Bristol Aerospace Centre takes off

28/05/2013

Bristol Aerospace Centre will be located on a site on Filton Airfield including two World War One listed hangars which will be fully refurbished to provide a first class heritage museum, learning suites, archives and workshops. On the same site a major new building will create a permanent home for Concorde along with a technology learning centre.

The project will bring together the Bristol Aero Collection with a number of other important collections of artefacts and archives which tell the stories of the aerospace industry, its people and achievements since 1910 when Bristol entrepreneur Sir George White established the British and Colonial (later, Bristol) Aeroplane Company.

Development funding of £243,600 has been awarded to help Bristol Aero Collection Trust progress their plans. The project will include extensive opportunities for people to get involved as volunteers and to learn new skills such as the restoration of artefacts, historical research, tour guiding and customer services.

As well as encouraging people to learn more about the heritage, a major aim of the project is to inspire the next generation of engineers, innovators and entrepreneurs. The Bristol Aerospace Centre will be working in partnership with local schools, colleges and universities to provide a programme of learning, ranging from science and engineering to geography and local history.

The project will also provide an important focal point for the local community with facilities such as meeting places, outdoor play areas and event spaces.

The total cost of the project is £13.5million. The project will conserve a part of Filton Airfield, along with the two listed hangars which date back to World War One and have been described by English Heritage as ‘the most complete of any in existence’ and as ‘a rare surviving example’.

The collections, many of which will be made accessible to the public for the first time, include thousands of important objects and nationally-significant archives which trace over 100 years of aviations history and the massive contribution made by the aerospace industry.

Concorde was largely designed and built at Filton, with the first British flight taking off in 1969 and the final supersonic flight of any Concorde in the world landing at the airfield in 2003.

Lloyd Burnell, Project Director of the trust, said: “We’re delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us this support. The Bristol Aerospace Centre at Filton will provide enormous opportunities for people to learn about our industrial aviation heritage and social history, as well as encouraging people to get involved through volunteering and the development of new skills. It is great to know that we are a major step closer towards meeting our ambitions.”

Nerys Watts, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South West, said: “Bristol has a unique aviation history and this is the perfect opportunity to reconnect the community and wider public with the important story of the aircraft that were developed here and the people that created them. The Heritage Lottery Fund is pleased to be able to offer its initial support for this project and will be working closely with Bristol Aero Collection as they develop their plans further.”

Notes to editors

The Bristol Aero Collection was formed in 1988 by a group of like-minded individuals, all passionate about aviation heritage at Filton. The group was publicly launched in June 1990, and in November 1992, became a registered charity.

Until its closure in May 2011, volunteers ran a museum on Kemble Airfield and, until Concorde was withdrawn from public access to complete essential restoration works, a volunteer team ran guided tours from the Concorde at Filton Visitor Centre.

For many years, the Bristol Aero Collection has been formulating plans to build an aviation heritage museum and learning centre in the Filton area and, in May 2012, merged with the Concorde Trust to realise its ambition.

Following the closure of Kemble Museum, the Bristol Aero Collection has been relocated and is currently being held in storage in Filton.

The project has already received pledges of over £4 million from BAE Systems, Airbus and Rolls-Royce and Bristol Aero Collection Trust is working in partnership with industry and education to develop its plans.The site on Filton Airfield has been pledged by BAE Systems. The project has been fully supported by Jack Lopresti, MP for Bradley and Filton, and by South Gloucestershire Council.

British Airways has selected the Bristol Aero Collection Trust as its preferred bidder to take over the lease of Concorde 216 from Airbus UK on completion of the Bristol Aerospace Centre.

Further information

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