

## **Phase 1 at Daedalus Waterfront takes off**

### **Blanchard Wells brings jobs and opportunity to Daedalus Waterfront**

#### **with a new state of the art manufacturing facility**

*Local engineering and manufacturing business Blanchard Wells are investing in the first phase of Daedalus Waterfront, buying a major first plot in order to self-deliver a new enhanced manufacturing facility, enabling 200 new jobs in the region, including apprenticeships with the nearby Civil Engineering Training Centre (CETC), helping Patron Daedalus to deliver their vision for this important 42-acre mixed-use waterfront development.*

- Blanchard Wells, who deliver civil engineering and concrete frame projects across the South of England and are celebrating 25 years in business, will be building a new enhanced manufacturing facility at the North of the site, next to the airfield.
- This announcement marks the first step towards delivering the vision for Daedalus Waterfront and the Development Company's objectives for the project; first, to bring jobs and opportunity to the area, second to preserve historic buildings and celebrate the site's significant history and third, to support the Hovercraft Museum and nurture it as a successful destination – all of which will ultimately restore this community's pride in HMS Daedalus.
- By early 2027 this new facility will feature a state-of-the-art Technology Centre, dedicated to manufacturing precast lift cores, stairs, and columns using market-leading reduced carbon concrete. This cutting-edge facility has already sparked interest from key industry and government bodies and will position Blanchard Wells at the forefront of Modern Methods of Construction in the Southern Region.
- Following that, Blanchard Wells intend to launch a Construction Hub—an inspiring office space that will bring together our Blanchard Wells professional teams with local design and construction specialists including structural engineers, architects, thermal modelers, highways experts, landscape designers, and sea defense consultants. They also plan to support local start-ups through the creation of a Construction Hub Network, which Blanchard Wells will lead.
- Blanchard Wells have already helped to establish and run training through nearby CETC, an Award-winning and state-of-the-art training facility providing a fully operational and realistic groundworks and civil engineering training environment.
- The first, commercial phase of Daedalus Waterfront is called The Sir Douglas Evill Enterprise Zone, named after the first commandant of RNAS Lee-on-the-Solent, who played a key role in the Battle of Britain. Blanchard Wells has purchased Phase 1a, adjacent to the airport and control tower, and will be submitting a new planning application, in partnership with Daedalus Waterfront, to bring forward this new facility.
- Other phases of this historic site will see barracks restored and converted into modern, mixed-tenure housing, and the Hovercraft Museum, home to the largest collection of hovercraft in the world, reinvented to become a world-class visitor attraction. The project is estimated to bring, in total, 240 full-time job opportunities to Daedalus Waterfront on completion, and the Blanchard Wells partnership will contribute to this total.



Blanchard Wells and Patron Daedalus Ltd are delighted to announce a partnership to deliver the first phase of the Daedalus Waterfront project, kick starting the project and delivering on our vision to create jobs and opportunities for the area first. Phase 1a remains part of Daedalus Waterfront and delivers on the original vision.

Blanchard Wells is a Local business with strong connections to the local community, with Mark Wells, owner and Chairman of Blanchard Wells, having grown up in Stubbington. Mark is also Chairman of the Solent Civil Engineering Employers Group and established the Civil Engineering Training Centre (CETC) in 2017, creating a unique Apprenticeship training programme that would address the country-wide skills shortage, support the construction industry across the region and create more jobs and opportunities for skilled groundworkers.

CETC is a state-of-the-art training centre, designed to provide a fully operational, realistic groundworks and civil engineering training environment and is fully equipped with the machinery, tools, materials and resources needed to ensure all apprentices develop work-ready skills and complete the relevant licenses needed to work successfully on-site. Blanchard Wells frequently visit the campus to support training, mentor apprentices and maintain the strong industry connections that the training scheme is renowned for.

### **About Daedalus Waterfront**

The landmark regeneration scheme has been put forward by a joint venture between Patron Capital, MurrayTwohig Developments, and Orwell Real Estate, who were selected by Homes England as development partners for the site last year. Their proposals will boost the local economy through the creation of new commercial and leisure sector jobs, provide much needed housing, protect and reinvigorate the various historic and listed assets, and secure the future of the largest collection of hovercraft in the world in The Hovercraft Museum.

In recent years the site has been largely dilapidated and forgotten, with the important historic assets awaiting viable reuse. The Daedalus Development Company has a clear vision to bring jobs and opportunity to the area, preserve historic buildings and celebrate the site's significant history, support the Hovercraft Museum and nurture it as a successful destination, ultimately restoring community pride in HMS Daedalus. This new transformational masterplan, designed by acme architects, will see a targeted, industrial innovation strategy implemented through the delivery of commercial space link to a thriving visitor attraction at The Hovercraft Museum. The proposals include:

- 24,500sqm of new, modern employment and industrial space.

- 5,200sqm of commercial space for new businesses and jobs in the Solent Enterprise Zone.
- 346 new mixed-tenure homes, 76 of which will be refurbishments of the existing heritage buildings including the historic barracks square.
- New community services and facilities, including a public park.
- A world-class visitor attraction at Seaplane Square and The Hovercraft Museum.

**A site of extraordinary historical significance**

Established as a seaplane base in 1917 during WW1, HMS Daedalus went on to play an important role in WW2 as the busiest airfield during D-Day and as a base for the US Navy's spitfires. The site was the founding base of the Fleet Air Arm and was the home of UK Coastal Command. In 1962 the Joint Service Hovercraft Unit was formed with the aim of testing hovercraft in an operational military environment, and the base was also the home of the Naval Air Engineering School. During all of this time, it was the beating heart of Lee-on-the-Solent, providing jobs, income, pride and energy to an entire community.

More information at [www.daedaluswaterfront.co.uk](http://www.daedaluswaterfront.co.uk)

**David Twohig co-founder of MurrayTwohig Development and CEO of Daedalus Development Company said:** *"This investment by Blanchard Wells in the regeneration of Daedalus Waterfront is the best possible start to the project; bringing advanced manufacturing, new jobs and an active partner in to help kick off the initial commercial phases of the project, helping us deliver on our commitment of this being a jobs and opportunity-led scheme"*

**Mark Wells, Chairman of Blanchard Wells said:** *"As we celebrate 25 years of trading, it's only fitting that we mark this milestone with a bold step into the future. This site marks a major investment in our future and will be developed in three carefully planned phases, in keeping with the historic design principles of the wider Daedalus Waterfront scheme. We're proud to name it The Sir Douglas Evill Enterprise Zone, in honour of the Air Chief Marshal who oversaw HMS Daedalus and played a key role in the Battle of Britain. This landmark project will create exciting new opportunities within our team and over 200 new jobs in the region, including apprenticeships in collaboration with the nearby Civil Engineering Training Centre (CETC)".*

**Kevin Cooke, Senior Partner at Patron Capital said:** *"Patron Daedalus Ltd welcomes Blanchard Wells as the first partner to recognise the attractiveness of Daedalus Waterfront, we look forward to investing in the future of Lee-on-the-Solent together."*

**ENDS**

16<sup>th</sup> April 2025

**Notes to Editors:**

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**About Blanchard Wells**

Blanchard Wells is a specialist contractor with proven capabilities for high standard, fast-track structures and civil engineering. Blanchard Wells leads from the front to deliver outstanding groundworks projects in the commercial, industrial, retails, residential, public and transport sectors. Blanchard Wells are a privately owned, South Coast based business carrying out civil engineering projects ranging from £100K to £18M in value. They have been operating for over 24 years from their Hampshire base with an annual turnover of circa £45M in 2024. Blanchard Wells has grown, since it's inception by Mark Wells – BWL Chairman, into a thriving leading local business, renowned for its support of the local area, economy and numerous voluntary and social value focused groups. They are recognised in the civil engineering field, and by our peers, for outstanding project delivery, quality of product, customer support and commitment to “do the right thing”.

**About Patron Capital Partners:**

Patron represents approximately €5 billion of capital across several funds and related co-investments, investing in property, corporate operating entities whose value is primarily supported by property assets and distressed debt and credit related businesses. Since it was established in 1999, Patron has undertaken more than 200 transactions across 103 investments and programs involving over 9 million square metres in 17 countries, with many of these investments realised. Investors represent a variety of sovereign wealth funds, prominent universities, major institutions, private foundations, and high net worth individuals located throughout North America, Europe, Asia and the Middle East. The main investment adviser to the Funds is Patron Capital Advisers LLP, which is based in London, and Patron has other offices across Europe including Barcelona and Luxembourg; the group is comprised of 68 people, including a 39-person investment team. Further information about Patron Capital is available at [www.patroncapital.com](http://www.patroncapital.com)

**About MurrayTwohig Development:**

MurrayTwohig Development is a development company founded by William Murray and David Twohig. It is the development arm of their place strategy consultancy MurrayTwohig Place Strategies. MurrayTwohig was founded in 2018 and has provided vision and real estate strategy on over 400 million sq.ft. of development with a project value in excess of \$200 billion, including at Battersea Power Station, Earls Court, Sony Centre Berlin, Transamerica Pyramid San Francisco and 78 Chicago. Their clients include Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan, Tishman Speyer and Related Group. [www.murraytwohig.com](http://www.murraytwohig.com)

**About Orwell Real Estate:**

Orwell Real Estate provides professional development management services to private clients and institutional funds across the UK. Our aim is to maximise the asset value whilst protecting the interests of all stakeholders. We undertake a comprehensive advisory across the full spectrum of the development cycle from acquisition, planning, legals and construction. Our exposure and involvement in the development debt market enables us to review suitable financial structures to best suit our clients' development objectives.

[www.orwellre.com](http://www.orwellre.com)

**About Homes England:**

As the government's housing and regeneration agency we believe that affordable, quality homes in well-designed places are key to improving people's lives. We make this happen by using our powers, expertise, land, capital and influence to both – bring investment to communities and get more quality homes built.

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**About Air Chief Marshal Sir Douglas Claude Strathern Evill:**

Air Chief Marshal Sir Douglas Claude Strathern Evill was born on 8 October 1892 in Broken Hill, New South Wales, Australia. He studied as a cadet at the Royal Naval College, Osborne, on the Isle of Wight, before attending the Britannia Royal Naval College in Devon.

Evill joined the Royal Naval Air Service in 1914 and spent much of the First World War on operational flying duties over the Western Front. On 22 June 1916 he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

On 30 July 1917 he became the first commander of the RNAS's Naval Seaplane Training School at Lee-on-the-Solent. The work in establishing the unit involved requisitioning 30 acres (120,000 m<sup>2</sup>) of land and several coastal properties.

On 1 April 1918, when the RNAS was merged with the Royal Flying Corps, Evill was regraded from squadron commander to major in the new Royal Air Force.

Evill remained in the fledgling RAF after the war and in 1919 he was placed in command of flying boat units, granted a permanent commission in the RAF in the rank of squadron leader and awarded the Air Force Cross.

In the five years leading up to the Second World War Evill held a number of air officer staff and administrative appointments. He was promoted to air commodore on the last day of 1935.

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On 1 January 1938 Evill was promoted to air vice marshal, three months later he was appointed Air Officer in charge of Administration at Bomber Command.

Following the start of the Second World War, Evill was moved from Bomber to Fighter Command as the Senior Air Staff Officer at its Headquarters, serving under Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding. He continued at Fighter Command throughout the Battle of Britain, The Blitz and the fighter operations of 1941.

By March 1943, Evill was appointed Vice-Chief of the Air Staff. He continued as VCAS throughout the rest of the war, receiving promotion to air marshal at the beginning of 1944.

Evill stepped down as VCAS on 1 June 1946; the following January he officially retired from the RAF, receiving promotion to air chief marshal just a few days before he left the Service.

As a retired officer, Evill stayed active in Service and civil matters. In late 1960 Evill was appointed Honorary Air Commodore of No. 3617 (County of Hampshire) Fighter Control Unit in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

Evill was portrayed by Sir Michael Redgrave in the film Battle of Britain (1969).