# SaxaVord Spaceport Officially Opened for UK's First Orbital Rocket Launch



SaxaVord Spaceport, situated on the island of Unst in Shetland, was officially declared open at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on May 29, 2024. This event marks the countdown to the UK's first-ever orbital rocket launch, set to take place this summer. The spaceport, noted as western Europe’s only fully-licensed vertical rocket launch spaceport, secured its spaceport and range licenses from the Civil Aviation Authority in December 2023 and April 2024, respectively.

The inaugural launch will be conducted by Rocket Factory Augsburg, a German rocket manufacturer, following the completion of ongoing engine tests at the site. According to the spaceport, the UK is set to become a frontrunner in spaceflight, particularly in delivering small satellite payloads into polar orbits.

Frank Strang, CEO of SaxaVord Spaceport, acknowledged the extensive efforts of his team in reaching this milestone. The spaceport's opening ceremony featured Mike Mongo, a space educator, and two young enthusiasts, Grace Wood and Harry Brazier, aged 10 and 7.

Strang also expressed gratitude towards the UK government for its £10 million investment and recognized the supportive roles of the Civil Aviation Authority, the Department for Transport, and the Shetland Islands Council. He highlighted that space is joining oil, gas, and renewables as significant contributors to the Shetland economy.