

FIRST FULLY UK-BUILT ISLANDER SINCE REPATRIATION OF PRODUCTION BEGINS GROUND TESTING AHEAD OF FIRST FLIGHT

News / Manufacturer



Britten-Norman has reached a major production milestone as the first Islander to be fully manufactured in the UK since the company repatriated its assembly line to Bembridge has now commenced its ground-test campaign. The aircraft is on track for a first flight in September, marking a significant step in the company's renewed commitment to British manufacturing; Following completion of the flight-test programme and final customer acceptance, the aircraft will be delivered to the Falkland Islands Government Air Service (FIGAS). Ahead of its formal market launch later this year, Britten-Norman is opening its Bembridge production facilities to selected customers and media, offering an exclusive first look at the new-generation Islander as it enters the final stages of certification and preparation.

The aircraft was rolled out at the company's Isle of Wight facility on Thursday 30th July, the day after electrical power was successfully applied for the first time. The roll-out followed the installation of the aircraft's engines, propellers, cowlings, electrical systems, brakes and flight control surfaces and mechanisms, and came in sequence with the programme's previous public milestones: 75% structural completion confirmed in June, power-on on 29th July, and roll-out the following day.

The aircraft is the first Islander to be fully assembled through Britten-Norman's reshored UK production line, marking the return of complete civil Islander manufacturing to the United Kingdom following a period in which major assemblies were manufactured overseas prior to final assembly in the UK.

Behind this aircraft, the production line is already at work. A second airframe is progressing through the line, components for follow-on aircraft are in manufacture, and the company is establishing a continuous production cadence at Bembridge, supported by investment in new machinery, tooling and facilities and a workforce that has grown by more than 40% since production was reshored.

The new-build aircraft retains the qualities that have kept Islanders in service worldwide for more than five decades: low operating costs, rugged reliability and unmatched short-strip performance, now delivered through more modern manufacturing methods and tooling. This aircraft is built to the same standard its operators have always relied upon, an airframe with a proven track record of 50 years of service life.

Duane Stewart, General Manager of the Falkland Islands Government Air Service, commented: "We're delighted to see this new aircraft taking shape and look forward to welcoming it to the Falkland Islands. We're incredibly grateful to Britten-Norman for their continued support and the strong relationship we have built over the decades. This new Islander will be a valuable addition to the FIGAS fleet and help us continue providing an essential service to our community for years to come."

Richard Milne, Chief Operating Officer at Britten-Norman stated: "The roll-out of this aircraft is a hugely significant moment for the whole Britten-Norman team, and we want to share it. To see the first Islander from our repatriated UK production line come together, from producing and sourcing the many parts to roll-out, is testament to the skill and commitment of everyone at Bembridge. We are now firmly focused on completing ground testing and preparing for first flight. The line is running, a second aircraft is taking shape behind this one. Customers and media are very welcome to visit Bembridge and see the aircraft and the production line for themselves ahead of the formal launch later this year."

Peter McKenna, owner of Aer Arann, said: "Having been an Islander operator for more than 56 years, we are thrilled to see new Islanders coming off the line at Bembridge. Nothing rivals the rugged reliability of the Islander, and our fleet is testament to that. We look forward to continuing our relationship with Britten-Norman for many more years to come."

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