



**VIRGIN GALACTIC PRESS STATEMENT TO BE ISSUED BY GRIFFIN PR POST  
STRATOLAUNCH ANNOUNCEMENT**

**13<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2012**

**VIRGIN GALACTIC WELCOMES ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW AIR-LAUNCHED SPACE  
SYSTEM AS FOUNDATION FOR COMMERCIAL ORBITAL OPERATION**

The announcement from Paul Allen and Burt Rutan today represents the latest chapter in the extraordinary story of commercial space. The initial collaboration between the two men produced SpaceShipOne and gave Sir Richard Branson and Virgin Galactic the confidence to make the significant investment required to commercialise the prototype technology, thus creating the world's first spaceline. With that project nearing completion and Virgin Galactic on the cusp of offering safe and commercially viable suborbital space flight for the very first time, it is exciting to see such a credible consortium now seeking to continue the heritage of air-launched space access towards the significant challenge of orbital flight.

Virgin Galactic has established itself as the lead operator of private sector manned spaceflight and as such is building a body of knowledge, expertise and assets, all of which will be invaluable as we assess the commercial opportunities that emerging technologies present. We therefore look forward to working closely with Stratolaunch as the project unfolds over the coming years.

Commenting on the announcement, Sir Richard Branson, Founder of Virgin Galactic said: "I very much welcome today's announcement from Paul and Burt. It takes me back to the exciting conversations the three of us had in 2004 when we first started talking about commercialising SpaceShipOne technology. We've come a long way since then; WhiteKnightTwo and SpaceShipTwo are built and flying and we have nearly 500 private individuals and science researchers signed up and ready to fly. The potential of the industry we are leading is immense but will depend on the continuing emergence of truly safe, affordable and transformative technologies. Burt and Paul's record in that respect is unmatched. I hope that in due course, in partnership with Stratolaunch and others, we will be able to repeat the pattern that has worked so spectacularly well in the suborbital sphere, for orbital spaceflight."

**Ends**

