

The 'UK Youth Build-a-Plane' Project



The 'UK Youth Build-a-Plane' Project is one of a number of educational initiatives developed by the Youth & Education Support Strut.

The programme aims to develop practical aviation skills and knowledge in an audience of young people from all over the UK, with the help of the local PFA groups.



THE PAST



The 'UK Youth Build a Plane Project' was developed from an idea by Captain Stewart Luck, a professional airline pilot and a member of the Executive Committee of the Popular Flying Association (now the Light Aircraft Association, LAA), the representative body responsible in the United Kingdom for amateur aircraft construction, recreational and sport flying.

The project was designed for young people from 11 to 18 years old to become involved practically in the 'Centennial of Powered Flight' in 2003 by building a RANS S6 kit aircraft. This was built in sections, by young people at Lisburn in Northern Ireland, Mold in Wales, Perth in Scotland and Manchester in England under the qualified supervision of LAA (formerly PFA) engineering inspectors as part of this nationwide community project.

To ensure the success of this potential logistical nightmare, the UK Distributor of the RANS S6 aircraft, Gordon McDill of Sports Air UK Ltd, divided the aircraft kit into 4 parts and issued a step-by-step project construction manual per build team, before shipping them to the respective teams, under the tutelage and supervision of their leaders and local PFA Inspectors.

Of course getting the continued focus of the young people was a challenge – with schoolwork, exams and family commitments – but they proved themselves worthy of the project.



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The aircraft was completed by the members of the various youth teams, with the aircraft sections coming together and being assembled in the NW of England. The aircraft was inspected to ensure it conformed to the engineering regulations, certificated for flight and finally flown in the summer of 2005.



Since then the aircraft has been displayed and flown at various youth and public events as an example of what the young can achieve, and has now been seen by tens of thousands of young people at the selected events and venues throughout the UK. The aircraft stands as a focus for them to appreciate scientific and engineering principles, and as an information point for aviation sports and careers.

THE PRESENT



With the registration of G-TSOB (The Spirit of Brooklands), the RANS S6 of the UK Youth Build-a-Plane has been issued with its 'Permit to Fly' by the PFA (now LAA), and retains its links with the Brooklands Museum, where it is a frequent visitor when it is not out-and-about at events or educational activities with schools and youth groups.



The aircraft is transported from event to event in a mobile 'hangar', a converted airport terminal shuttle bus which doubles up as an activity base. The bus is fitted out with materials and support for various educational activities, allowing it to be used as a mobile classroom.

This was made possible by a generous donation from BAA Stansted.



The plane will be seen this year by many more young and influential people at various events in the UK and perhaps also overseas. With a series of associated hands-on workshops that come with the aircraft, the project's 'aviation-based educational package' is an exciting and unique proposition to be used by those organisations and events wanting to inspire the younger generation.

It's an ideal way to get their local communities 'on-side'.



People and markets always respond positively to organisations that are prepared to 'put something back' into the community in which they live. Sponsorship of this project is arguably the clearest demonstration any organisation can make of its commitment to the future of young people, not only in the United Kingdom but, as it has proven in the life of the project so far, overseas as well.

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The plane has been flying for a few years now, and many youngsters including the original builders have experienced one or more flights in it.

We aim to attract people in secondary education or youth organisations, motivate their interest in aviation in general, then nurture their aspirations to gain practical skills and experience for a future career, which might well be aviation related.



THE FUTURE

Already this exciting and innovative aviation outreach initiative has attracted sponsorship from a private individual, who has supported a second aircraft, which has been built in Devon by Scouts and Air Cadets, and has now been seen at many events in Devon and further afield. This aircraft, an x-Air Hawk, is already flying youngsters.

Two further aircraft kits have been purchased by Boeing UK, and are being built in schools in Hampshire and Gloucestershire. A further two kits will be allocated in 2010, making a total fleet of 6 aircraft. The aim is to turn the projects into a mini business, with the skills including the marketing being an important component, so a succession of youngsters learn the skills and the pleasure of constructing these aircraft.



By inviting the 'UK Youth Build-a-Plane Project' team to appear at various Fly-Ins, Air shows, Corporate and other Events we team up to publicise in advance both the project and the event. On the day, the static and flying display are hands-on activities, in which young and old people (as shown in our photos) participate and interact; it's not forced, it's spontaneous enjoyment.

Stewart Luck, the primary trustee of the 'UK Youth Build-a-Plane Project' commented, "Sponsorship will allow us to deliver a new experience to the young. OUR COCKPIT DOOR REMAINS OPEN EVEN IN FLIGHT SO WE CAN TALK TO THE AUDIENCE! Some of the youngsters may never have been in or near an aircraft before, and for them it will be a real adventure, while for others it will be a chance to develop an existing interest or maybe a career."

"It is important to realise that the project is there for 'connecting' with young people – and we need grants and sponsors to continue carrying out the various planned activities throughout 2010 and beyond", commented Chris Shaw, Educational Advisor to the project. "Of course we have our core team of LAA Youth & Education Strut volunteers, who travel the length and breadth of the UK to deliver an exciting aviation experience to the youngsters, but we do need urgent funds to cover our costs and educational materials", he said.

Further funding will allow additional aircraft build / group-operated flying projects – similar to G-TSOB. In these "partnerships", members of the Air Cadets and Scouts Youth organisations as well as Schools work together, bonding leaders, youngsters, team members and supporters alike.

If you can offer support or sponsorship for this worthwhile project, please e-mail plane@flyers.org.uk or write to Captain Stewart Luck at LAA, Turweston Aerodrome, Nr Brackley, Northants, NN13 5YD. Phone 01280-846786.

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Background Information

What is the UK Youth Build-a-Plane Project?

The 'UK Youth Build a Plane Project' is a focus for a partnership of supporting organisations, led by the Youth & Education Support Strut of the LAA. It delivers a range of focused educational activities in the youth and education sectors, based on aviation. Although a leisure activity, the skills learnt will be equally valuable in later life.

For more information on the work of the LAA and its Youth & Education Strut visit the website at www.flyers.org.uk where information on this exciting project can be found. Remember that it PROMOTES and encourages AIRMINDEDNESS for Young People and supports Educators in a wide variety of subject and disciplines.

This project provides a PRACTICAL showcase of what Young People can achieve and invites them to focus and get INVOLVED.

'UK Youth Build-A-Plane Project' Aims:

- To promote air-mindedness in young people by delivering a hands-on aviation experience through a wide variety of methods.
- To motivate young people in the areas of science, technology, design and engineering.
- To develop the technological problem-solving ability of young people.
- To provide ideas for project work for Educators/Teachers and Youth Leaders.
- To promote and deliver a range of aviation related activities available to Schools and Youth Groups as part of their respective curriculums.
- To encourage young people's awareness of the importance of the aviation / aerospace industries and of the wide array of related careers choices.
- To provide opportunities for aeronautical engineers to work as mentors with Schools and Youth Groups.
- To promote a community interest and appreciation of aviation related matters



The Rans S6 on static display with the big boys at Farnborough 2006



The Scottish build team with their wing

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