



Auckland Heliport wins NZ Architecture Award

The developers and operators of Auckland Heliport at Onehunga, Advanced Flight Limited, have won one of two 2011 Commercial Architecture prizes awarded by the New Zealand Institute of Architects at their annual ceremony during April. KiwiFlyer paid them a visit just after the award was announced.

MANAGING Director of Advanced Flight, Keith Stephens says they are delighted to have received the award in conjunction with architect Bodie Maxcey of Maxcey Architects. Keith explains that they had several specific ideas about the layout and functional requirements of the building, primarily wanting something that was welcoming to clients, that didn't require aircraft to be moved around, and that reflected the quality of their overall helicopter management and charter operation. There's no doubt that the building answers all of these requirements and achieves much more besides.

Now located on Ports of Auckland land at the old Pike's Point airfield site in Onehunga, Keith shifted the company from shared and outgrown facilities at Ardmore last year. Aside from the opportunity to develop a purpose built facility, the move also facilitated significant cost savings for the owners of aircraft managed by Advanced Flight. As much as 10% of annual flying time was being consumed by "dead leg" ferry time from Ardmore to Auckland as the owners tended not to travel to Ardmore in order to board their aircraft. The new facility is now much more conveniently located between Auckland Airport and the central city.

Inside Auckland Heliport

The award won't come as a surprise to anybody who has visited the facility which exudes quality of purpose, is spacious, light, and welcoming. Long and narrow in order that aircraft are stored only one deep in the hangar, the facility showcases the aircraft it contains and deliberately avoids a formal reception area. Keith explains that located as they are (which is not really in a public place), they tend not to have "walk-in" customers. He says they normally will know who and when anyone is arriving and prefer to be able to meet visitors at the door and invite them into the building as a guest, who then shares the same facilities – lunchroom, lounge, offices, etc. – as they do themselves.

The facility has a very pleasant sense of space to it and is flooded with natural light. Office areas are deliberately open plan and un-partitioned. Nearly all spaces offer a view into the hangar area and with some \$20m of near new aircraft domiciled there, it is a view that any aviation enthusiast will well appreciate.

About Advanced Flight

Keith formed Advanced Flight and obtained an Air Operators Certificate in 1998 when the owners of the Bell 407 he was flying left to spend an extended period of time overseas. In 2000, he leased a second aircraft to cater for America's Cup charter work – and this became the second private helicopter to be managed by Advanced Flight. A few years later, two became three. Then, around

2004, the total jumped to six. Today the company manages nine aircraft on behalf of private owners. Advanced Flight offer a complete managed service consisting of procurement and importing, aircraft care, maintenance, group insurance, charter operations, and aircraft sales.

Advanced Flight's focus is thus to serve the requirements of its helicopter owning customers. Charter work is undertaken via lease back arrangements with owners but is not aggressively marketed. This side of the business has built up mainly through word of mouth and referrals due to the company offering a highly professional flight experience in near new and well maintained aircraft.

The company has a very low pilot turnover (there are six on staff) and regular customers soon get to know the team. All pilots have a minimum 3000 hours experience and they and the company are all accident free.

Keith says that in some ways their flying operations contain little variety, as they don't undertake the utility operations that fully commercial operators do. However, a lot of their charter work goes beyond the norm of traditional short scenic or transport flights. Many New Zealand tours have been undertaken as owners use their aircraft for personal holiday transport. And Keith has travelled to Australia twice to perform the same task there. He also helped to ferry a new EC130 from London to Auckland when the owner (and PPL pilot) elected to pick

up his new aircraft in Europe and fly it home. Several of the owners are licensed pilots, some preferring to fly themselves - but often with an Advanced Flight 'safety pilot' on board with them.

The nature of their fleet, operation, and reputation for discretion also make Advanced Flight a popular choice for visiting sports and rock stars, as well as other dignitaries.

Already near to capacity, it likely won't be long before Keith and architect Bodie Maxcey begin plans to expand the facility further.

For more information

Contact Keith Stephens at Advanced Flight on 09 636 0509, email: fly@advancedflight.co.nz or visit www.advancedflight.co.nz



Auckland Heliport at Onehunga is an outstanding facility developed by Advanced Flight Limited and is well deserving of the national architectural recognition it has now received.



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