New Airbus A320 wing facility

BRISTOL

British Aerospace Bristol will shortly put out to tender the building of a large new production centre to house the equipping, completion, and testing of Airbus A320 wings. The facility is expected to cost over £4.5 million, and must be fully operational by October 1986.

As a full Airbus partner with France, Germany, and Spain, British Aerospace is responsible for the design and building of wings for the consortium's family of airliners. The 150-seat A320 will enter airline service in 1988.

Partly completed A320 wing structures, transported from the Chester factory of British Aerospace, will pass down a seven stage production line in the new facility before being flown complete and fully tested in a Super Guppy freighter to the Airbus final assembly plant in Toulouse.

Built to the most modern standards, and with a high level of insulation to minimise heating costs, the new building will contain a total usable floor area of 96,000ft².

Alongside the production floor will be a two-tier stores building, an automated electrical wiring loom manufacture area, and supporting workshops for electricians and coppersmiths. The close proximity of these support services is expected to make a major contribution to manufacturing efficiency.

Electrical, hydraulic, and compressed-air supplies will be fed from under the floor to provide an unobstructed main production area of some 350ft by 150ft. Cranes will lift complete Airbus A320 wings, and hover pallets will shift assemblies down the production line.

Although required as an Airbus wing equipping centre for the foreseeable future, the building has been designed to be capable of accommodating other work should the need arise. A usable height within the production area of 35ft would allow complete smaller aircraft to be housed.

The first flight of the A320 will be in March 1987, with the start of airline services one year later. To meet this timetable the manufacture of wing components and sub-assemblies is already well advanced at a number of British Aerospace factories.

The first wing-box will move from Chester to Filton in December, and completion of early pairs of wings will be undertaken in another of the site's assembly areas until the new building is ready. Production is expected to build up to 66 aircraft a year by the early 1990s to meet demand.

The front fuselage section of the first A320 has just been delivered by Aerospatiale Nantes to Aerospatiale St Nazaire. Part of the centre section will shortly leave that factory for MBB Hamburg.

This special facility for Airbus A320 wing assembly is being built at Bristol. See story

**MUST READ**

The market for transducers is set to double by 1989 to $819 million a year, according to a new report by Frost & Sullivan of New York "Optical, Fibre Optic, and Biomedical Transducers". The market for optical transducers reached $140 million in 1984, and is expected to total $320 million by 1989. The report is available price $1,575 from Frost & Sullivan, 106 Fulton Street, New York, NY 10038, USA, tel (212) 233 1080; or in Europe, Frost & Sullivan, 104 Marylebone Lane, London W1M 5PU, England; tel 01-486 8377/8379.

**WHAT'S HAPPENING**

The International Federation of Airworthiness will discuss structures maintenance and airborne software at its Amsterdam Conference, November 4-6. The conference is being arranged with the support of Fokker (Frits M. van der Jagt, Fokker Corporate Office, PO Box 12222, 1100 AE Amsterdam-Zuidoost, Holland; tel 020 564 9111).

Key Supporting shops co-located (e.g. Electrics/Coppersmiths)

Fully automated stores (computer controlled storage, retrieval and line feed system.)

Mobile counter balance manipulators to handle components such as flaps.

Floor area (ft²) (incl. Support Facility) 96,000

Span (ft) 150

Length (ft) 350

Height-Usable (ft) 35

Wing root reference jig

Production centre management area

Wing boxes from Chester

Wing carrier units with built-in air-pallets

Site plan showing existing aircraft assembly facilities and location of A320 Wing Assembly Area