

Essex & Herts Air Ambulance gets keys to new airbase

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Essex & Herts Air Ambulance (EHAAT) has taken possession of its brand-new purpose-built airbase at North Weald Airfield following its completion by Barnes Construction.

Work on the facility began in February 2020 after planning permission was granted by Epping Forest District Council. Project managed by quantity surveyors Castons, and designed by architects Hurley Porte and Duell and structural engineer specialists Superstructures, the new airbase was built by Barnes Construction and has been delivered on time despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a socially distanced handover, EHAAT CEO Jane Gurney and Cliff Gale, EHAAT's Operations Director took possession of the building from Mark Hart, Joint Divisional Managing Director of Barnes Construction. This was carried out via a video link in order to comply with the current lockdown restrictions on non-essential travel.

Jane Gurney said: "The handing over of this building today by Barnes Construction marks yet another milestone in what is a very important project for the Charity. The opportunity to design and build our own Airbase has allowed us to include elements such as dedicated areas for training which will benefit not only our crews but also the local pre-hospital care community along with an interactive visitor centre for our supporters, who we look forward to welcoming to this incredible new building when such visits become possible again.

On behalf of the Trustees and the Executive Team I would like to thank Barnes Construction, associated partners and suppliers for all their hard work and support in seeing this project through to completion in such a professional manner especially with the added pressures the pandemic presented.

I would also like to thank our amazing fundraisers and donors for helping us secure the future operation of the charity at North Weald for many years to come by supporting us and making this possible".

Mark Hart said: "We are proud to have played a key part in the construction of this new airbase, which is a true community-based project that will help everyone. The project has been a collaborative team effort and I'm very grateful to Castons, Superstructures and Hurley Porte and Duell in particular, for helping us to get the scheme delivered on time, and under the most extreme and challenging circumstances due to COVID-19".

In addition to housing one of EHAAT's two helicopters and two of its rapid response vehicles, the new building has areas for training, mentoring, patient liaison and fundraising. There is space for cross training with other emergency services, which will benefit both EHAAT and the local pre-hospital care community. Part of the new airbase will be a dedicated interactive visitor centre which will allow the charity to welcome and engage with the local community.

The new building, which includes a hangar which is capable of housing two helicopters when necessary (for example, to permit aircraft maintenance) has underground heating beneath the helipad to keep it free of snow and ice during the winter months.

The building has been designed with 'green' issues very much to the fore. It includes charging points for electric cars and photovoltaic panels on the roof which will generate electricity. Any excess will be supplied to the National Grid. There is bicycle parking for staff who wish to cycle to work and as much waste as possible will be recycled. The building has been well insulated in order to retain heat and reduce noise pollution and it will make as much use as possible of natural light in order to save on electricity.

Work has now begun on the internal fit out phase, and it is scheduled to become operational by June of this year.

Visit ehaat.org/north-weald-airbase/ to see a time-lapse of the complete external build.

-ENDS-

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Photograph: Mark Hart (Joint Divisional Managing Director of Barnes Construction) hands over the new base virtually to EHAAT CEO Jane Gurney accompanied by (L-R) Cliff Gale (Operations Director), Gaynor Wareham (Critical Care Paramedic), Lee Burling (Pilot), Clive Sturdy (Co Pilot) and Ben Clarke (Pre-hospital Care Doctor). The aircraft is the charity's AgustaWestland AW169 helicopter, which is based at North Weald. (Picture by Warren Page of Pagepix).

For more information contact the EHAAT Communications Team on 0345 2417 690

Notes to Editor:

- Project managed by Castons and designed by Hurley Porte and Duell and Superstructures, the new facility has been built by Ipswich-based Barnes Construction.
- Barnes Construction was founded in 1978 and is the largest division within The Barnes Group Ltd. It is a medium sized business and one of the largest privately-owned construction companies based within East Anglia. It operates predominately within the Eastern Region but also undertake projects on a national basis for a number of repeat business clients.
- The projected cost of the building is in the region of £4.5 million. As well as making use of some of our reserves, EHAAT are actively looking for funding via a number of corporate supporters. In addition, in his 2018 Budget Statement the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the Government was making £10 million available to support the funding of capital projects by air ambulances in England. We applied for £1.5 million to help pay for the new airbase and will be receiving the full amount.
- Essex & Herts Air Ambulance (EHAAT) is a charity that provides a Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) for the critically ill and injured of Essex, Hertfordshire and the surrounding areas.
- The service is provided free of charge but, unlike NHS emergency services, the Charity receives limited direct funding from the Government and none from the National Lottery. It costs in excess of £750,000 every month to keep the service operational and cover all charitable costs, and this would not be possible without the generosity and goodwill of people and businesses of Essex, Hertfordshire and beyond.
- Each of the Charity's HEMS teams consist of two Pilots, a Pre-hospital Care Doctor and a Critical Care Paramedic.
- These teams, made up of highly-skilled individuals, attended 1,626 patients in 2020 and are the backbone of your local life-saving Charity.
- The fleet consists of two Air Ambulances, and four rapid response vehicles (RRVs - cars). The RRVs are crewed by a Pre-hospital Care Doctor and a Critical Care Paramedic and carry the same life-saving equipment as the helicopters.
- During the day, from 7am until 8.00pm, the Critical Care Team provides the service using helicopters based at Earls Colne and North Weald. An RRV is used before sunrise, after sunset or when the helicopter is unable to fly because of poor weather or maintenance.
- Overnight from 7.30pm to 7.30am the service is provided using an RRV based at North Weald.

Company Contact:

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