unlock delivery services for businesses and communities across the country. The funding will also support the regulatory pathway that could see air taxis in use from 2028.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-age-of-the-flying-taxi-draws-closer-with-the-future-of-flight-action-plan> - The UK government has unveiled the Future of Flight action plan, detailing how drone technology could transform the skies and boost the UK economy by £45 billion by the end of the decade. The plan includes the first piloted flying taxi flight by 2026, regular services by 2028, and demonstrations of autonomous flying taxis without pilots on board by 2030. The initiative aims to make the UK a leader in emerging aviation technologies, improving transportation and creating economic opportunities.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/air-taxi-maker-vertical-completes-phase-one-testing-prototype-2024-09-12/> - UK-based Vertical Aerospace has completed the first phase of pilot testing for its VX4 air-taxi prototype, which resulted in a 3.9% rise in the company's shares in U.S. premarket trading. The VX4 has received 1,500 pre-orders worth $6 billion from companies like Virgin Atlantic, American Airlines, and Japan Airlines. The testing involved piloted tethered flights and ground runs, covering 70 test points to ensure its safety in real-world flight scenarios. Vertical is now moving to phase two testing, focusing on vertical take-offs, landings, and low-speed maneuvers.
5. <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/vertical-aerospace-honeywell-deepen-ties-take-key-air-taxi-systems-certification-2025-05-08/> - Vertical Aerospace, a British electric-aircraft company, has deepened its collaboration with Honeywell through a long-term agreement aimed at certifying key systems for its VX4 air taxi. The deal focuses on the aircraft management and flight control systems, including Honeywell's compact fly-by-wire technology. These systems are being certified through the UK Civil Aviation Authority in coordination with the European Union Aviation Safety Agency. The partnership seeks to accelerate VX4’s development for certification by 2028 and initial deliveries by 2030, with plans to deliver at least 150 aircraft.
6. <https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/vertical-aerospace-plans-long-range-hybrid-air-taxi-variant-widen-market-reach-2025-05-12/> - Vertical Aerospace announced plans to develop a long-range hybrid-electric version of its VX4 air taxi to broaden its commercial appeal, especially in defense and logistics sectors. The new aircraft variant aims for a range of up to 1,000 miles—a significant increase from its all-electric predecessor—and a payload capacity of 1,100 kilograms. This development comes amid rising demand for high-payload, quiet air vehicles suitable for diverse applications, including rapid urban transportation. The initiative follows a strategic partnership with Honeywell to aid in certifying the VX4’s key systems.
7. <https://www.flightglobal.com/aerospace/vertical-pushes-back-vx4-until-2028-but-promises-first-upgrade-in-2030/160705.article> - Vertical Aerospace has delayed certification and service entry for its VX4 electric air taxi by another two years, now targeting UK certification in 2028. The company plans to achieve the first major upgrade in 2030, likely to allow a capacity increase. Vertical intends to deliver at least 150 VX4 aircraft by the end of the decade, with production output ramping up to more than 200 units annually by the end of 2030. The strategy aims to position Vertical as a leader in the electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) sector.