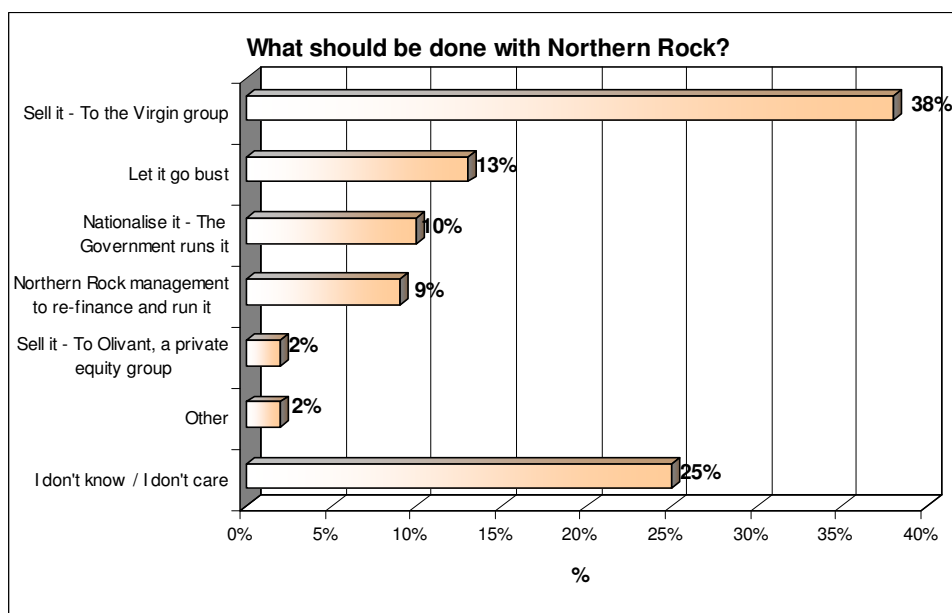


Virgin Group - The people's choice to run Northern Rock

London 5th February 2008: A new survey by Lightspeed Research, a global online market research company, revealed that most people in the UK think that the Virgin Group, headed by Richard Branson, would be the best choice to take over the running of struggling bank, Northern Rock.

The survey, completed by 3,000 people on Tuesday 22nd January, asked the UK panellists what they felt should be done to resolve the problems experienced by Northern Rock bank. 40% respondents said it should be sold to a private company: the majority (38%) to the Virgin group, and only 2% opting for Olivant - another potential bidder. 10% felt that the Government should take control over the bank through nationalisation, while 9% preferred current management with fresh financing. Just over one in ten respondents felt the bank should be allowed to go bust, with more people in the North saying that the bank should be left to fail (14%) compared than those in the South at 12%. 25% either did not know or did not care what happened to the bank.



David Day, CEO Europe of Lightspeed Research said, “Our survey revealed that 40% of respondents trusted a private company to take over the failing bank, with Richard Branson’s Virgin Group coming out as the clear favourite for those who expressed a preference.”

Ends

For press inquiries contact Lightspeed Research:

Ralph Risk, Marketing Manager - Europe

Tel office+44 (0)20 7896-1950 Tel mobile +44 (0)787 650 7689

rrisk@lightspeedresearch.com

Catherine Evans or Lucy Green

Greenfields Communications, PR Consultancy

cevans@greenfieldscommunications.com Tel +44 (0) 7870 781260

lgreen@greenfieldscommunications.com Tel: +44 (0) 7817 698366

About Lightspeed Research

Lightspeed Research is global interactive data solutions provider delivering market research results through global panels. Lightspeed Research provides access to household members across 34 countries in Europe, North America and Asia-Pacific.

Lightspeed Research's proprietary panels are recruited and maintained to ensure quality and representative sampling to support studies that range in scope and complexity across most industry sectors. Lightspeed Research operates panels covering healthcare, financial services, automotive, B2B, telecommunications, family and more. Lightspeed Research is a member of WPP (LSE: WPP) (NASDAQ: WPPGY), one of the world's leading communications services companies. For more information, please visit

www.lightspeedresearch.com