

Blue light base leads the nation

By **LUCY CLAPHAM**

lucy.clapham@archant.co.uk

The opening of Sheringham's new £1.25 million fire station has been hailed as pushing the county's emergency services to the "cutting edge".

The eco-friendly building is the first in Norfolk to house all the blue light services and will now be shared by fire, police, ambulance crews and the coastguard.

Fire minister Bob Neill, who officially opened the station last Thursday, said the collaborative work had made Norfolk's fire service a leading team nationally and praised all those involved in seeing the project through.

He was joined by dignitaries and top officers from all the emergency services to cut the ribbon - a triple band of fire, police and ambulance incident tape - and also met the station's nine-strong firefighter crew.

Mr Neill said: "I'm delighted that we have got all the blue light services coming together here at a time when we have got to make sure the public pot goes that much further.

"This state-of-the-art facility will get the maximum use throughout

the day by having all the services here in this one spot. It encouraged and reinforces the culture of collaboration we all want to see."

The two-storey building - complete with drill tower - in Cromer Road was funded by Tesco as part of the retail giant's planning conditions for erecting a new supermarket on the site of the old station.

It will now provide the home for Sheringham's retained crew, a response base for the ambulance service and accommodation for a neighbourhood policing team and the coastguard.

Mr Neill added that the joint use "does genuinely put Norfolk as a fire service right at the cutting edge nationally."

Sheringham's crew manager Paul Richardson said the "milestone" station benefited crews and the community with joint training helping at incident scenes.

Sheringham's crew will now be able to carry out enhanced training with the addition of the drill tower, which will allow them to prepare for incidents in high-rise buildings.

The old station, which was built in 1963, will be demolished along with the town's community centre to make way for the Tesco store, which is scheduled to open next year.



CUTTING EDGE: The opening of Sheringham fire station by fire minister Bob Neill.