

UK PRODUCTION OF ISLANDER AIRCRAFT BEGINS AT BRITTEN-NORMAN

News / Manufacturer



Britten-Norman, has begun UK production of the Islander, having shifted its manufacturing back to the UK from overseas. This historic moment is the culmination of years of strategic planning and follows the announcement by the company in June that new aircraft production was to be fully repatriated to its flagship manufacturing site in Bembridge on the Isle of Wight. A ribbon-cutting took place at an event on Thursday 21st September as the new production line at the Bembridge manufacturing facility was officially opened by Bob Seely, MP for the Isle of Wight.

The iconic Islander aircraft, variants of which have been manufactured by the company for more than 50 years, will be built in the UK for the first time since production was moved to Eastern Europe in the late 1960s. The first UK Islander aircraft now in production is due for completion in May 2024. The move signifies Britten-Norman's commitment to British manufacturing and its dedication to fostering innovation within the aerospace sector. Returning manufacturing to the UK will not only strengthen the company's position as the world-leading sub-regional aircraft manufacturer but also contribute to the growth and development of the British aerospace industry.

The Bembridge manufacturing site has been at the heart of Britten-Norman's operations since its inception, and this repatriation marks a significant homecoming for the company. With a renewed focus on British craftsmanship and engineering, Britten-Norman will be able to enhance its production capabilities, improve supply chain efficiency, and accelerate innovation in aircraft design and manufacturing.

The Company is planning for new aircraft production to increase fourfold by 2027 with strong economic performance and increased revenue projected. The repatriation to Bembridge is expected to create numerous job opportunities and contribute to the economic growth of the Isle of Wight and the wider Solent area.

The Company has already embarked on a recruitment campaign, further boosting job creation in the UK's Solent Local Enterprise Partnership area, with roles including aircraft fitters and technicians, production engineering and supply chain management. The expansion will also create new traineeship and apprenticeship opportunities on the Isle of Wight and in South Hampshire.

Chief Executive of Britten-Norman, William Hynett, expressed his enthusiasm for this pivotal moment: "We are immensely proud to bring production back to the UK, where our manufacturing story began nearly seven decades ago. This move underlines our dedication to the highest standards of quality, innovation, and the resurgence of British aerospace manufacturing. We look forward to a bright future as we continue to build world-class aircraft right here in the UK."

Island MP Bob Seely said: "The Islander's return to the Isle of Wight is an important and exciting day. I am delighted that Britten-Norman has made the decision to bring back the production line of their iconic plane to where it was first built, on the Isle of Wight. It's a major vote of confidence in the future of the Island and a significant investment for our skilled manufacturing base."

The repatriation of production to Bembridge represents a new chapter in Britten-Norman's storied history, promising exciting developments, and opportunities for both the company and the UK aerospace sector.



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