

Stalham 2019 EAAA visit

A 20-strong group of members and guests of Stalham Farmers' Club had a fascinating behind-the-scenes visit to the East Anglian Air Ambulance headquarters at Norwich Airport.

As the charity prepares to launch 24/7 operations in autumn 2020, members were briefed on what has been a record year by chief executive Patrick Peal. An amazing £14.4m in donations funded this vital work as a total of almost 1,800 missions were flown last year. Norfolk topped the list with 1,234, Suffolk 473 and Cambridgeshire 466 missions. In addition, there were 1,023 specialist road responses by the dedicated medical team.

Mr Peal said that the EAAA would need to raise £13m a year to operate a full 24/7 service from late 2020. The Cambridge-based helicopter has just extended its hour to provide cover from 7am until 1.30am.

However, the proposed phased expansion will help to provide crucial extra cover. It is estimated that there would be a 20 to 22pc increase in mission capability for an 8 to 10pc increase in costs.

Plans have been submitted to Norwich City Council for a major expansion of the current headquarters, which will allow all operations to be brought together on a single site. The £6.5m scheme will also include investment in new hangers, training and patient after-care facilities. These plans are likely to be discussed early next month.

At present, the charity's 75 staff are split between different locations around Norwich airport.

Since the EAAA launched its first aid training programme in June 2018 led by critical care paramedic Mark Milsom, it has held courses for more than 2,500 people in basic life saving skills. Groups receiving this basic training have included young farmers, Countrysiders and Women's Institutes.

With cardiac arrest accounting for more than a third of call-outs, practical on-the-stop CPR or heart/ chest massage can dramatically boost survival rates. Sir William Cubitt, chairman, said that almost every YFC group in East Anglia had taken up this training opportunity. And from September 2020, secondary schools will be required to give basic CPR lessons as part of the National Curriculum.

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