

SUMMER 2022

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Gama Aviation

Paul Kinch, Director, Engineering Service Line **Maintaining Excellence**

Dynamic Shift – Dustin Dryden, Owner and Chair, Volare Aviation
Five Favoured Years – Frederic Lemos, Head of Airbus Corporate Helicopters
Service in the Heart of Europe – Petr Wessnitzer, Marketing Manager, ABS Jets
Perfectly Aligned Service – Andy Robinson, SVP Customer & Services Business Aviation, Rolls-Royce

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Editor's NOTES



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As this edition of *Executive & VIP Aviation International* is prepared for press, the European Business Aviation Conference and Exhibition (EBACE) is just weeks away.

Twice cancelled, it seems a very long time since the industry last gathered in Geneva, yet the intervening period also seems to have flown and when anyone says, 'last year' at the show, we'll all know they really mean 'last time'.

The passion that permeates business and VIP aviation was positively brimming among our interviewees for this edition. Between them they boast centuries of aviation experience, from veteran engineers like Gama Aviation's Paul Kinch, Director, Engineering Service Line and Andy Robinson, SVP Customer & Services for business aviation at Rolls-Royce, to Douglas Corbett, Sustainable Flight Operations Consultant for Equinox Charter, which was established only in November 2021.

Our focus at Gama Aviation is on MRO, an important asset within the company's broad business and special missions portfolio and one in which Paul Kinch says network and connections are an important enabler. Do we need any more of an excuse to visit Geneva?

From Andy Robinson we learn of the extreme lengths to which Rolls-Royce goes in supporting its customers as well as how new technologies are being used to create digital twins of in-service engines, powering predictive maintenance and engine development.

Taking a very different view we also hear from two European business aviation institutions, Switzerland's Albinati Aeronautics

and Prague-based ABS Jets, while Dustin Dryden, owner of the UK's Volare Aviation, reveals his very different business model which, he says, is increasingly responsible for operating family aircraft rather than business jets and helicopters.

The post-Covid boom in the business jet sales, charter and refurbishment markets has already made plenty of headlines, but Eric Gillespie, Executive Vice President at Canada's Flying Colours Corp, says the MRO and refurbishment specialist has also seen increased interest in its regional jet and helicopter conversions. Elsewhere, the ever-effusive Frederic Lemos, Head of Airbus Corporate Helicopters, reports a similar surge in helicopter interest, as travellers seek to replace long car journeys and multiple touch points with a helicopter ride.

Connecting it all, we hear from Chris Moore, President at Satcom Direct, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. Inflight connectivity has evolved almost beyond recognition since 1997, to the point where for many owners and operators a recalcitrant satcom today means an AOG, while downloaded aircraft systems data is driving operational efficiency.

Even if you already read this summer 2022 *Executive & VIP Aviation International* digitally prior to the show, I hope you've taken the opportunity to pick up a printed copy at EBACE. We have a team roaming the exhibition hall, keen to speak with you about all things business aviation and to explore how, between us, we can help deliver your message through unique content. See you there!

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See Gama Aviation at Stand V93 at EBACE

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Contents

SUMMER 2022



4 Maintaining Excellence

Gama Aviation is building on almost four decades of business aviation MRO experience, with new approvals extending its maintenance expertise

12 Perfectly Aligned Service

Andy Robinson, SVP Customer & Services for business aviation, explains how Rolls-Royce is exploiting digital technologies to enhance reliability and customer experience

18 Flying in the Cloud

Honeywell Aerospace has taken a step forward in flight deck design with Anthem, an intuitive, connected cockpit, described by Ryan Lees, the company's new EMEA president



22 Building Relationships

Sam Cook, who leads J.P. Morgan Private Bank's Specialty Lending division, provides an overview of aircraft financing in today's unprecedented marketplace

24 Regional, Rotary, Resurgence

Canada's Flying Colours Corps is seeing a resurgence in interest for regional jet and helicopter conversions, as EVP Eric Gillespie reveals

30 Swiss Movement

Albinati Aeronautics embodies the Swiss reputation for quality across a range of business and VIP aviation services, including aircraft management, charter and CAMO



34 Oxford Advantage

Innovatively embracing the lighter end of general aviation alongside its bizjet and helicopter activity, London Oxford Airport is transforming, ready for a bright future

38 25 Connected Years

Satcom Direct has been connecting business aircraft for 25 years. Company president Chris Moore looks at its latest developments and highlights some milestones along the way

44 Three Tiers of Sustainability

Equinox Charter launched its Enhanced Sustainability Initiative in April, helping clients choose preferred operators based on professionally assessed sustainability criteria



46 Service in the Heart of Europe

ABS Jets provides the highest service standards at airports across the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as Marketing Manager Petr Wessnitzer explains

50 Dynamic Shift

Volare Aviation offers the unique possibility of buying an aircraft from stock and flying it away within a day or so, a model that has adapted well to the post-Covid market

56 Five Favoured Years

Frederic Lemos, Head of Airbus Corporate Helicopters, looks back over the five years since it was launched at EBACE 2017, and previews its 2022 show news

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The Challenger is no stranger to Gama Aviation's Bournemouth hangar

Maintaining Excellence

Gama Aviation is building on almost four decades of business aviation MRO experience, with new approvals extending its maintenance excellence beyond a core of expertise in the Challenger, Global and King Air

Early in 2021, Gama Aviation reorganised into three strategic business units, Business Aviation, Special Mission, and Technology & Outsource, each focussing an aspect of the company's prolific expertise on a primary market. Founded in 1983 as a general aviation services provider, Gama Aviation has expanded its capability beyond business aviation to include military and parapublic special missions and operations, ranging from aircraft role modification up to complete service delivery, including fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft provision, crewing and support.

Much of Gama Aviation's work has grown naturally out of its business aviation expertise, the organisation's continuing deep affiliation with the King Air turboprop helping fuel its special missions work. In pure business aviation terms, Gama Aviation's focus is on the management, maintenance and operation of business aircraft, including in-house MRO, FBO and charter capabilities. While the UK and Middle East are the company's key markets, Gama Aviation acquired US company Jet East around the time of its 2021 reorganisation, adding a strong MRO presence in the world's largest business aviation market to its portfolio.

Back in the UK, Gama Aviation operates out of several locations, but its primary MRO site is at Bournemouth, Dorset. The facility includes a recently refurbished hangar that is among the largest capacity civilian hangars in the UK, and a large stores and logistics operation. A portion of the engineering capacity is assigned to managed aircraft, with the remainder available to other Gama Aviation affiliated

customers or those simply seeking a top quality MRO, especially for King Air, Challenger and Global aircraft.

The fact that Gama Aviation is also an operator means it is able to offer supplementary or alternative lift while aircraft are in maintenance. A useful service, it has the added benefit of allowing owners to experience other aircraft types, perhaps prompting future acquisitions. Gama Aviation's MRO pricing model is transparent and, on the basis that 'cheap' is seldom good in aviation, it would rather lose work than artificially lower prices.

This transparency extends to the hangar floor, where Gama Aviation has welcomed the growing trend of client teams bringing in third-party continuing airworthiness managers (CAM) and advisors to provide oversight on heavy maintenance projects. On a deep check, for example, close engagement with a CAM and client team also enables discussion around aircraft upgrade and refurbishment.

Late in April 2022, a Bombardier Global Express was disassembled in the hangar undergoing its 240-month check, for example, after a handful of similar airframes passed though on 120-month checks over the past 12 months. Deep maintenance episodes such as this present ideal opportunities for cockpit and cabin avionics upgrades, satellite connectivity installation and cabin refurbishment, all of them more relevant than ever to customers in today's fast-paced market.

Such deep maintenance is the foundation that any MRO seeks, but right now Gama Aviation is also taking plenty of work generated by the used aircraft market, offering further opportunities. Paul Kinch, Director, Engineering Service Line, explains: "Buyers need pre-purchase

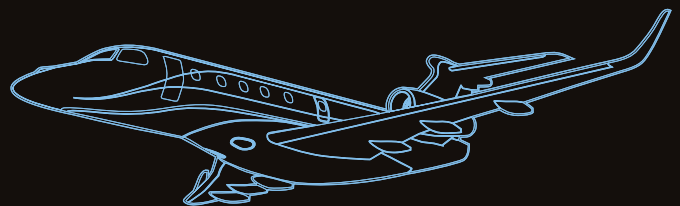


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When Gama Aviation delivers an aeroplane, I want it to be reliable. I want the customer to be happy



Above: The King Air joins the Challenger and Global among Gama Aviation's core types, but it has approvals across a wider variety of fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, with more imminent. Top: Gama Aviation's MRO provision centres around a refurbished hangar at Bournemouth International Airport

inspections [PPI] as part of the transaction and those will often generate other work. New owners might want to upgrade connectivity, change the interior or have a repaint, for example, and that's an opportunity for us to engage."

Potential customers and third parties typically come to Gama Aviation for PPIs when they are buying or selling a Challenger or Global. In that case, beyond calling on its engineering team, the company also brings in expertise from elsewhere in the group for a detailed examination of the aircraft records. The result is a holistic picture of the jet's condition that ensures trust in the aircraft, its valuation and the quality of the service provided.

Seamless service

Industry veteran Paul Kinch is Gama Aviation's newly appointed Director, Engineering Service Line. Barely a month into the job when he spoke to *EVA*, he is actually an old hand at the company. "In 1984 I worked as an engineer at Gama Aviation, alongside the founding directors, when it had its first King Air. I subsequently went off and set up my own business, sold it, then went to work with Qatar Airways. I came back to the UK and now I'm at Gama Aviation again."

Kinch is based at Bournemouth and says when it comes to the Challenger, Global and King Air, the only service currently not available on site is cabin interior refurbishment. For wood veneers, carpets,

lighting and other cabin furnishings, Gama Aviation works with trusted suppliers although there is an ambition to bring more of the work into the Bournemouth workshops. Third parties are also used where full exterior paint is required, but otherwise Bournemouth offers what Kinch terms 'one-stop, seamless service' for all other work on its core types, while other approvals are scheduled for this year. It is also important to remember that Gama Aviation has further UK centres offering complementary capabilities, including King Airs and helicopters in Glasgow, and more services in Doncaster.

Kinch's long association with Gama Aviation is indicative of the depth of experience enjoyed by the leadership team, in an industry where personal networks and trust built while navigating aviation's ups and downs are worth as much as any corporate structure. And that's especially true in the post-pandemic era, where the robust supply chain MROs enjoyed in the past has been replaced by global logistics and parts supply challenges.

Even a network as strong as Kinch's struggles, and Boris Wolstenholme, recently appointed managing director of the Business Aviation strategic business unit, sees an opportunity for Gama Aviation to begin reconditioning parts for its own and other MROs' use. Wolstenholme's background is in aircraft parts and he notes that the company's



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Above: Gama Aviation's MRO capability extends to the deepest of checks. Right: Bournemouth handles maintenance for Gama Aviation's managed fleet, with capacity to take on 'drop-in' work and longer-term scheduled inputs from across the industry



maintenance hubs have space for parts inventory and are ideally positioned to connect into existing logistics channels.

Inevitably, Gama Aviation also faces the employment challenges common to the sector, where it is incredibly difficult to attract talented people, especially young talented people, into aviation. "Gama Aviation is committed to its own long-term strategy, having developed a Part 147 maintenance training organisation," Kinch says. "You can't find people 'off the shelf' with the experience we need, so we have an induction process and apprentice scheme. We have six apprentices today and we'll be recruiting three every year, so three qualified engineers will join the team every year starting in five years from now. And that's just Bournemouth, we are taking another apprentice in Glasgow."

Embracing technology

Young people are all about technology, but some seasoned engineers have been known to distrust digital when paper and a greasy thumbprint have seen them through a long career. That's very much not the case at Gama Aviation. "We like to embrace technology," Kinch says. Having said that, he notes that older airframes are not digital,

although there is little that can be done with a brand new aircraft without the correct technology. "We have tablets on the hangar floor and engineers book their time live on their phones. The system also allocates tasks. Imagine one of ten engineers on an aircraft with 500 tasks, then that engineer only sees the tasks allocated to them and the hours required.


"We're transitioning to fully digital at Bournemouth over the coming year or so, while Glasgow is already virtually paperless. I've already seen our younger technicians telling the older guys they don't even need a laptop anymore when they can achieve something more quickly on a tablet or phone." Kinch is also deeply enthusiastic about preventative maintenance and the benefits of aircraft connectivity in fault diagnosis.

Gama Aviation's technological focus extends to aircraft upgrade and it has expertise in all flight deck avionics, cabin management systems, satellite connectivity solutions and more. "Satcom, high-speed internet, is now an essential, especially for charter operations, and that's something we are pushing quite hard, with some great packages on offer," Kinch notes.

In the US, Gama Aviation has traditionally supported large fleet operators with heavy checks, line maintenance and AOG, a provision it has reinforced through the Jet East brand. Overnight and pre-emptive line maintenance plus access to a strong AOG support network helps minimise downtime for these fleets and it is a model now being introduced into the UK. Gama Aviation already has a major fleet owner signed up and is developing new AOG provision, with mobile service units, as part of the package. Details of the operator have yet to be released, but the deal will add new type approvals, further expanding Gama Aviation's capabilities.

Meanwhile, Bournemouth will remain the central hub for Challenger, Global and King Air maintenance while more line stations come online, strategically positioned at volume hubs or where demand is strong. At the same time, Gama Aviation's existing hubs, including those at Glasgow and Sharjah, will see continuing investment as approvals and teams expand.

Paul Kinch has known Gama Aviation for almost 40 years. His philosophy encapsulates the company ethos. "When Gama Aviation delivers an aeroplane, I want it to be reliable. I want the customer to be happy."

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Perfectly Aligned Service

Alongside its Pearl engines, Rolls-Royce is exploiting digital technologies to enhance reliability and customer experience. Andy Robinson, SVP Customer & Services for business aviation, explains

“Whatever we do, our decisions must always protect the brand,” says Andy Robinson, SVP Customer & Services for Rolls-Royce business aviation engines. “If we have that mindset, we’ll do the right thing. The brand is hugely important and perfectly aligned to business aviation. Our customers relate to it because it represents quality, excellence in design, excellence in engineering and excellence in service.”

A Rolls-Royce aeroengine ran for the first time in February 1915. Delivering 300hp, it was a technologically advanced design masterpiece known as the Eagle. The marque’s reputation for excellence had already been established through its automobiles and although the aeroengine and car businesses split in 1971, today’s Rolls-Royce engines continue the tradition of combining cutting-edge technology and excellence.

Insofar as a modern business jet engine is concerned, customer satisfaction is derived from two quite distinct areas. First, an engine, especially an engine new to market, must exceed current capabilities for fuel burn, emissions, noise, maintainability and other parameters and it must be, as far as possible, future-proofed. Second, it must be subject to a comprehensive support regime. With the advent of the connected engine, that can mean assisting the customer with a problem before it occurs.

All that is a long way from the Eagle and the line of piston engines, mostly named for birds of prey, that followed. In the turbine era, Rolls-Royce named many of its turboprop, turbojet and turbofan engines for British rivers, a tradition partially upheld with its latest offering, named for China’s river Pearl. The choice of moniker reflects the Far East market’s importance



The Rolls-Royce Business Aviation Availability Centre

for Rolls-Royce and its airframe customers, which have chosen members of the Pearl engine family to power the Bombardier Global 5500 and 6500, Dassault Falcon 10X, and Gulfstream G700 and G800. Nonetheless, the US remains the largest business aviation market and is therefore where Robinson is based.

A 45-year Rolls-Royce veteran and former apprentice, he was born in Burton-on-Trent (Trent turbofans power Airbus A330, A340, A350, A380 and Boeing 777 and 787 models), has a fierce appreciation of exactly what Rolls-Royce’s heritage means to its workforce and the expectations it engenders among customers, and a ready smile. The latter appears at the suggestion of the next Rolls-Royce engine being named Potomac or Mississippi, before he takes great pleasure relating how the US actually has its own river Pearl, flowing through Mississippi into Louisiana.

“Our headquarters for business aviation is in Berlin, but I lead the customer-facing organisation globally and I’m based in North America, as is the majority of my team,” Robinson says. “Close to 70% of our business aviation customers are here and most of our aircraft manufacturer customers are here – Bombardier, Embraer, Gulfstream and Textron – apart from our latest success – Dassault. Europe is a close second, followed by Asia-Pacific and then Latin America. We believe that having our Pearl 10X on Dassault’s Falcon 10X will open up a new market, since Dassault customers are very loyal to the company and it could help us grow our European customer base.”

Global reach

The fact that business aviation has global reach is among its many attractions, but also poses challenges when it comes to providing support. Robinson acknowledges

that Rolls-Royce must maintain its own global reach, offering service wherever its customers fly. “We have a dedicated business aviation team. We do that because our customers are so very different to the airlines. They don’t have the infrastructure, network, parts, spare engines or technicians of an airline, instead buying these from others.

“We formed a Corporate Customer Council community in which we sit with key customers, management companies and service centres to talk about what’s important and how best we can provide it. It was clear that speed and aircraft availability was critical. That led us to create a network of more than 75 authorised service centres, the largest in business aviation, that allows us to respond quickly. We support it with spare parts located in nine stores and 160 lease engines distributed across almost as many places.”

This wide geographic coverage helps alleviate some of the logistics headaches plaguing the MRO industry post-pandemic, but Robinson candidly admits that there are still issues to overcome. “Under our CorporateCare and CorporateCare Enhanced packages it’s our obligation to ensure parts are where they are needed. We have to get the parts there to avoid a customer missing a trip, and we do. Last month [March 2022] we achieved 100% averted missed trips, but the cost and logistics are difficult. We’ve partnered



Rolls-Royce is using advanced virtual reality techniques both for training and, as here, product development

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Rolls-Royce developed the Pearl 15 for Bombardier's Global 5500 and 6500

with a logistics provider that's embedded within our 24/7 Availability Centre and we rely on them to identify delivery routes and options. Then we have a sophisticated software capability that shows where our parts are stored and the quickest routes to move them from the warehouse to the customer, even considering delays that might be caused by weather."

Delivering the best engine...

How does Rolls-Royce ensure its engines are technologically advanced and reliable? Robinson explains: "During flight test we have maturity metrics that we track to ensure the engine, its components, performance data and the manuals we provide hit a level of maturity that enables us to go into service with confidence. Much of this is accomplished through

engine health monitoring, which we've been doing for decades in the airline and submarine worlds but is less well understood in business aviation.

"With the newer engines, we're introducing an Engine Vibration Health Monitoring Unit, or EVHMU, an aircraft-mounted box that measures about 10,000 parameters per engine and transmits that data to us. We use the data to create a digital twin. We know exactly what the engine was like when we delivered it and we can compare that condition with the digital twin, allowing us to track anything that's changing. At that level of data integrity we can even see when engine accessories are beginning to fail. It's all part of our IntelligentEngine vision."

As an example, Robinson cites the fuel metering unit, a component that measures

fuel flow into the engine and without which the aircraft is AOG. On an aircraft without EVHMU, there is no warning of a failure until the accessory quits. "With the EVHMU, we can monitor the response time of the fuel metering unit torque motor. When the electronic control unit 'tells' the motor to move and its response is slower than expected, even by a millisecond, we can see that through the EVHMU data. That tells us it will fail and we can replace it before it does."

Even more impressively, the EVHMU facilitates two-way communication. Robinson continues: "It means we can reconfigure it to examine other aircraft parameters. If there were a starting issue, for example, we can monitor a start remotely, reconfigure the EVHMU to look at APU duct pressure and other



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pressures relevant to starting, and troubleshoot remotely.”

Every engine in the fleet will have a digital twin, primarily fed by EVHMU-collected data, but also with information about operations, operating environments, maintenance and more. Thus, Rolls-Royce creates a network of digital engines in which trends can be identified across the whole fleet, in one engine compared to the rest, or even in batches where, say, the same component is not performing as expected. The net result is not only a powerful predictive maintenance tool, but also a massive resource for engine improvement and future development.

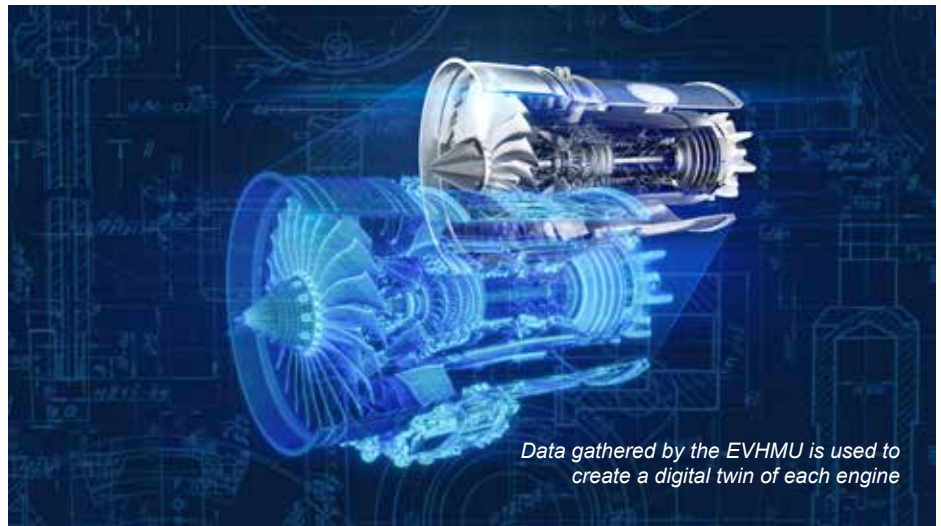
Delivering the best service...

Robinson is therefore confident that Rolls-Royce engines are the best they can be. But how do he and his team ensure they deliver service to match? How do they communicate with owners and operators when the only times they are likely to connect are post-failure or when an issue is imminent?

Considering customers subscribing to the CorporateCare or CorporateCare Enhanced support packages, Robinson explains: “We work with the aircraft manufacturers, because customers typically call them first. When there’s already a problem, we’re notified and launch our availability service. We work to understand the problem, then send parts and technicians to fix it.” Robinson makes the process seem simple, but notes that on at least one occasion Rolls-Royce has chartered a C-130 cargo aircraft to deliver a replacement engine and all required tooling to a remote island. “It’s just what we do.”

Rolls-Royce is increasingly proactive in its support, contacting customers with emerging faults they had not suspected. It could even be a case of ‘bad news’ – a component has just failed, followed immediately by ‘good news’ – a technician and part are on their way already. It is, Robinson agrees, bad news delivered really positively.

The Pearl 15 is already operational with Bombardier, while certification of the Pearl 700 is expected over the coming months and the Pearl 10X test programme is proceeding well. These are digital



Data gathered by the EVHMU is used to create a digital twin of each engine



In January 2021, Rolls-Royce ran the Pearl 700 on 100% SAF

engines for the latest generation of digital aircraft. They will be served by a new breed of technician informed like never before. So, how is Rolls-Royce equipping and training them?

Robinson responds: “We already used VR during engine design, to ensure that parts can be replaced in a certain time, that there’s space for the technician to work and the engine can be maintained effectively. Then, in July/August 2020, fortuitously given the pandemic, we launched VR training. Our instructors in Indianapolis train people at their home bases and we’re growing the courses so that now people can ‘sit’ in the cockpit, start the engines and interrogate the central maintenance computer. It’s very powerful.” And it is one more advanced solution enabling Rolls-Royce to maintain its tradition for delivering excellence.

During flight test we have maturity metrics that we track to ensure the engine, its components, performance data and the manuals we provide hit a level of maturity that enables us to go into service with confidence



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BEYOND THE SURFACE

Flying in the Cloud

Honeywell Aerospace has taken a bold step forward in flight deck design with Anthem, an intuitive, connected cockpit, described here by Ryan Lees, the company's new EMEA president

Once upon a time, pilots carried a flight bag. A badge of office, it contained all the paperwork, charts and manuals required to safely realise the magic of flight. The flight bag was essential beyond backing up or verifying aircraft systems; it was an integral part of the cockpit.

Through the 2000s, the electronic flight bag (EFB) emerged. Archaic to modern eyes, the EFB was a rugged combination of screen and keys in a unit not unlike a handheld computer. The magic of the flight bag had gone, but the saving in fuel burn across the world's fleets that resulted

from carrying less paper was more than worth it.

More recently, the iPad found its way into the cockpit. Adding connectivity to the traditional capabilities of the EFB, the iPad links crews with their operations centres and maintenance departments; it also provides the latest, detailed weather and helps them navigate unfamiliar airports. The iPad holder has become an essential cockpit fitting.

Now Honeywell Aerospace has devised its own kind of magic: the Anthem connected cockpit. It seems as though the industry has seen 'connected cockpits' before, but not like this, because Anthem connects to the cloud.

Ryan Lees, Honeywell Aerospace's president for Europe, Middle East, Africa and India, explains that Anthem delivers everything we've come to expect from a 'connected cockpit' – and more. "It's connected in all phases of flight and even before the flight. Pilots can upload a flight plan from their hotel room, customise the cockpit displays and plan the entire flight through Mission Manager. We believe it could save as much as 45 minutes of in-cockpit planning and start-up time.

"That planning goes right into the detail, too. A pilot could tell the system that at a certain point in the flight they want it to send a text message to the caterer or fuel truck to have them ready on



...pilots can connect directly to ForeFlight or other flight planning applications, or view airfield webcams and websites

the ground. With the aircraft connected in flight, those requests trigger notifications on the flight deck for the pilots to action with a simple click.”

Maintenance data is downloaded and uploaded as appropriate, of course, but pilots may also remotely check fuel levels, for example, via the cloud. The aircraft doesn’t need to be ‘on’ for the system to work, either, because all the data is in the cloud and is downloaded the instant the aircraft regains connection to a network.

Anthem also enables secure Internet browsing, on one of the cockpit displays, via the aircraft’s connectivity pipe. “It means pilots can connect directly to Forge Flight or other flight planning

applications, or view airfield webcams and websites,” Lees enthuses.

Authorised users may also access all the Anthem information separately, so everything the pilots input and see is available to maintenance and operations staff, while any issues emerging on the ground – perhaps as trivial as a caterer being absent because their truck broke down – are easily communicated to the flight deck crew. Better still, the system is intuitive; in its literature, Honeywell likens the experience to using a smartphone.

System engagement

The full Anthem capability is expansive, but Lees says it is possible to engage with

the system at different levels. “It could be as simple as the fuel truck receiving a message saying the plane’s going to be 15 minutes late landing and then will be parked at a particular location, or as complex as a ground department logging in and tracking the airplane to see more data. All of that will be available through the Honeywell Forge Flight platform, which does the analytics and makes the data available in whatever form is useful to the end user; a text message or web dashboard, for example.”

Anthem obviously consumes more data than current cockpits. Connecting should pose no problem, though. Lees notes: “It will use any connection available. On

the ground that could be Wi-Fi or LTE. It can use VHF and satcom too. The faster and better the connection, the more information becomes available to the pilot, including the secure cockpit browser, but the aircraft doesn't actually require a connection to fly safely."

Stories of airports closing down because of emerging Covid restrictions while aircraft were inbound are not unusual and in a similar situation, Anthem comes into its own. "Imagine landing at a remote, previously unvisited airfield in Alaska," Lees says. "One pilot could be taking a good look at the runway via the airfield webcam. Alternatively, having learned of the closure, someone on the ground in flight operations could uplink a new flight plan for the pilots to review and accept, at which point it loads into the avionics without additional pilot workload."

Cockpit configuration

Configuring the Anthem cockpit screens to individual pilot preference is easily accomplished by clicking and dragging, even across multiple screens, potentially creating a two- or even three-screen 'super map'. Conversely, in a critical stage of flight where only essential data is important, information may be minimised. Further, Anthem includes what Honeywell calls a 'smart scratchpad' and which Lees describes as 'game changing'.

He explains: "A pilot can use either data or speech entry, like a number or destination, and the smart scratchpad will pop up the screen it thinks is relevant to the input and ask the pilot to confirm it. Once they have, it enters into the avionics, avoiding the need for pilots to switch between menus and screens."

Anthem aims to create an ideal workspace for pilots and yet also has the potential to reduce workload to such an extent that companies nurturing urban/ advanced air mobility (U/AAM) craft, usually with the intention ultimately of flying those aircraft autonomously, are among Anthem's early customers. Lees explains: "We're building a lot of simplified vehicle operations elements into Anthem, with the aim of reducing crews down to one pilot or, on long transatlantic flights, two. The theme is to reduce pilot workload, make it easier to work the cockpit and do more in advance, all of which demands less of the pilot and



moves us towards automation across the aviation industry."

Future vision

Anthem appears to be everything Lees describes today, but also a vision for the future. "It's fully scalable from a two-seat general aviation airplane all the way up to an airliner. And the secure cockpit browser adds a level of future-proofing, because data pulled off the web can be loaded into the avionics."

There is also easy compatibility with third-party apps, and data gathered from the airframe may also be loaded into the avionics. It creates a vision of cloud-shared data in which every aircraft becomes a data node, generating information for others and consuming that which it requires. How will Honeywell keep its customers safe in this shared environment?

"Our philosophy is that the user owns their data. We may have rights to use data but must have their consent before we

use it. All the Anthem data goes though Forge Flight but the individual flight department can decide how it wants the data used. It may have an airframe OEM representative helping with maintenance, for example, and want them to have particular access."

This is a slightly baffling concept but it helps to consider packets of data, with Forge Flight acting as the sorting room, never opening a packet marked 'OEM' but ensuring that's where it's delivered.

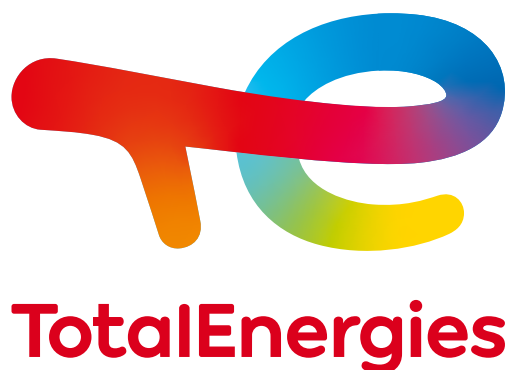
With Anthem bringing the fully connected aircraft closer to reality, what's next? Lees theorises: "I think we'll see reduced requirements for hardware on the aircraft over time, and software becoming far more capable as connectivity and data improve. Thinking about new-generation aircraft, maybe the software solution becomes so good that AAMs won't need weather radar, they'll just get the data they need from the cloud."

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Building Relationships

Sam Cook, who leads J.P. Morgan Private Bank's Specialty Lending division, provides an overview of aircraft financing in an unprecedented marketplace

Even industry veterans with 30 or 40 years' experience are calling these the most unusual of times. The global pandemic shone a spotlight on the distinctive capability, professionalism and versatility that characterise business aviation, while risk-averse travellers subsequently turned away from airlines for fear of Covid infection, choosing private charter instead. The demand for charter remains strong, while some customers are inevitably stepping up to aircraft ownership. Or at least, attempting to do so, in a market where wait times for new production aircraft are long and good-quality used aircraft are not only attracting high prices, but also selling fast. And now, of course, while the US market remains buoyant, the European market is weakening in light of the bloody conflict in Ukraine.

Wider understanding

So these are, indeed, unprecedented and complicated times, during which Sam Cook, who leads J.P. Morgan Private Bank's Specialty Lending division across Europe, Middle East and North Africa (covering aircraft, yachts and fine art) says aircraft purchasers, especially those new to the market, must ensure they understand the longer term costs of aircraft ownership and seek the very best support for their transaction in a rapid-paced marketplace. "The increase in demand for aircraft post-Covid has been huge," Cook confirms. "The supply/demand dynamic has shifted heavily in favour of sellers and we're seeing record low levels in stocks

of aircraft available for sale. Buyers are competing on price and the ability to transact quickly, taking aircraft off the market in maybe two or three weeks – people are even taking aircraft without pre-purchase inspections." Cook cautions that while purchasing an aircraft with robust maintenance programmes in place for airframe, engines, APU and so on helps mitigate the risk of buying without inspection, there may be hidden issues that a pre-delivery inspection might detect. Without an inspection, there is always the chance of unexpected and expensive rectification work being required soon after purchase. And while he does not expect these extreme market conditions to last long, for the time being they are keeping aircraft sales brokers, aviation lawyers, MRO providers and, of course, lenders, very well occupied. "A busy market is good for all participants, but it doesn't mean we change our appetite around the kinds of deals we want to do as a bank and how we think about our credit underwriting guidelines. We want to maintain a consistent product and ensure we're underwriting the right risk for us." Cook is enthusiastic about new buyers entering the market, especially the opportunity it provides for J.P. Morgan Private Bank to help them understand the industry. "It's really interesting helping them think through what's the right aircraft for them and who are the participants to partner, while also helping them understand aspects they perhaps haven't considered around operations, jurisdictions and so on."



Aligned interests

Another important consideration is to determine the appropriate term for financing. "We usually set loans up over five-year committed periods," Cook explains. "Five years is the typical ownership period we see, but every owner is different and circumstances change. Sometimes they fairly quickly start needing more range, in which case we can help finance a move to a larger aircraft or a second one. Typically we don't charge early repayment penalties, so they're also free to pay off the full loan at any time should they want to." After a financing agreement has been reached and an aircraft purchased, the bank's continuing involvement includes regular reports on the number of hours flown, the latest maintenance input and other parameters ensuring, as Cook puts it, that the value has been properly protected over the life of the loan. "Our interests are aligned with the owner's," he says. "They want to ensure the aircraft isn't depreciating more than it should because if they want to sell it, they want a good, marketable aircraft with liquidity; they want its value protecting." For now, the business jet market remains



It is important that new buyers ensure they understand the longer term costs of aircraft ownership and seek the very best support for their transaction. Bombardier

healthy, but the war in Ukraine is casting a degree of doubt, especially in Europe. The media has carried a number of stories of aircraft linked to or known to be owned by sanctioned individuals being frozen, and there seems little clarity on what that will mean in the long term. Cook reveals J.P. Morgan Private Bank's point of view: "It's a fast-moving situation and we don't yet know what it means for the market. There is the issue that those aircraft can't be properly maintained or supported and they're depreciating faster than would have been expected."

Critically in any deal, J.P. Morgan's advice to clients is to ensure they have fulfilled due diligence and the structure they have in place is legally robust. Cook says: "We've built trusted relationships with some of the leading participants in the aircraft market and I believe our clients appreciate our ability to give them open, frank suggestions that help them navigate the market successfully. Over the past 18 months or so it's been interesting helping new owners do that and I hope they see the guidance we provide as an added benefit of working with J.P. Morgan Private Bank."



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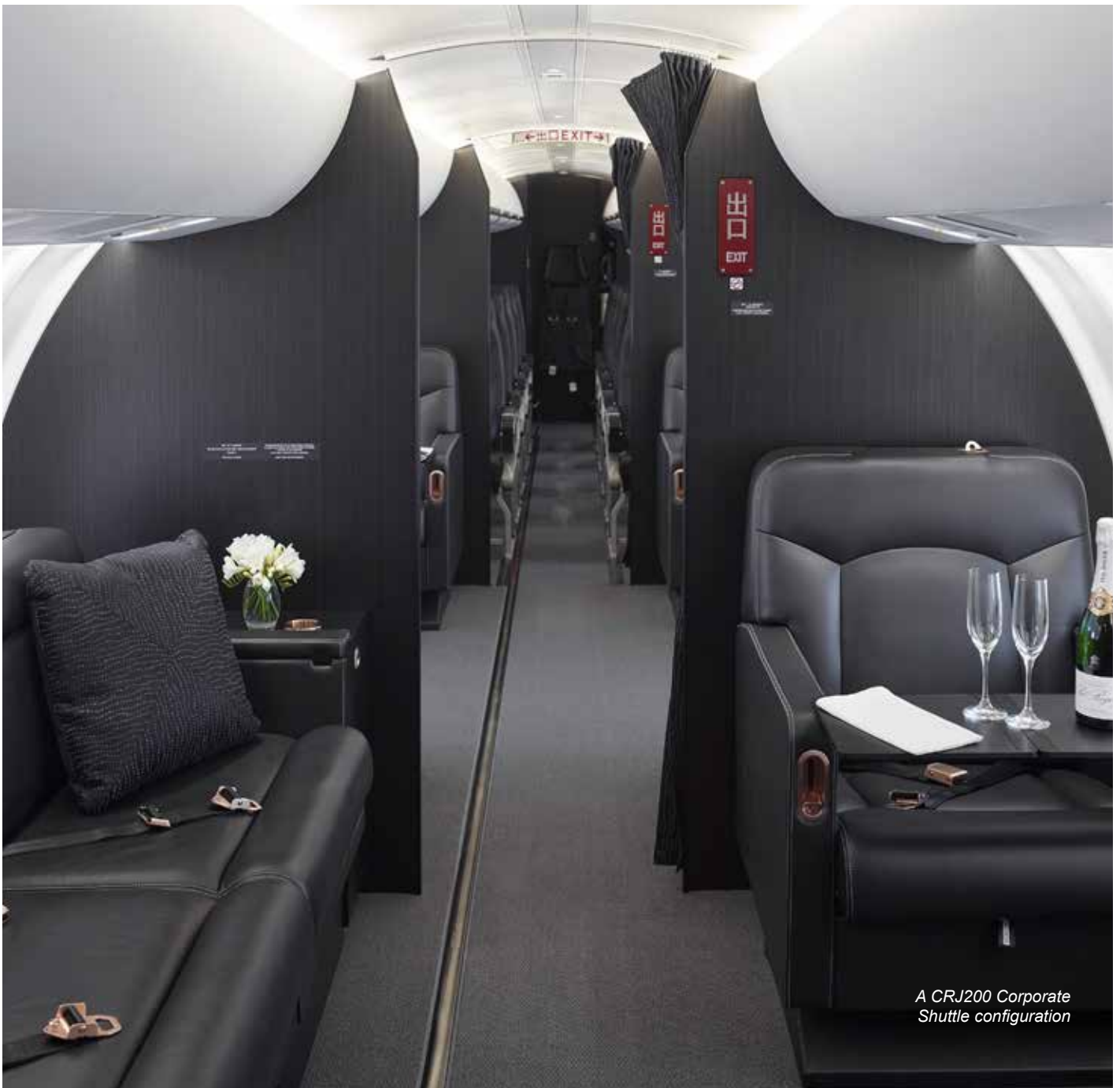


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Regional, Rotary, Resurgence

Alongside its regular business jet work, Canada's Flying Colours Corps is seeing a resurgence in interest for regional jet and helicopter conversions, as EVP Eric Gillespie reveals

.....



A CRJ200 Corporate Shuttle configuration

Today's hectic market means jet manufacturers, sales brokers, MROs and refurbishment specialists are enjoying busy times. Peterborough, Ontario-based Flying Colours Corp is no exception, offering a full spectrum of MRO, completion and refurbishment options, including a unique Bombardier CRJ200 capability. The company has previously offered Corporate Shuttle and ExecLiner conversions of the regional airliner and has recently seen an uptick in demand.

Eric Gillespie, Executive Vice President at Flying Colours Corp, says requests for information are coming in for pure VVIP ExecLiner conversions, with auxiliary fuel tanks extending range from 2,000nm to 3,000nm, plus aircraft in VIP and medevac configuration, pure Corporate Shuttle, and mixed VIP/Corporate Shuttle. "In the past, requests have predominantly been from private individuals but recently we've heard from charter operators and even private equity funds looking to make investments," he notes.

Although Flying Colours has worked on Embraer ERJ145 conversions, its long association with Bombardier means the primary focus is on the CRJ, especially with so many airframes sitting unused after their withdrawal during the worst of the pandemic. "The airlines are keen to sell them and there are more available than previously. We conduct pre-buy inspections and we're quickly able to establish when an aircraft is priced correctly and how much time/budget will be needed to complete a full conversion," Gillespie says. To date, Flying Colours has converted around 30 pre-owned and 15 green CRJ airframes.

Cabin choices

Acknowledging the possibilities of the Embraer ERJ and E-Jet airframes too, Gillespie enthuses: "The great opportunity with a conversion is that the customer can explain their mission needs and share their interior vision. We can then optimise the interior to fit their requirements, working with the template provided by the airframe to deliver a unique new interior every time. The discussion doesn't necessarily start



A CRJ200 ExecLiner conversion

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with what the airframe is. It is more focused on what the customer needs to do and how we can help them achieve their goals.”

After 45 CRJ conversions, Flying Colours has an array of experience and STCs, helping ensure smooth service entry. The Peterborough site is impressive for its workshops and skill base, with cabinetry, upholstery, veneering, design engineering teams and manufacturing all available in-house. It also boasts avionics, maintenance and paint teams, making it a one-stop, one-location shop. When needed, partners are carefully selected according to project requirements.

When it comes to cabin management system (CMS) and inflight entertainment and communications (IFEC) provision, Flying Colours is again highly qualified and capable of integrating a variety of equipment according to customer request. “Our recommended CMS depends on the mission,” Gillespie reports, “but we often

Helicopters on the up

Elsewhere in this edition Frederic Lemos, Head of Airbus Corporate Helicopters, reports hearing from customers keen to use helicopters where they might previously have been happy with a long car journey, because of Covid concerns. It is a trend Flying Colours has also observed, in the form of renewed interest in its helicopter cabin refurbishment expertise.

“We recently had a request for a Sikorsky S-92 refurbishment into a VIP format and anticipate seeing more helicopters over the next couple of years as people reshape the way they travel in our post-pandemic world,” Gillespie says.

Helicopter cabins are typically smaller and quite differently shaped to business jet interiors and, again reflecting Lemos’ thoughts, Gillespie notes: “Helicopters operate shorter flights than jets and can often be compared with a large SUV in terms of size, so the interior design is frequently influenced by the automotive industry. As a VIP passenger transitions from car to helicopter there can be common elements, but on a jet the design palette expands.”

To some extent there are similar considerations in designing helicopter and jet cabins insofar as it is imperative to optimise space and combine form with function for a practical solution. But there are important differences. “For example, a customer may have requested a particular seat design but factoring in the combined downward and forward forces may mean that internally a helicopter cabin needs to incorporate specific features while externally it meets the owner’s expectations. Vibration and noise are typically greater in a helicopter than on a jet, so designs that reduce their impact are essential. High-quality dampening is also imperative and noise-cancelling headphones are a must.

“Our overall philosophy for design remains the same though,” Gillespie goes on. “We ask about mission, range, frequency of flight, passenger numbers, and then work with

owners or operators to achieve their desired end result. We want to bring their vision to life, while adhering to regulations, safety and available materials.”

Like jet owners, those with VIP helicopters want elegantly designed interiors that are comfortable and include connectivity and entertainment options. Managing these requirements within a helicopter’s operational limitations and available cabin space inevitably dictates what is possible, setting parameters within which Flying Colours works.

Other, less immediately obvious needs that Gillespie notes include durability, which is often a factor for commercial operators working in harsh environments with frequent turnarounds. It is also not unusual for larger VIP cabins to include a lavatory and galley-type stowage area for refreshments. Requests for the Collins Aerospace Airshow moving map system are not unheard of, but the cost of installing and operating the system means they are uncommon.

Gillespie says passengers want to travel seamlessly from point to point, remaining connected at all times, but while it is possible to provide Internet connectivity to helicopters, the options are limited. Their typically smaller airframes restrict antenna size, while rotors interfere with satellite signals – and, since helicopters fly lower than jets, satellite signals may be lost in weather or topography, while in remote areas, or over water, at low level, there may be no signal at all.

However, some of those limitations are now being addressed. Gillespie reports: “With the growth of the LEO [low earth orbit] satellite sector, the increasing demand for digital tools and data transmission, and advances in antenna and hardware technology, the options for helicopter connectivity are growing. Gogo’s air-to-ground is a good option for North American aircraft and the Iridium NEXT constellation, through the Certus platform, can also support rotary needs with hardware from Honeywell and Satcom Direct.”

Tractor Tales

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A previous S-92 refurbishment to VIP configuration

select Collins' Venue, with controls sourced from Alto Aviation.

"We see a lot of North American customers choosing the Gogo Avance L3 or L5 systems as cost-effective connectivity options within the continental range. Our international customers opt for Jet Connex powered by Inmarsat. Connectivity hardware depends on the system, customer preference and our recommendation. For travellers flying internationally on a regular basis in larger cabin aircraft we typically suggest Collins or Satcom Direct systems. We're increasingly seeing customers of these large airframes opting to have both Ka-band and Ku-band systems installed to ensure there is never any loss of coverage. For the regional jet conversions we anticipate Gogo being the lead connectivity solution."

On the outside

Painting complete aircraft is a demanding task requiring costly, highly specialised facilities, and many refurbishment and MRO centres prefer to contract the job out to dedicated providers. Flying Colours has a fully equipped paint shop at Peterborough, however, capable of accommodating aircraft up to Boeing 737 or Airbus A220 size. It has been operational for just two years, but has turned out some stunning finishes.

Gillespie explains: "Each design is individual and most are very specific in terms of colours and paint types; more often than not the design is provided by the owner/operator to their personal taste or fleet brand. Our choice of paint supplier is driven by numerous factors, including the aircraft's condition, which may require more paint preparation. Other considerations include budget, the design, and whether the customer wants special features such as mica/pearl effect or chromalusion."

The ability to provide full exterior paint, complete cabin refurbishment and MRO defines Flying Colours' capability at Peterborough, while its dedicated MRO facility in St Louis supports projects as needed. The family-run company works across all types of fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, but its unusually close relationship with Bombardier means it is the provider of choice for CRJ200 conversions.

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Swiss Movement

Albinati Aeronautics embodies the Swiss reputation for quality across a range of business and VIP aviation services, including aircraft management, charter and CAMO

Founded by CEO Stefano Albinati and now in its 21st year of operation, Albinati Aeronautics operates a managed fleet of more than 20 business aircraft, many of them available for charter, boasts a team of 140 personnel and remains fully independent. Headquartered in Geneva with a sister company in Malta, Albinati Aeronautics has become a specialist in Bombardier aircraft, but also proudly operates the Pilatus PC-12 and PC-24, along with Dassault and Cessna jets.

Marketing Coordinator Adrien Fostoff says some of the fleet are exclusively under continuing airworthiness management organisation (CAMO) jurisdiction, or management but the available charter fleet ranges from PC-12 to Global 7500, a diversity of aircraft which, he explains, “...allows us to be independent and therefore able to react immediately to our charter customers’ requests without compromising service excellence or safety. And if an aircraft from our fleet is not available, or a specific aircraft type is requested, we source it through our network of carefully selected partners.” Importantly, he notes there are operators with which Albinati chooses not to work – only those delivering service to its own standards are considered.

Beyond CAMO, charter and management, Albinati also offers maintenance, complete crewing and full operator services, and aircraft sales and acquisition, a combination that could lead to compromise. “We avoid the risk of doing lots to a good standard but failing to excel at anything by remaining a family office,” Fostoff declares. “Implemented by Stefano Albinati 20 years ago, it’s a philosophy that has helped make Albinati

Both the PC-12 and PC-24, shown here, are proving extremely popular with charter customers

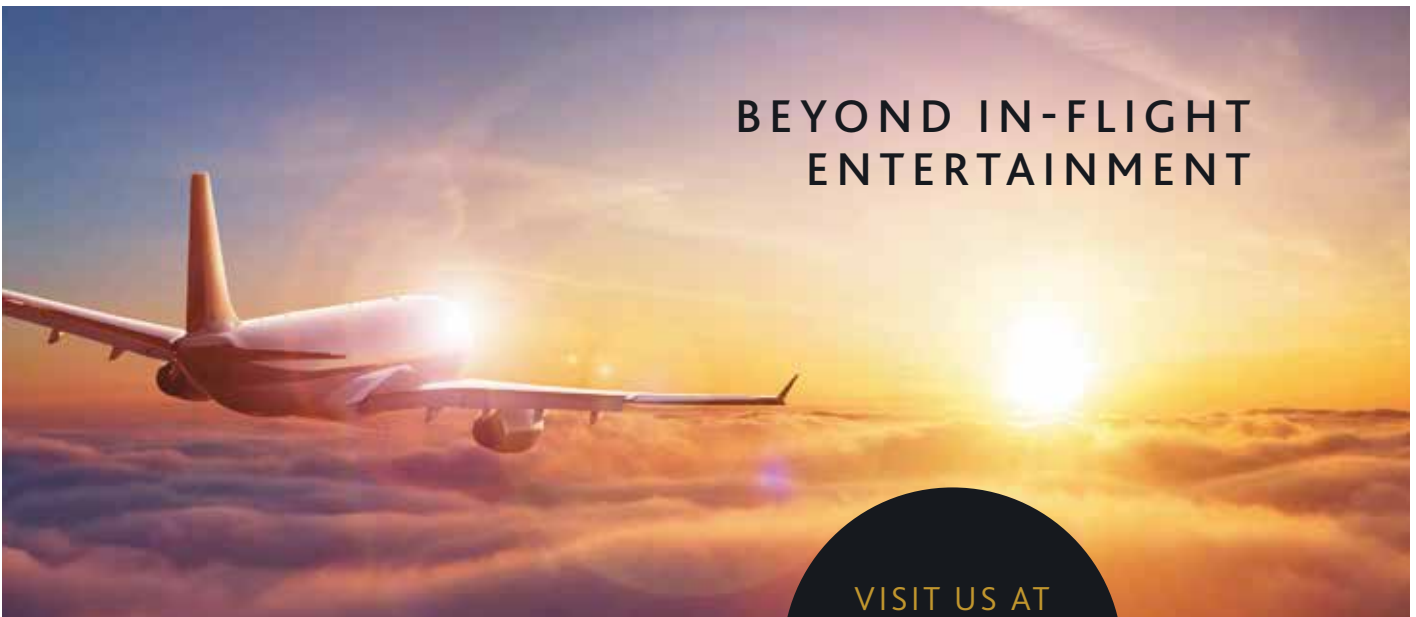




Aeronautics a success. We have chosen to limit the fleet to fewer than 30 aircraft. A larger fleet would require more structure and while we're confident we could still deliver excellent service, we might lose the family ethos our customers value.

“In addition, fleet maintenance supervision and organisation are delivered in-house by a CAMO team of highly experienced engineers. We are also free from constraining partnerships with manufacturers or maintenance centres, while our aircraft management services are provided from Geneva or Malta; nothing is outsourced, everything remains 100% under our supervision. We opened offices in Turin, for example, to better respond to customers whose aircraft are based in Italy.”

This in-house, family ethos even extends to crewing, Albinati employing all its cockpit and cabin crew full time. Considering the variety of aircraft in its fleet, it means making a considerable commitment, but one considered essential. Fostoff explains: “Our goal is to provide



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In 2021 we recorded our highest number of movements in 20 years. We saw 40% of our business coming from customers who previously did not travel privately but have now become regulars



The quality of Albinati's charter fleet is high and exemplified here by a Global 6000 cabin

high-quality service and absolute safety. We believe this is only possible if our flight personnel are permanent, full-time employees, subject to a continuing education requirement that enables them to meet company standards and deliver the highest levels of safety. It also guarantees our customers a personalised welcome from crews who know and understand all their expectations and requirements.”

Global dominance

Bombardier's Global series dominates Albinati Aeronautics' fleet, albeit through natural evolution rather than design. “We managed the very first Global 5000 in Switzerland,” Fostoff reports. “After that, one thing led to another. We took many Globals under management and became the first Global operator in the

country. Our large Bombardier fleet allows us a privileged relationship with the manufacturer, but although we could be considered a Bombardier specialist, we apply exactly the same levels of service to every aircraft in our care. Our engineers are trained to the same level on every aircraft under their supervision, including certifications, qualifications, courses on new aircraft, training in the manufacturers' maintenance centres and more.”

It seems only correct that much of the remainder of Albinati's fleet comprises aircraft from Pilatus. “As a Switzerland-based business aviation company we are proud of having become a reference operator for Pilatus,” Fostoff says, “and we share with them the values embodied in the term ‘made in Switzerland.’” Albinati received only the second ever ad hoc

license issued by the Swiss Federal Office of Civil Aviation to a Swiss company for commercial PC-12 operations and Fostoff describes it as the perfect aircraft for traveling around Europe, especially to more challenging airports, including Saanen, La Môle and Lugano.

Well received by customers, the PC-12 made an important contribution to Albinati's continuing success through the worst of the Covid pandemic. Albinati, of course, was not immune from the challenges of the past two years, but neither has it been slow to take advantage of opportunities.

“In 2021 we recorded our highest number of movements in 20 years. We saw 40% of our business coming from customers who previously did not travel privately but have now become regulars,” Fostoff notes. “We plan to continue growing without sacrificing the family ethos or losing any of our passion for aviation and excellence.”



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Oxford Advantage

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During 2021, London Oxford Airport saw its average number of daily business aviation flights increase by almost 40%, more than any other UK business aviation airport. In total numbers of daily flights, London Oxford was fifth behind Farnborough, London Luton, Biggin Hill and London Stansted, but of those, only Farnborough comes close in terms of growth, at 31%. In its modest, get-the-business-done-without-undue-fanfare way, London Oxford is therefore thriving and, including the general aviation and flying school activity that accounts for the overwhelming majority

of its business, expects to achieve around 70,000 movements this year.

August 2021 was London Oxford's busiest month in 15 years, while it had its busiest January and March for 15 years in 2022 (February was denied its fair share of activity by a run of severe storms). Meanwhile, the airfield owners are investing heavily in new infrastructure, focused on exploiting emerging opportunities and preparing an airfield that dates back to 1935 for a future that includes the emergence of eVTOL and other advanced air mobility platforms.

James Dillon-Godfray, Head of Business Development at the airport, says London Oxford is enjoying peak investment at the

moment, with a number of fundamental changes and developments either implemented or in progress. "In the last year we built Hangar Number 15," he says, "a 70,000 sqft facility capable of taking as many as six G650 or Global 7500 jets, with offices at the back. We expect to build more to the north of the airfield, starting around 2023 with a second facility adjacent to Hangar 15, which is already almost full of tenant aircraft.

"We've also built seven new helipads. We've a lot more helicopter activity than in the past, including aircraft from Volare Aviation and Airbus Helicopters, but also the Children's Air Ambulance and National Grid."

Looking to the mid-term, Dillon-Godfray imagines infrastructure in place to allow the rapid charging of electric aircraft at the helipads. An ambitious undertaking, it requires very high-capacity power supply and retractable charging points.

Perhaps reflecting the fact that wholesale electric aviation is decades distant, London Oxford has also invested heavily in a new fuel farm, almost quadrupling capacity with two 85,000-litre tanks and with space for three more, one of which is expected to become available during the summer. The facility is ready to accept sustainable aviation fuel.

London Oxford aims to be as flexible and available as possible to its business aviation clientele, a policy that led to an upgrade providing Category 6 fire cover during all operational hours – essentially 6am to midnight seven days per week as required, hours that few other airports can match. It means that for the first time, Oxford can accept any aircraft capable of using its runway – effectively up to 737 BBJ class – with no notice. Such aircraft have visited London Oxford in the past but, significantly, in 2021 Embraer 190 and 195 jets chartered by the local proliferation of F1 teams were regular visitors.

Aside from Hangar 15 and its twin, other planned major airfield infrastructure changes include a realignment of the main taxiway, construction of a new fire station and the addition of an MRO

facility. The latter is linked to the taxiway change, which will reroute around the MRO site, while also speeding up aircraft movements; an additional taxiway is also being built, from the runway midpoint. London Oxford averages 14 daily business aviation movements, but enjoys considerably more general aviation rotations, the majority of them from several based flying schools.

New infrastructure

The modern fire station will house three new fire tenders that are expected before the end of the year, while Dillon-Godfray confirms that a tenant for the MRO has been found. He was unwilling to identify the company but expects the facility to be complete late in 2023. In the main Oxford Jet Centre FBO, existing office space has been vacated to enable a new pilots' lounge to be constructed, while other airfield buildings are also being repurposed, including a 'terminal' for light general aviation beneath the control tower.

Much of London Oxford's continuing success stems from its willingness to embrace multiple aviation tenants, but it also engages keenly in the types of development to which the large areas of real estate characteristic of an airport lend themselves. Typically for a working airfield, London Oxford has some buildings and infrastructure dating back to the 1940s, while subsequent development has come and gone. Now it is building a

science and R&D business park close to the airport entrance.

Several university towns have similar parks, housing start-ups that emerge from university research projects. "There's an increasing demand for R&D laboratories and units in Oxford," Dillon-Godfray explains, "where people want to be reasonably close to the city and university colleges." The site's ready access to business aviation is a significant bonus, as demonstrated in Cambridge, whose airport benefits from traffic generated by the city's pharmaceutical and high-tech industries.

Dillon-Godfray reports early interest from aerospace and aviation companies, including eVTOL enterprises, while the adjacent Oxford Technology Park has already attracted an F1-connected organisation that is moving in to begin battery and electric motor development. Given the close relationship between electric technologies for the automotive and aviation industries, its position close to several car manufacturing and F1 facilities and, of course, the airfield, London Oxford Airport could become a leading next-generation air mobility hub.

The airport's owners have unwavering support for aviation, guaranteeing that London Oxford will not go the way of Cambridge Airport, for example, which is scheduled for redevelopment away from aviation use. For now and the foreseeable future, Oxford's business and general



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aviation ecosystem will remain at the heart of its activity.

Aviation companies continue to find the airport attractive and Dillon-Godfray notes: “On the MRO side we have Jet Maintenance International (JMI), focusing on Citations and Falcons, and also now a Tamarack retrofit centre for Europe and authorised Williams engine and Garmin service centre; RPM Aviation, specialising in the Citation Mustang; and MAC Aviation, supporting Bombardier models; while A2B Aero and, of course, Airbus Helicopters provide helicopter MRO. We also have a number of light general aviation maintenance companies.”

Volare Aviation, a company with a diverse business across the spectrum of MRO and operations, also calls London Oxford home, while Dillon-Godfray says that among other based aircraft operators, “We have Livingstone Skies with a Piper M600 single-engined turboprop on an AOC and available for charter, the Little Jet Company with several Citations and King Airs, and Executive Jet Management Europe (EJMI), the management and charter side of NetJets, with two Global Express aircraft.”

Viable alternative

The airport is clearly popular with aviation companies and its growing number of business aviation movements shows that it is a favourite with travellers, but does it really offer a viable alternative access point for London, whose centre is almost 60 miles away by road? The answer is a resounding yes, but the reasons why are not immediately obvious.

Dillon-Godfray explains: “We are outside the LTMA [London Terminal Manoeuvring Airspace], which is the



Hangar 15 nearing completion, with Airbus Helicopters, the Oxford Jet Centre FBO and control tower beyond

busiest airspace in Europe. Aircraft coming off the airways, heading for airports inside the LTMA, may be directed into some quite convoluted routeings before they line up to land or, worse still, are put into a hold. That extra time in the air often negates the additional driving time of using Oxford and costs a lot more.

“Aircraft for Oxford come off the airways and nine times out of ten take a direct routeing straight to us, with no slots and no slot control. Business aircraft have priority over smaller aircraft here and after landing there is a very short taxi off the runway to the main ramp, where a car or helicopter can be sitting ready to go. From touchdown to driving out of the airport can be as little as four minutes and it’s the same driving into the airport to take off.”

For people who choose to drive between Oxford and London, the extra miles compared to its peers are deceptive, since the M40 motorway

linking the cities is, according to Dillon-Godfray, the least congested and officially the fastest arterial route into London. “For those living in the north-west quadrant of London, including Kensington, Holland Park and Notting Hill, where much of the London-based business aviation clientele is, getting swiftly onto the A40 and then the M40 is far easier than the convoluted, tortuous urban crawl and busier motorways required to reach our competitors.

“All things considered, from starting point to finishing point on the overall journey, London Oxford can be advantageous and many people find it hassle-free and generally predictable. It’s also easy to make last-minute changes to schedules and, now that we are Category 6 fire capable all the time, even the biggest jets can chop and change without worrying whether we’ll have the right cover.”



Helicopter operations have gained a new significance, here with the Children’s Air Ambulance AW169 (right) and a National Grid Bell 429

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25 Connected Years

Satcom Direct (SD) has been in the business aviation connectivity business a quarter century. Company president Chris Moore takes a look at SD's latest developments and highlights some of the milestones along the way



Satcom Direct celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. Even without that most significant milestone, 2022 has already been busy. In April alone, the company announced Federal Aviation Administration approval of Supplemental Type Certificates for the Plane Simple Ku-band tail-mounted antenna on the Gulfstream G550, G450, GV and GIV, followed soon after by the revelation that its FlightDeck Freedom (FDF) communications platform had been selected as the default datalink for the in-production G500, G600 and G650ER, with initial line fits already completed. Then, at the very beginning of May, came news that SD was opening a Singapore office.

Considering the Plane Simple antenna, Chris Moore, President, Satcom Direct, says: "The programme's evolution has been very significant for us. We were already a hardware manufacturer with the Satcom Direct family of routers, including the Satcom Direct Router (SDR), SDR Gateway and SDR WiFi hub,



Left: Chris Moore, President, Satcom Direct
 Right: Jim Jensen, SD's CEO and founder, established the company in 1997

plus stylus handsets for aircraft. These meant we could support all elements of cabin Wi-Fi distribution and support our customers in flight. We decided to

develop the Plane Simple antenna system from the ground up to address growing demand from a digitised business aviation community.



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“The antenna is the piece of the connectivity puzzle that joins the SD ecosystem of software, hardware and ground infrastructure, adding value across our agnostic connectivity systems that also enable third-party integration. We have simplified connectivity for business aviation owners by positioning SD as the single source for all connectivity acquisition and support needs. Owners/operators need only make one call to SD for connectivity or streamlined customer support along the whole connectivity supply chain. We believe it will change the way the sector thinks about connectivity.”

Satcom Direct’s SD Avionics division has developed the antenna range in partnership with Quantenelektronische Systeme GmbH (QEST), a market leader in innovative aeronautical antennas. With just two line replaceable units, Plane Simple requires minimal installation and offers simple transition pathways, while the associated modem may be located in an unpressurised fuselage section, freeing cabin stowage space. The initial Plane Simple antenna configuration links to the multi-layered, high-throughput Intelsat FlexExec satellite network. Developed for the business aviation sector, FlexExec delivers global coverage through Ku-band.

Connected Gulfstreams

Meanwhile, the significance of FlightDeck Freedom as a line fit addition to the latest Gulfstream models should not be underestimated. It combines a robust datalink and flight communications platform in a single service package. Moore explains: “FDF keeps the entire flight department and crew synced with the aircraft for more efficient flight operations by providing critical data to support service monitoring. It also plays a significant part in monitoring connectivity usage and can alert crew if there are anticipated coverage losses, and provide geo-notifications relating to upcoming sensitive airspace as well as vital weather alerts.

“Immediately after flight, aircraft movement data is delivered via FDF datalink to web-based SD PostFlight software, which automatically populates the aircraft flight log with all available data relating to flight times and cycle events for each leg of a journey. This automated, timely and precise recording of critical flight data reduces pilot workload,



Satcom Direct’s global headquarters at Melbourne, Florida

minimises the opportunity for human error and improves operational efficiency by synchronising the flight department, crew and maintenance teams with autonomous flight log information.”

That FDF provides secure communication goes without saying, given SD’s reputation for data security, but its flexibility is perhaps less immediately obvious. Moore again: “Its configurable features enable integration with value-added services and facilitate monitoring of industry compliance requirements. It also has an open architecture design allowing integration with leading trip support providers and supporting tools.”

Providing support to a growing fleet of line-fitted Gulfstream aircraft could prove challenging, but Moore is confident in FDF’s maturity and capability as well as SD’s ability to stand behind Gulfstream

customers. “FDF was launched in 2007, so it has been a core SD product and service for 15 years. When it was first launched it was built on an agnostic platform to allow third-party integration and this is how we’ve developed all our technology since then. As with all SD products and services, we have a dedicated team that supports FDF developments and customer requirements.”

This is also not the first time that SD and Gulfstream have worked closely together. Moore provides details: “When Gulfstream launched its Connected Services programme in 2017, we were named exclusive provider of cabin and cockpit connectivity service plans on in-production and in-service aircraft. This means that Gulfstream customers can fly globally with confidence knowing they can maximise faster, richer data during

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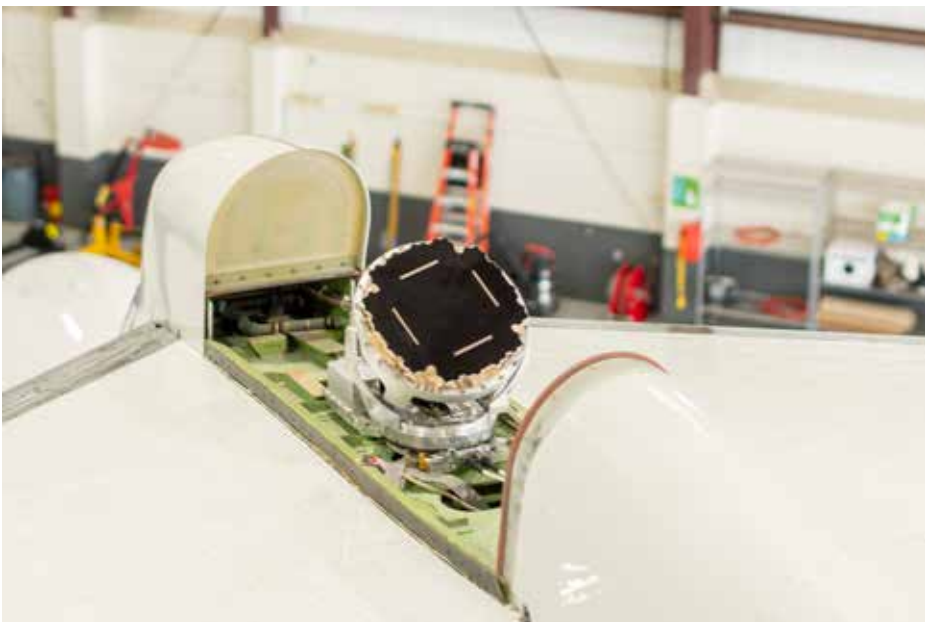


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Left: Satcom Direct operates this G550 as a trials platform
Below left The Plane Simple tail mount antenna



all phases of flight. This relationship still exists and we are pleased to be able to support Gulfstream's customers around the world."

Quarter century

Satcom Direct is 25 years old in 2022. Over that quarter century connectivity has been transformed, reinvented, evolved and transformed again. What does Chris Moore consider are the industry highlights in that time? "The most significant developments relate to consistency,

capability and customer experience," he says. "Connectivity historically relates to enabling communications, essential for increasing productivity and leisure options in flight as executives, families and groups wanted to remain connected while they travelled, but today it means much more than communication. It is about generating aircraft data, and enabling greater productivity and increased efficiency of operations.

"Traditionally, services were prescriptive and limited. Today, connectivity

does so much more than just enable communications, as data sits at the heart of aviation activity. It is now so important that if the connectivity is not working properly many operators/owners declare an AOG, demonstrating how far expectations and connectivity solutions have come."

And what have been the most significant milestones for SD during its first 25 years? "The Satcom Direct Router has raised cabin Wi-Fi standards and at least 2,500 routers from the SD router family now support onboard connectivity. It is the most popular router in the business aviation sector.

"Customers expect the same connectivity experience in the air as they do on the ground, and as more data-hungry apps are being used, data transmission rates are soaring. Connectivity is tailored to each customer mission; services and products can be tailored to enhance the passenger experience. Customers also expect a better customer support experience, which is why the introduction of the Plane Simple antennas has been such a milestone. We can now support our customers across the whole connectivity supply chain whereas once upon a time we'd have had to make three or more calls to create a solution or resolve any issues.

"Aircraft now generate reams of data that can be synchronised across all flight team stakeholders. This enables predictive maintenance, creates a digital history of the aircraft, monitors aircraft performance across the board and is raising industry standards by enabling improved operational efficiencies. The accuracy of the digital history helps retain asset value as it drives more efficient operations and maintenance, as well as recording much more accurate aircraft cycle times.

"The convergence of products enabling third-party integration of all the pieces of the aviation operational landscape, delivering more real-time, accurate data, is also now a reality and it is transforming business aviation."

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Three Tiers of Sustainability

Specialist provider to the music industry Equinox Charter launched its Enhanced Sustainability Initiative in April, helping clients choose preferred operators based on professionally assessed sustainability criteria

Established in November 2021, Equinox Charter builds on its founders' combined industry experience of more than 100 years to deliver specialist charter and medevac services. Launched alongside travel management company Equinox Travel, Equinox Charter is primarily dedicated to the music and entertainment industries, where agendas are demanding and requirements exact.

Equinox Charter aims to provide bespoke travel for bands, solo artists, agents, tour managers and film production companies, which could mean moving a single performer and one or two assistants between multiple gigs in several countries over the course of a long weekend, or an entire band and entourage between international tour dates. These people typically have complex needs, balancing the discretion and easy travel inherent to business aviation against the need to generate and manage publicity and PR for their work.

From the outset, Equinox Charter Managing Director Elliot Bottomley, and joint CEOs of Equinox (including Charter and Equinox Travel) Ian Patterson and Glen Duckworth, recognised that sustainability ought to be front and centre for any nascent charter organisation; it was therefore high on the company agenda. Since then, plans for a refined sustainability offer have matured and on 13 April 2022, the Equinox Enhanced Sustainability Initiative (EESI) was launched.

Three-tiered assessment

The scheme aims to help clients make informed operator choices and boost their own environmental, social and governance (ESG) credentials through a three-tiered assessment detailing operators' flight operations and sustainability culture.



Equinox's Sustainable Flight Operations Consultant, Douglas Corbett performs the appraisals and manages the scheme. A business jet and airliner flying instructor with music industry experience, he is uniquely qualified to work closely with the company's specialist travel team and aircraft operators.

And that's important, because although the Lower Tier assessment is based on reviewing publicly available material, the Middle and Top Tiers involve Corbett visiting operators and reviewing their sustainability claims and credentials on site. "Everyone I've spoken to in the

Everyone I've spoken to in the private jet world has been very open

private jet world has been very open,” he reports. “They are taking the opportunity to learn from the airlines, where there are procedures the commercial carriers have been using for years to reduce fuel burn or save on materials that private jet operators haven’t seen.”

The operators are therefore on board with the process, yet Corbett is working on behalf of Equinox’s clients rather than them; any operator he finds is not meeting the required sustainability standards is likely to be eliminated from the client’s selection process. The fact that an operator has missed out is unfortunate; the idea they may continue missing out for the same reasons is even more so, in which case, does EESI feed back to unsuccessful operators?

“We’ll never push a client towards using an operator they don’t want to use,” Corbett says, “but where a company otherwise looks good, it’s in everybody’s interest to offer professional, accredited advice as to how they can step up and appeal more to clients.”

Right now, Corbett and Equinox are working hard to educate clients on what

exactly aviation sustainability looks like and how it is achieved – Corbett calls it a long-term plan. Those clients generally have very little industry knowledge, but who exactly are they? “We have artists who want to talk to us directly about it, then management companies, tour managers and publicists. It’s important to our clients that they are flying sustainably, but also that they generate a robust sustainability narrative.”

Equinox Charter’s clients must fly, and they want to do it sustainably. Corbett and Equinox help ensure their messaging on the subject is accurate, helping them engage their audience and wider media interest effectively.

Are there lessons for the wider business and VIP aviation community? “Absolutely,” Corbett says. “It’s about showing business jets really aren’t so bad by explaining key points accessibly, through the right channels. We’re already helping our clients do that, should they choose an operator we suggest.” And that’s good for them, for Equinox, for the aviation industry – and, most importantly, the planet.

Equinox Enhanced Sustainability Initiative Assessment Tiers

Lower Tier: considers a combination of existing carbon mitigation culture, ESG efforts, published technical data and other available third-party information

Middle Tier: includes direct contact with the operator, gathering information against a 100-point matrix and recording technical and non-technical flight operations initiatives

Top Tier: involves a deeper flight operations review with expert analysis and direct flight observations, sustainability line checks, and in-depth evaluation against criteria including culture, ground operations, airmanship and crew training

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Service in the Heart of Europe

ABS Jets provides the highest service standards at airports across the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as Marketing Manager Petr Wessnitzer explains



Petr Wessnitzer
Marketing Manager, ABS Jets

Headquartered at Václav Havel Airport Prague in the Czech Republic, ABS Jets offers a surprisingly broad range of private and VIP aviation services from several Czech and Slovak airports. From its location in central Europe, ABS Jets is working hard on sustainability and quality initiatives – its Prague FBO was the first in Europe to gain IS-BAH Stage III certification – while simultaneously expanding its managed aircraft fleet and client base. Marketing Manager Petr Wessnitzer answered *EVA*'s questions.

ABS Jets offers a comprehensive variety of services, including ground handling and FBO provision. You have FBOs at Václav Havel Airport Prague and MR Stefanik Airport, Bratislava, and offer private aviation ground handling services at many other locations. How does your system work?

We have an FBO in Terminal 3 at our Czech base at Václav Havel Airport Prague and another at MR Stefanik Airport Bratislava, our Slovakian base. We can also provide ground handling at other Czech and Slovak airports, many of which we have audited and certified as delivering the

standards we expect for our clients – ABS Jets' presence is a 100% quality guarantee.

Your Prague FBO is IS-BAH Stage III certified. What does that mean to the ABS Jets team?

Our FBO was the first IS-BAH Stage III-certified facility in Europe. We are very proud of our ground handling team and believe that the commitment to quality and safety values we hold throughout the company were a critical element in the certification. However, our focus remains on improving service delivery and our internal processes, which is why we became the first ground handler at Prague's Terminal 3 to provide electric cars for our clients.

As part of its electric strategy, ABS Jets added the Mercedes-Benz EQV electric van to its fleet in April. How is the vehicle performing in daily service and how do your customers like it?

We were delighted to welcome the electric

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“We deliver all our services in-house thanks to the knowledge and passion of more than 250 dedicated staff”



ABS Jets offers ground handling services at airports across the Czech Republic and Slovakia



The company's expertise extends to maintenance and CAMO

We are delighted to welcome the electric Mercedes-Benz EQV into our client fleet

Mercedes-Benz EQV into our client fleet. We were the first ground handling provider at Prague's Terminal 3 with such a vehicle and we've had lots of positive feedback from our clients and handling agents. Now we are looking forward to the imminent arrival of an electric Lektro aircraft tug and further electric transport options. Sustainability is a key future strategy here at ABS Jets.

You offer aircraft management, maintenance and CAMO (Continuing Airworthiness Management Organisation) among other services. Are these provided alternatively as individual or packaged services?

We offer aircraft management, aircraft maintenance, charter and brokerage,

ground handling, flight planning and dispatching, CAMO, travel management, hangarage and other services. Clients may choose an individual service, but we can provide everything they and their aircraft need. We deliver all our services in-house thanks to the knowledge and passion of more than 250 dedicated staff. Many of our team – our CAMO engineers and maintenance technicians, for example – are among the most expert in Europe.

Are your flight handling and travel management services provided separately to your charter offer, or are they only available when clients charter with you?

These services are available to our clients however they wish to access them. They might use only our travel management services for their holiday, for example, just as we provide travel management for our crews.

The tragic war in Ukraine is on Slovakia's border. Has it caused problems for your business or your customers? Are the international sanctions affecting ABS Jets?

The war is indeed on our doorstep and ABS Jets is respecting all sanctions even though this is not an easy situation. We are pleased to have many clients around the world deeply satisfied with the high service standards we provide. We believe we must be patient and keep doing our very best. Naturally, we are working hard to expand into new markets more quickly than we had previously planned. We are also adding more aircraft to our fleet.

Bratislava is close to Vienna and Budapest, making it a very international location in the centre of Europe. Is this reflected in your business ethos and client base?

Of course. Our locations – Prague and Bratislava – are our big advantage. We are literally based in the heart of Europe and so we are a major provider of business aviation services in Central and Eastern Europe, although we do have clients from other continents too. Our ambitions for the international market are huge and we are looking forward to a bright future based on our continuing ethos of quality and safety.

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Dynamic Shift

Volare Aviation offers the unique possibility of buying an aircraft from stock and flying it away within a day or so, a fact that hints at an enormous capability that has adapted well to the post-Covid market

Since the pandemic, Volare Aviation founder Dustin Dryden says the aircraft it operates are more often 'family aircraft' than business aircraft



Companies offering complete business aviation solutions are not unusual, although the definition of 'completeness' varies between them. The step from being purely an operator to also offering aircraft management is an obvious one. The combination of aircraft sales and

acquisition, management and charter, also makes sense, while maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) sits comfortably alongside cabin refurbishment.

But operators offering a truly complete range of business aviation services are unusual, rare, even unique. The UK's Volare Aviation is an operator and aircraft management provider, with a specialist sales and acquisition department, in-house

MRO and refurbishment facility. It works across the spectrum of fixed-wing business aircraft and has a dedicated helicopter department. And charter, previously a minor part of the business, is now expanding as the company establishes a charter brokerage based on its current fleet of more than 30 aircraft, ranging from the Leonardo AW109 helicopter to a newly available 737 BBJ.



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“Two of the 31 aircraft we manage today were bought for business purposes, the rest are used primarily for moving families and all belong to local owners”



.....

Unique business

Founded at London Oxford Airport in 2013, Volare Aviation has changed and adapted considerably over the past two years in direct response to the Covid pandemic. Owner and chair Dustin Dryden explains: “The business was set up to buy and sell aircraft, which is quite a rarity since most aircraft are traded through brokerages or bought new. But we have a balance sheet that enables us to buy in stock, plus a large maintenance and refurbishment centre, and hangar space in which aircraft sit awaiting buyers. There are maybe only two or three other companies working that way globally and we serve an international market.”

And yet where other companies do buy aircraft into stock, they tend to be opportunistic rather than adopting the strategy as a business model. Dryden and his team show on a daily basis just how successful the model can be, so why has no one else followed their lead? “The main reason is that it requires a huge amount of capital and it’s very difficult to get bank debt because banks just don’t understand aeroplanes. Plus, the engineering and other expertise to understand exactly what

you’re buying is quite sophisticated and not readily available,” he says.

Thinking about how the business looks today, Dryden continues: “Pre-Covid it was unusual for us to sell an aircraft into the UK and very rare for one to stay with us here at Oxford. Covid changed that. It changed how people perceive aviation and how they use it, and that’s been a huge factor in how the business has progressed. Relying on third parties for anything has become extremely complicated too. Rapid logistics for parts shipping just doesn’t exist anymore, for example, so we’ve progressed our supply chain.”

That progression has enabled the business to become more insular, to the point where virtually everything, including engineer training, fixed-wing and rotary AOCs, sales – and soon, charter – is handled in-house. Remarkably, Volare’s full service MRO

capability is available across every manufacturer with the exception only of Dassault. Dryden explains: “It gives us the scope to look at an aircraft, buy it the same day, move it to Oxford, perform MRO on it and then operate it under any of our many approvals.”

Family jets

This gamut of flexible capability helped see Volare through the pandemic and introduced a new type of customer. “To some extent we’ve gone from being a business aircraft operator, with a managed fleet of two jets and two helicopters a couple of years ago, to being a family aircraft operator today, with a managed fleet of 14 Leonardo helicopters and 17 fixed-wing aircraft. We expect the fleet to number 50 aircraft by the end of the year. Two of the 31 aircraft we manage today were bought for business purposes, the



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Above: Volare delivers high-quality cabin refurbishment from its own workshops

Volare recently acquired six AW109 helicopters in a utility/medical evacuation configuration, then worked with Leonardo on a programme of work to convert them for executive/VIP/family use. G-PUBS (top) is the first aircraft off the line

rest are used primarily for moving families and all belong to local owners. Covid has caused a huge, dynamic shift that's driven a lot of first-time buyers. It means we have people coming to us looking to buy aircraft with no knowledge of how to use or operate them."

That naivety over how the industry works has brought challenges that Volare is uniquely equipped to meet. Just as they might with a car or even a home, many new buyers want to view an aircraft, try it and, if they like it, do a deal immediately. Volare can do that because it has a stock of refurbished aircraft ready to go. Dryden continues: "The average time for the traditional process of aircraft acquisition

from first look to entering service is three months, even before refurbishment. We supply refurbished, shiny, good-as-new aircraft with wonderful histories that a customer could, for example, view on Monday, pay for on Tuesday and fly away on Wednesday, because we're an operator too. We've made it a very simple process for the customer and it's been hugely successful."

Volare's jet fleet has the Bombardier Challenger at its core, but also includes Global and Hawker models, while the helicopter operation relies on the AW109, there being considerable cost saving benefits to operating fleets of similar types. That said, the company trades in

many other types, so the Sikorsky S-76 and Leonardo AW139 have passed through its hangar, while a 737 BBJ should have arrived at London Oxford by the time these words are read.

Dryden has a long association with the airport, beginning with gaining his instrument rating and commercial pilot's licence at Oxford as a teenager. "I've been here as a student, an employee, selling Cessnas and Schweizer helicopters, and as a business owner. It's a beautiful area within an hour's drive – 20 minutes in a helicopter – of central London, and we have an excellent relationship with the airport."

In 2021, Volare delivered 21 aircraft, the majority of them having passed through its engineering facility for refurbishment and 80% remaining in the Oxford-based fleet. That so many joined the fleet truly marks a step change in the business as well as signifying growth in staff and infrastructure. At the same time, the charter market has boomed so that demand is overstressing capacity and charter rates have increased. In response, Volare Aviation, with its projected 50-strong fleet, is now busy setting up a dedicated charter sales operation for the first time in its history.

Five Favoured Years

“It seems like only yesterday,” says Head of ACH Frederic Lemos, looking back over the years since Airbus Corporate Helicopters launched at EBACE 2017

Airbus Corporate Helicopters (ACH) celebrates its fifth anniversary at this year’s European Business Aviation Conference and Exhibition (EBACE) event in Geneva. Over the half decade since ACH launched, two EBACE shows were cancelled owing to coronavirus and, through the spectacular machinations of fate at its worst, ACH had the misfortune to bring the superlative ACH130 Aston Martin Edition to market just as the global pandemic struck. They have been a difficult five years.

Nonetheless, ACH has thrived. Under the keen leadership of Frederic Lemos, Head of ACH, the division has come to dominate the corporate and VIP helicopter sector even as external pressures have caused the market to contract. Lemos notes that ACH was responsible for 25% of the 200 corporate/VIP helicopters sold worldwide in 2017 and while slightly fewer than 200 were sold in 2021, ACH was responsible for 68% of them. The market has evolved in ACH’s favour, although its geography remains largely unchanged, as Lemos reports: “80% of our business is in the US, Brazil and Europe, although other areas are opening up, including India.”

Within those markets he says ACH is seeing more younger customers, while the use of helicopters from yachts continues to expand. “Our customers are also using their aircraft on more varied missions. Work, leisure and as a tool during the Covid period, allowing them to travel safely on journeys where they may previously have used a car. Taking a helicopter rather than surface transport is also more secure in regions where personal safety can be an issue.”

According to Lemos, the sweet spot for many ACH customers is 90 minutes – any less and they take the car, any more and they fly fixed-wing. It is worth considering, taking the UK as an example, that 90 minutes in an ACH145 equates to as much as six hours driving.

Last year was ACH’s best ever, with 103 helicopters sold compared to 62 in 2020 and 66 in 2019. It sold examples of every aircraft in its catalogue and Lemos notes a trend of strong sales in the intermediate single category, where ACH took bookings for 30 of the ACH125 and 38 of the ACH130 in 2021; the ACH130 was its bestselling model by some margin.

Frederic Lemos, Head of ACH



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The beautifully finished ACH130 Aston Martin Edition uses materials and craftsmanship from the car maker's vehicles

Interest in the ACH130 has been helped along by the ACH130 Aston Martin Edition, subject of a late 2019 media preview in London and formally launched the following January. It has sold surprisingly well, especially since its availability has so far been almost entirely within the pandemic period. Lemos reports that 14 Aston Martin Editions had been ordered and six delivered by late April 2022, totals he had expected to reach only three years after product launch.

The Aston Martin Edition has proven popular in Australasia, where half the aircraft so far ordered have been sold and especially so in New Zealand, with five aircraft booked. Lemos confirms that the model has been responsible for lively interest in the ACH130 in general and enthuses: "We'll be showing the ACH130 Aston Martin Edition on our EBACE booth, together with an Aston Martin car."

Light twin favourite

Moving up the range to light twin-engined helicopters, the evergreen ACH135 booked nine orders in 2021, while the ACH145 managed 13, despite the US\$3 million or so differential in price between the baseline

models. The larger aircraft's healthy sales are due in part to the upgraded D-3 model, most obviously equipped with a new five-bladed rotor that brings a noticeable improvement in ride quality and improves the helicopter's payload.

The ACH145 has also continued to build on its already strong following among yacht owners, where twin-engine safety and reduced maintenance requirements are highly prized. The ACH145 is protected against corrosion as standard and other than regular washing with fresh water in accordance with the maintenance manual, the aircraft typically requires nothing more complex than daily checks for several months at sea. It therefore allows owners to embark their helicopter for extended periods without worrying about finding an authorised MRO. It also offers the smallest footprint of any eight-passenger capable helicopter, enabling it to land virtually anywhere, a capability further prized by the increasing number of ACH customers using their yachts as bases for adventure travel.

Its reliability, smooth ride and comprehensive Helionix avionics suite are probably enough to keep the ACH145 ahead

in the growing market to replace older helicopters in the light-twin segment, but ACH plans to tempt buyers further with a facelift of its popular ACH145 Mercedes-Benz Style, expected in 2023. A five-bladed ACH145 will be available for customer demonstration at May's EBACE event, albeit operating from nearby Archamps.

The new twin

Lemos is particularly excited by the medium-twin ACH160. The H160's service entry has been delayed a little by Covid-19, in particular its FAA certification, which is now due this year along with first delivery, although the type already has EASA certification and the ACH160 STC has been granted. A commercial H160 is now operational in Japan and ACH160 deliveries are imminent. Meanwhile, the French government has ordered 169 H160M helicopters to replace five different types in military service, with first delivery expected in 2026. The H160M differs significantly from the basic H160, but with three models in production, the Marignane line is going to be busy.

Might it be so occupied with H160M production that ACH160 slots are difficult

'Arrive Anywhere' is the ACH motto. In this case, arrival was by ACH130



This five-bladed ACH145 Mercedes Benz Style is equipped for yacht flying

to secure? Lemos says not. “A production ramp-up had already been planned and, clearly, ACH requires relatively few aircraft. A portion of production has already been assigned to us while the differences between the ACH160 Exclusive specification and H160 or H160M mean those aircraft must be identified on the line at the beginning of production. I think the H160M order represents an opportunity for ACH because of the accelerated production ramp-up, which will accelerate the programme. And the military will fly more than our clients and we’ll see benefits from software updates and other developments more quickly as a result.”

In *EVA’s* Spring 2020 edition, Benoit Defforge, President of Airbus Corporate Jets, revealed his passion for the ACJ220 as a game-changing business/VIP jet and it is interesting to hear Lemos enthusing over how the aircraft is likely to change the relationship between ACH and ACJ. The latter celebrates its tenth anniversary this year.

Lemos notes that ACJ’s customers have always been potential ACH buyers, but only those customers for the larger end of the ACH offering – the ACH175 for example – have likely been ACJ patrons. With the ACJ220 exposing customers in a new price bracket to Airbus’ premium brands, Lemos expects to see some looking beyond the jet to what ACH has to offer.

Looking ahead, there’s every reason to believe that ACH will continue its dominance of the VIP/corporate

helicopter market. The wider Airbus Helicopters entity is focused very much on the future, with multiple technologies under investigation alongside the inevitable eVTOL development. Airbus products are already among the quietest helicopters available, thanks to advanced rotor technologies and the fenestron anti-torque system employed on all ACH models except the ACH125 and ACH175.

As work continues to determine how eVTOLs will integrate into urban infrastructure there is every likelihood that quiet, efficient helicopters will find new favour, offering capability that has been available for decades but restricted due to noise and safety concerns. In this scenario, a quiet turbine-engined helicopter, burning sustainable aviation fuel, responsibly operated and equipped with the latest safety systems becomes a compelling choice for those seeking practical, real-world urban mobility.

Indeed, Airbus Helicopters is developing new safety and control

technologies with equal application to eVTOL and rotary-wing platforms such that we can expect a revolution in helicopter capability even beyond today’s high standards. The company is already working towards hybrid propulsion with an electric motor capable of turning the rotors in the event of engine failure, while electro-optical navigation aids, rotor strike warning systems and eVTOL flight control developments all promise to ease pilot workloads, making helicopter flying more intuitive and even safer than it has already become.

Airbus Helicopters is well placed to take a leading role in both future helicopter technological development and eVTOL operations. Airbus Corporate Helicopters may be a small component within that larger segment, but it sold more than 100 aircraft last year and its unique combination of luxury, quality and technology surely mean ACH has more record-breaking years to come.

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