

Britten-Norman Flies First Islander Built in the UK

UNITED KINGDOM, September 4, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The first Islander whose airframe has been assembled in the UK from detail component level completed its first flight. For operators, the significant part is what sits behind it on the line

Britten-Norman's first Islander assembled in the United Kingdom from detail component level completed its first flight from Bembridge Airport, Isle of Wight, at 14:25 on Thursday 3 September, and has entered its flight test programme.

For operators evaluating the Islander, the first flight matters because of what it proves about supply. Britten-Norman

now builds the complete airframe at Bembridge from detail component level, under its own production control, in place of receiving major sub-assemblies for final assembly. A second airframe is progressing through the same line, components for the aircraft behind it are on order, and the company is working to a continuous production cadence with a strategic ambition of eight aircraft a year. Britten-Norman is the UK's only civil A2 approved aircraft manufacturer.

Assembling the airframe at Bembridge gives Britten-Norman direct control of the build sequence, the tooling and the quality gates, and removes a road movement of major sub-assemblies across Europe from the middle of every aircraft. Both bear directly on on-time delivery, and both allow customer specification to be built in during assembly rather than fitted afterwards.

Approximately 350 Islanders are in service across more than 70 countries and six continents, and the fleet has flown around 20 million hours. Twin engine configuration with single engine inoperative capability, Lycoming O-540 and IO-540 powerplants and Hartzell variable pitch



The first fully UK-built BN2B-26 Islander first flight

propellers are all long-established across that fleet, supported by a worldwide parts and maintenance network and by CAA, EASA and MoD design approvals. An operator taking a new Islander is taking an aircraft whose behaviour on a short wet strip is already documented across 350 aircraft and 20 million flying hours.

The line is being staffed for the ramp as well as tooled for it. Bembridge has assembled Islanders at more than 30 aircraft a year, and the people who did that work are training the people who will do it again. Peter Dowers, who joined as a fitter in September 1978 and completed his 500th Islander with 2317, has spent this year passing on airframe build to the shop alongside fit out. Callum Trueman, who began his apprenticeship mentored by Mr Dowers in 2006, is now a Production Manager at Bembridge.

Trueman said, 'Being an apprentice under Pete's leadership, I learnt a lot from him and now the whole team have had to learn and engineer this aircraft pulling on Pete's knowledge, which going forward will help us create a quality product at rate. This aircraft is Pete's 500th and my first, and the next one is already on the line.'

The aircraft is destined for the Falkland Islands Government Air Service and will move into the final stages of its programme on completion of flight test.

Richard Milne, Chief Operating Officer at Britten-Norman, said, 'Operators want to know two things. Will the aircraft do the job, and will it arrive when we said it would. The first has been settled for a long time. Assembling the airframe here is how we settle the second, because it puts the sequence, the tooling and the quality standard in our own hands.'

Britten-Norman is opening the Bembridge production line to operators and to media. Enquiries about production slots and specification should be directed to the sales team.

ENDS

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Aircraft serial 2317 is a BN2B-26 Islander was rolled out at Bembridge on 30 July 2026. On delivery it will be the 1,254th Islander.

BN2B-26 performance. Take-off ground roll 621 ft, 189 m, and 1,218 ft, 371 m, to clear 50 ft. Landing ground roll 459 ft, 140 m, and 980 ft, 299 m, to clear 50 ft. Rate of climb 860 ft per minute, 145 ft per minute one engine inoperative. Maximum cruise 142 kt, economical cruise 126 kt. Range 539 nm IFR and 675 nm VFR. MTOW 6,600 lb, 2,994 kg. Payload with maximum fuel 1,706 lb, 774 kg, without tip tanks. Disposable load 2,486 lb, 1,128 kg. Twin Lycoming piston 260

hp. Extended range tip tanks and auxiliary tanks are available.

Islander production history. The prototype and the first production aircraft were built at Bembridge, with early sub-contract work at Cowes. From 1968 airframe manufacture was sub-contracted to IRMA Bucharest, later Romaero, and complete airframes were brought to the Isle of Wight for fit out, customisation and certification. That arrangement ran until 2009, when it moved to major sub-assemblies transported to Bembridge by road for final assembly. Aircraft 2317 is the first Islander whose airframe has been assembled in the UK from detail component level. The Islander was designed in the UK and has been type certificated and production controlled in the UK throughout. There was also parallel manufacture at Fairey's Gosselies facility in Belgium from 1972 to 1978 and licence production by the Philippine Aerospace Development Corporation from 1975 to 1995.

Britten-Norman has invested in tooling and facilities and has grown from around 100 people in 2024 to around 180 today. Plans to bring Islander assembly back to the UK were developed in 2017 and the programme was formally launched in 2023.

Production slot and specification enquiries: sales@britten-norman.com

ABOUT BRITTEN-NORMAN

Britten-Norman is a UK based aircraft manufacturer and a global leader in subregional aviation, best known for the Islander, a rugged twin engine Short Take Off and Landing (STOL) aircraft. Founded in 1954 by John Britten and Desmond Norman, Britten-Norman is the UK's only civil A2 approved aircraft manufacturer. The company designs, manufactures and supports the Islander and Defender aircraft families from Bembridge, Isle of Wight, providing through life support to operators worldwide. Approximately 350 Islanders remain in service across more than 70 countries and six continents, having flown around 20 million hours between them.

For more information about Britten-Norman, visit www.britten-norman.com. For media enquiries, please contact: pr@britten-norman.com

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