

Best freighter forward

CEO *Grégoire Lebigot* discusses Vallair's cargo conversion programmes and its aircraft recycling activities

F

For Vallair, recycling has always been at the forefront of our endeavours. Many years ago, we recognised the importance of sustainability and the need to recycle aircraft and parts if possible. We focus current activities towards achieving this.

Maximising the life and value of aircraft, engines and parts is at the very core of our ethos. In 2006, I was one of the historical founders of AFRA (Aircraft Fleet Recycling Association) and Vallair remains recognised as a leading independent provider of teardown services with an extensive network for sourcing and disposal of assets.

A significant part of our recycling activity is, of course, our cargo conversion programme and our core competencies lie with the conversion of Boeing and Airbus narrowbody aircraft from passenger to freighter. Vallair is the launch customer for the Airbus A321 freighter and we have recently delivered our first A321P2F conversion to launch operator Qantas Freight, with our second A321 PCF due to be



By recycling passenger aircraft into freighters, we extend their economic lives by 15–20 years and provide an eco-friendly solution

delivered by the end of 2020. As the A321 is a relatively young conversion candidate, using newer technologies, we expect operators to see a 20 per cent reduction in fuel burn per payload.

Historically, of course, our expertise in the conversion of narrowbody aircraft comes from the Boeing 737-800. It is the only other narrowbody freighter currently available on the market and we have undertaken 15 conversions to date. Offering unrivalled capacity and capability, this aircraft can accommodate 11 full height containers or pallets and an increased main deck payload.

The Covid-19 pandemic has certainly seen a huge increase in demand for air cargo. By recycling passenger aircraft into freighters, we are extending their economic lives by 15-20 years whilst providing a fuel-efficient and eco-friendly solution.

To support this, we have purchased 10 A321 aircraft for conversion so far. We predict that our B737 and A321 cargo conversion programmes are without a doubt the long-term effective solutions that will support the projected market demand of the next 20 years or more. We are excited to lead the way with our pioneering A321F programme

and hope that we are playing our part in protecting our environment, while fulfilling the demand of air cargo.

In addition to recycling passenger aircraft as freighters, Vallair also manages teardowns. Our facility in Chateauroux, France employs skilled and certified mechanics to identify, store and manage parts for maximum efficiency and asset value realisation.

Vallair continually seeks to acquire narrowbody and engine assets for sale, lease and teardown in its own right and in partnership with other investors, lessors and MROs.

For the past 10 years, we have partnered with Veolia, one of the largest waste management companies in the world. Veolia is experienced in the treatment of waste and recovery of materials and Veolia Aero Recycling is responsible for the separation of materials into recyclable and non-recyclable. Together, we achieve a recycle and recovery rate of 94 per cent, above and beyond the levels of our nearest competitor.

An important part of the disassembly process is also ensuring that the airframe is deconstructed whilst guaranteeing safety, environmental protection and cost optimisation. At every step we ensure that the ground is fit for reuse and conduct all our disassembly activities in line with the strict AFRA guidelines. 🌱