



Department for Transport

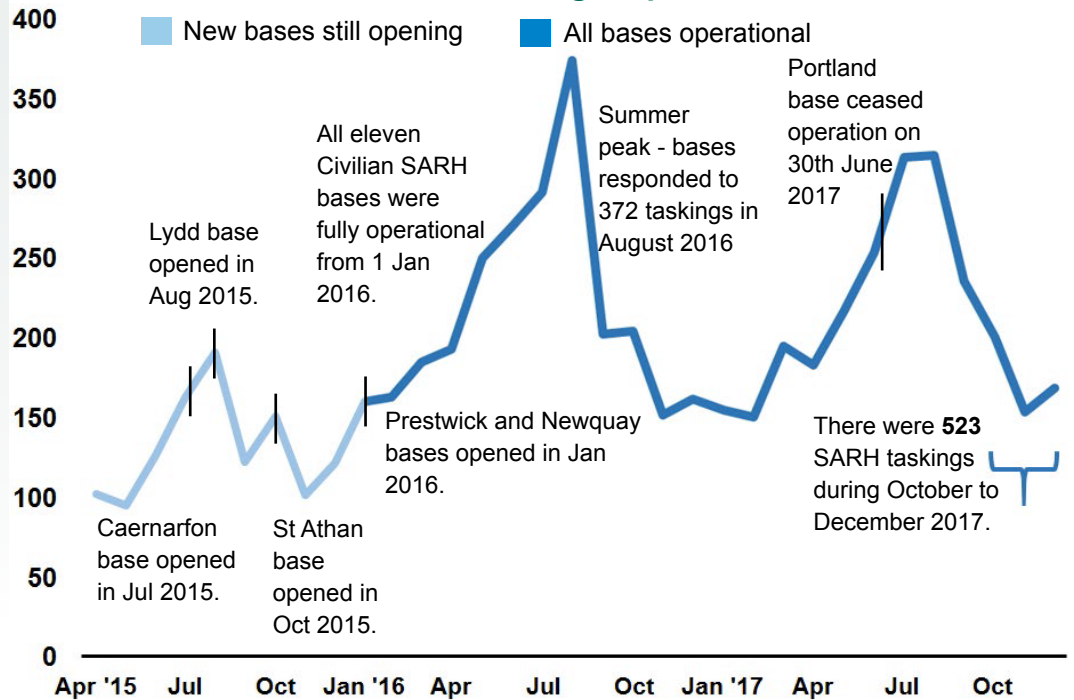
Search and Rescue Helicopter Statistics: October to December 2017

About this release

This release is part of an experimental statistics series covering civilian search and rescue helicopter (SARH) operations in the UK. The data originates from the Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centre (ARCC) who are responsible for the co-ordination of a SAR helicopter and is provided to DfT by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). This release covers the period 1 October 2017 to 31 December 2017.

There were 523 civilian search and rescue helicopter (SARH) taskings in the UK during October to December 2017.

Total number of civilian SARH taskings, Apr 2015 to Dec 2017



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On average, SAR helicopters across the UK responded to 6 taskings a day during the latest quarter. Prestwick had the most taskings, responding to 75 taskings. Stornoway had the least, responding to 22 taskings.



Of all taskings, 46% were rescues or recoveries during the latest quarter. The Sumburgh base had the highest proportion of rescue or recovery taskings (81%) with the majority taking place out to sea.



329 people were rescued and 100 assisted by SAR helicopters across all taskings during October to December 2017.

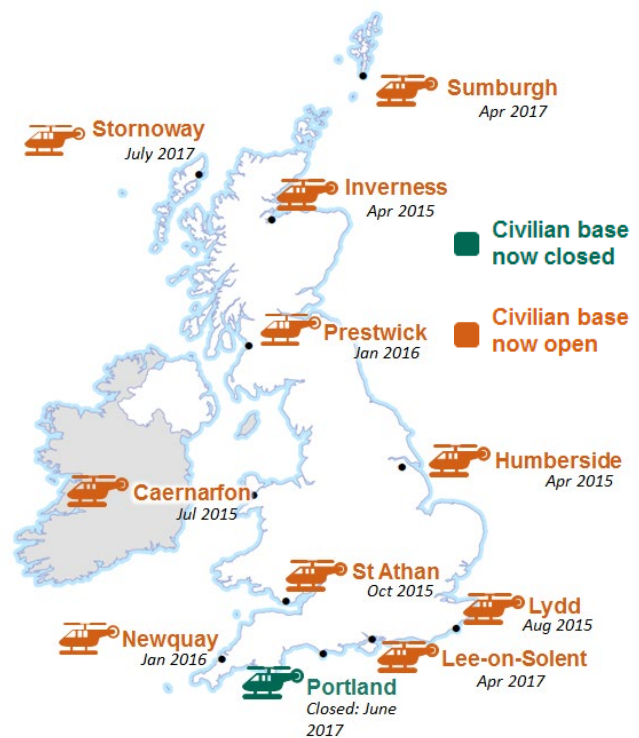
Background information

In April 2015, the operational phase of a new contract to operate civilian search and rescue helicopter (SAH) services in the UK, managed by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), commenced. These new arrangements took over from the previous mixture of military and coastguard SARH services.

The Department for Transport (DfT) is now responsible for the production of statistics on SARH activity in which all civilian bases are now operational.

The statistics presented in this document cover the period October to December 2017 for all ten civilian SARH bases. The Portland base ceased operation on 30th June 2017.

Map 1: Civilian SAR Helicopter Bases



Proposed changes to the status of these statistics

Currently these statistics are labelled as 'experimental', which is a designation used for statistics that are in the testing phase or where user needs are unclear.

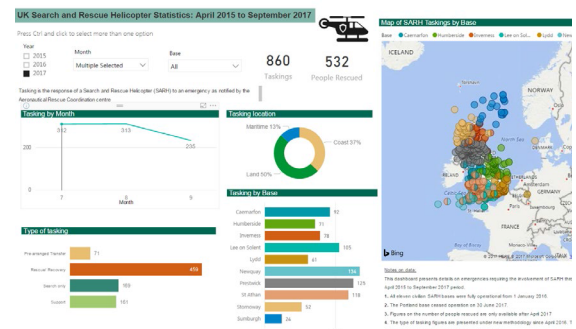
However, following the transition to the new data source for the last three quarters, and feedback from users, we are confident that the statistics are no longer in a testing phase and therefore propose to remove the experimental labelling for future releases. We are also in the process of checking the compliance of these statistics against the Code of Practice for Statistics, which may result in their designation as 'National Statistics' in future.

User feedback request

We are carrying out a user survey to assess how well the statistics are meeting user needs, and whether further improvements could be made. Please could you fill in the user survey to help us improve the statistics, which should not take you longer than 5 minutes to complete: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Search-and-rescue-helicopter-statistics/>.

Interactive dashboard

This is the second SARH release to incorporate an interactive visualisation dashboard. To explore the interactive dashboard follow the link here: <http://maps.dft.gov.uk/sarh-statistics/interactive-dashboard>. We would appreciate any feedback as we are always trying to improve our statistical outputs.



Overall trends

During October to December 2017, there were 523 taskings overall. Although there were 10 bases in operation (compared to 11 last year), taskings broadly remained similar to the same period in the previous year. Of the ten bases, Prestwick had the most taskings, responding to 75 taskings and Stornoway had the least responding to 22 taskings.

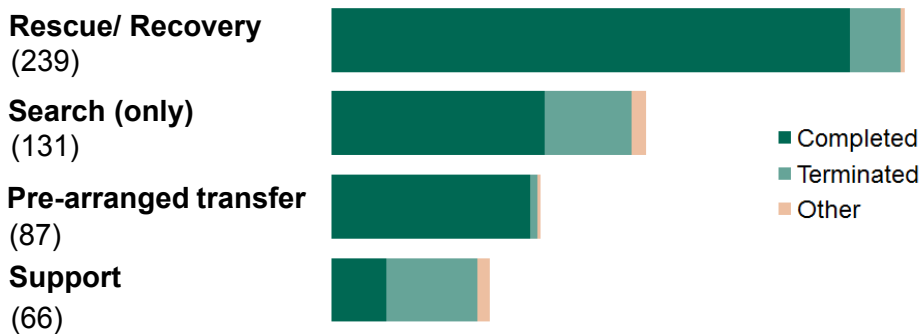
Taskings responded to by the Lee-On-Solent base increased by 45% compared to the same quarter last year. The St Athan base also increased by 48%. Part of the increase in the number of taskings for these bases may be due to the closure of the Portland base in June 2017.

Tasking categories

Rescue or recovery taskings accounted for 46% of all taskings during October to December 2017.

Pre-arranged transfers accounted for 17% of all taskings during the latest quarter. The greatest proportion of these taskings were carried out by the Lee-On-Solent, Prestwick and Newquay bases (83% of pre-arranged transfers), where a number of transfers took place between the Channel Islands (Jersey, Guernsey), Isle of Wight and Isles of Scilly to mainland UK.

Chart 1: Number of taskings by tasking category and outcome, October to December 2017 [SARH0102](#)



SAR helicopter services supported and completed around 79% of all taskings during the latest quarter. A further 19% were terminated and 3% were diverted, suspended or cancelled (other)¹.

Of all rescue or recovery taskings, 90% were classified as complete, 9% were terminated and a further 1% as other.

Of all support taskings 58% were terminated, largely due to another emergency service or partner agency being able to resolve the emergency and therefore the SAR helicopter was no longer required.

¹ Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Definition

Tasking count

The response of a SAR helicopter to an emergency as notified by the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre (ARCC).

Definition

Tasking category

Rescue or Recovery: The transfer of person(s) resulting in them being delivered to a safe environment (including medical facilities).

Search: Search for craft, person(s) etc which does not result in moving a person.

Pre-arranged Transfer:

Transfer of patients or organs between medical establishments.

Support: Includes on-scene assistance, pre-positioning of SAR units for a potential incident and movement of equipment/personnel.

Tasking outcome

Terminated: Includes taskings that were stood down; en route, on scene and prior to launch due to another emergency service/ partner agency being in attendance and the helicopter no longer required or the emergency was resolved by other means.

Other: Includes taskings which was aborted due to bad weather, re-tasked, helicopter is unsafe for flight or technical/crew issues.

Number of people rescued or assisted

During October to December 2017, there were 329 people rescued across all taskings. Of all bases, Prestwick rescued the most people (53).

Of all persons rescued 42% were responded to by the four Scotland helicopter bases. Outside of Scotland, the busiest bases were, Caernarfon, Lee-On-Solent and Newquay, accounting for 40% of all rescues.

During the latest quarter a further 100 people were assisted, of which 64% were accounted by the Sumburgh base. One of the Sumburgh taskings involved assisting over 50 people.

Definition

Person(s) rescued

Person(s) transported by a SAR helicopter to a place of safety (not including bodies recovered).

Person(s) assisted

Person(s) rescued to a place of safety by other assets but is supported by a SAR helicopter. For example, search taskings. This also includes taskings whereby one SARH base may assist another SARH base carrying out a rescue.

Note that in some cases, a SAR helicopter may respond to a tasking where more than one person was rescued. On occasion, this can be a large number of people from one emergency for example, a rescue involving a fishing vessel. Therefore, this should be taken into account when interpreting the statistics.

Location of tasking

Land based taskings accounted for the majority of SARH taskings during October to December 2017, in line with previous quarters.

The majority of pre-arranged transfers took place on land (72%). The majority of searches took place on land and coastal areas (95%) with only 5% taking place over maritime.

Definition - Land, coast and maritime

Coast: Taskings occurring between 0.2 miles inland and 3 nautical miles out to sea.

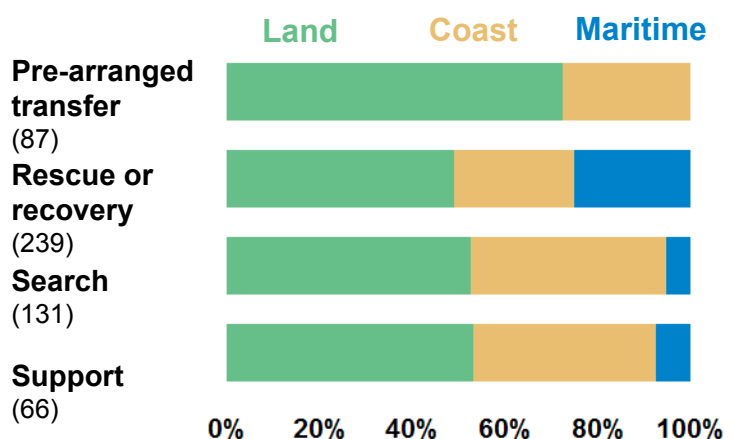
Maritime: Taskings that occur more than 3 nautical miles out to sea.

Land: All other taskings that are not classed as coastal or maritime.

Chart 2: Proportion of taskings by location type, October to December 2017
[SARH0103](#)



Chart 3: Proportion of taskings by category and location type, October to December 2017
[SARH0105](#)



Location type

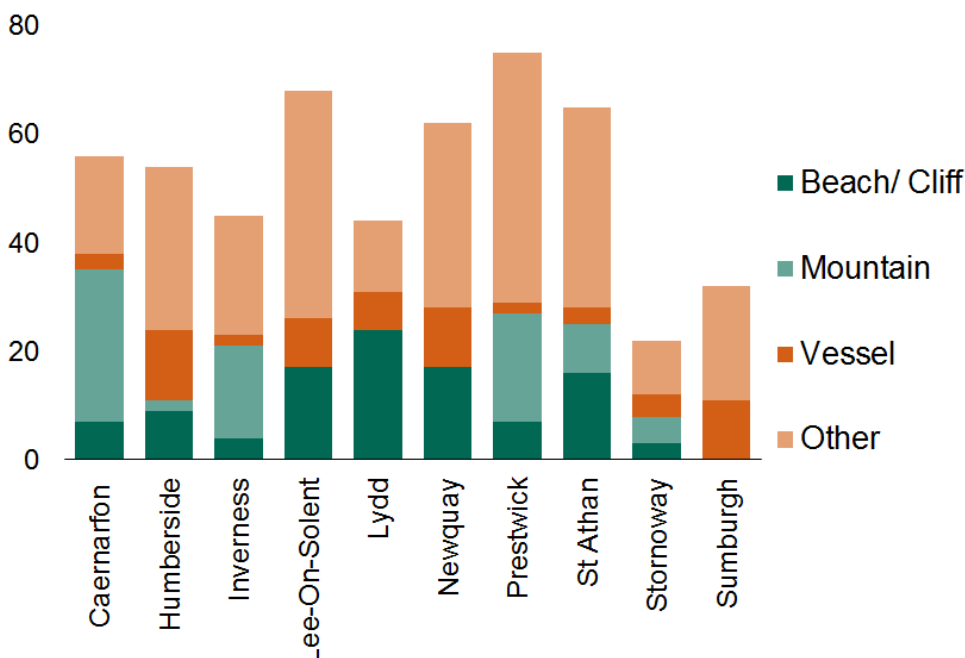
Taskings taking place in beach or cliff areas were the most common location type (aside from other) during October to December 2017, accounting for 20% of all taskings. Beach/ Cliff taskings were more common in the South of England where helicopter bases operate in areas with leisure activity.

There were 81 taskings taking place in mountainous areas, accounting for 15% of all taskings. 80% of mountainous taskings were responded to by the Caernarfon, Inverness and Prestwick bases. In particular most of the mountainous rescues were from Snowdonia, Cairngorms, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park.

Taskings involving a vessel (commercial and leisure) accounted for 12% of all taskings during the latest quarter. Vessel taskings accounted for 34% of all Sumburgh taskings.

The “Other” location type category accounted for 52% of all taskings during the latest quarter¹.

Chart 4: Breakdown of taskings by location type, October to December 2017 [SARH0114](#)



Definition - Location type of tasking

Statistics presented here are based on an additional variable inputted by the ARCC.

Mountain: Includes areas of significantly high ground such as a mountain side, ridge, summit or group of hills.

Beach/ Cliff: Includes areas on a beach, cliff face, base or top.

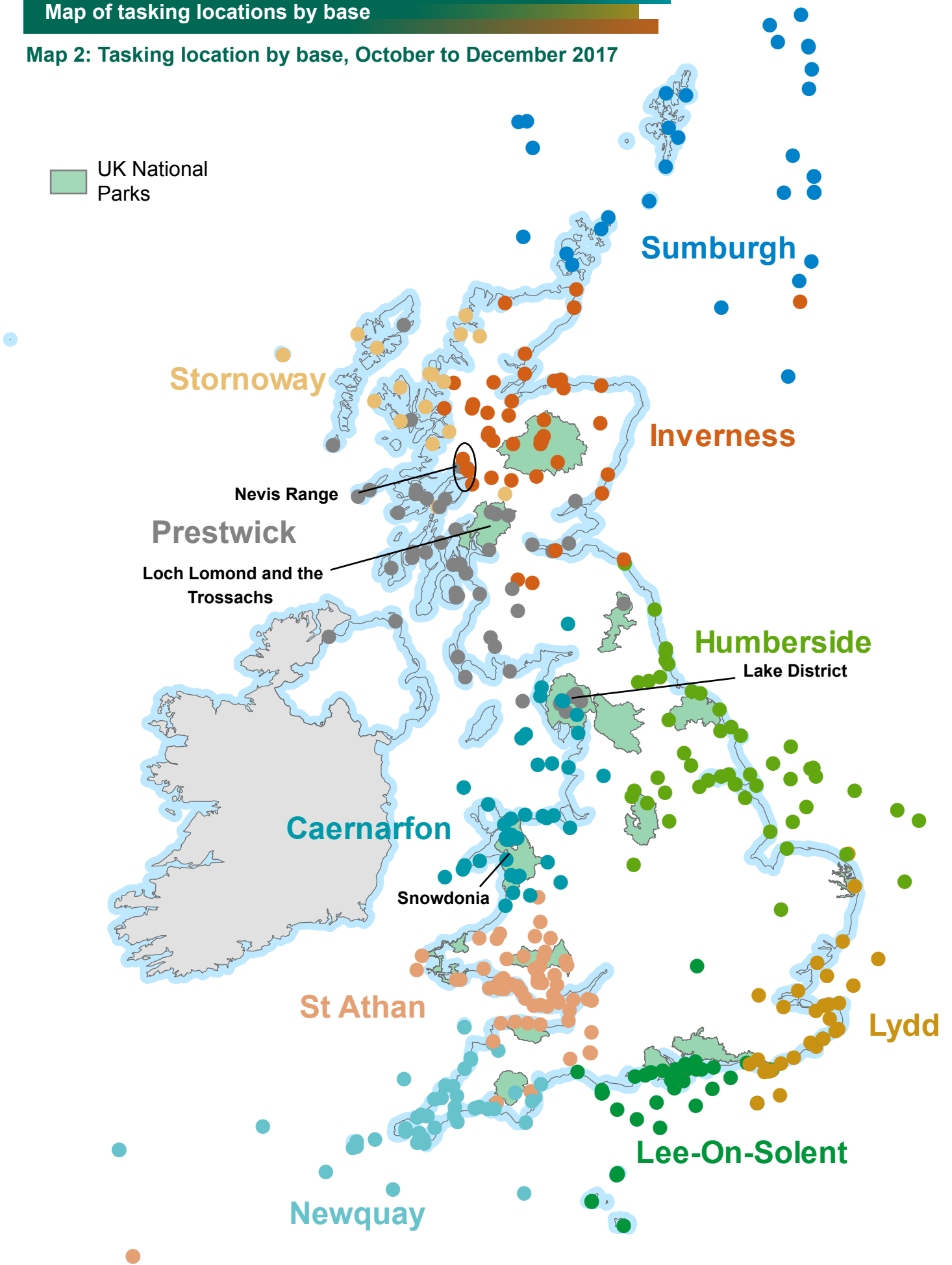
Vessel: Includes leisure (kayak, surf boards etc) and commercial (cargo, barge, ferry etc) vessels.

Other: Those not classed in the above categories, which includes inland waterways, oil platforms, wind farms, aeronautical and medical centres.

¹ Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Map of tasking locations by base

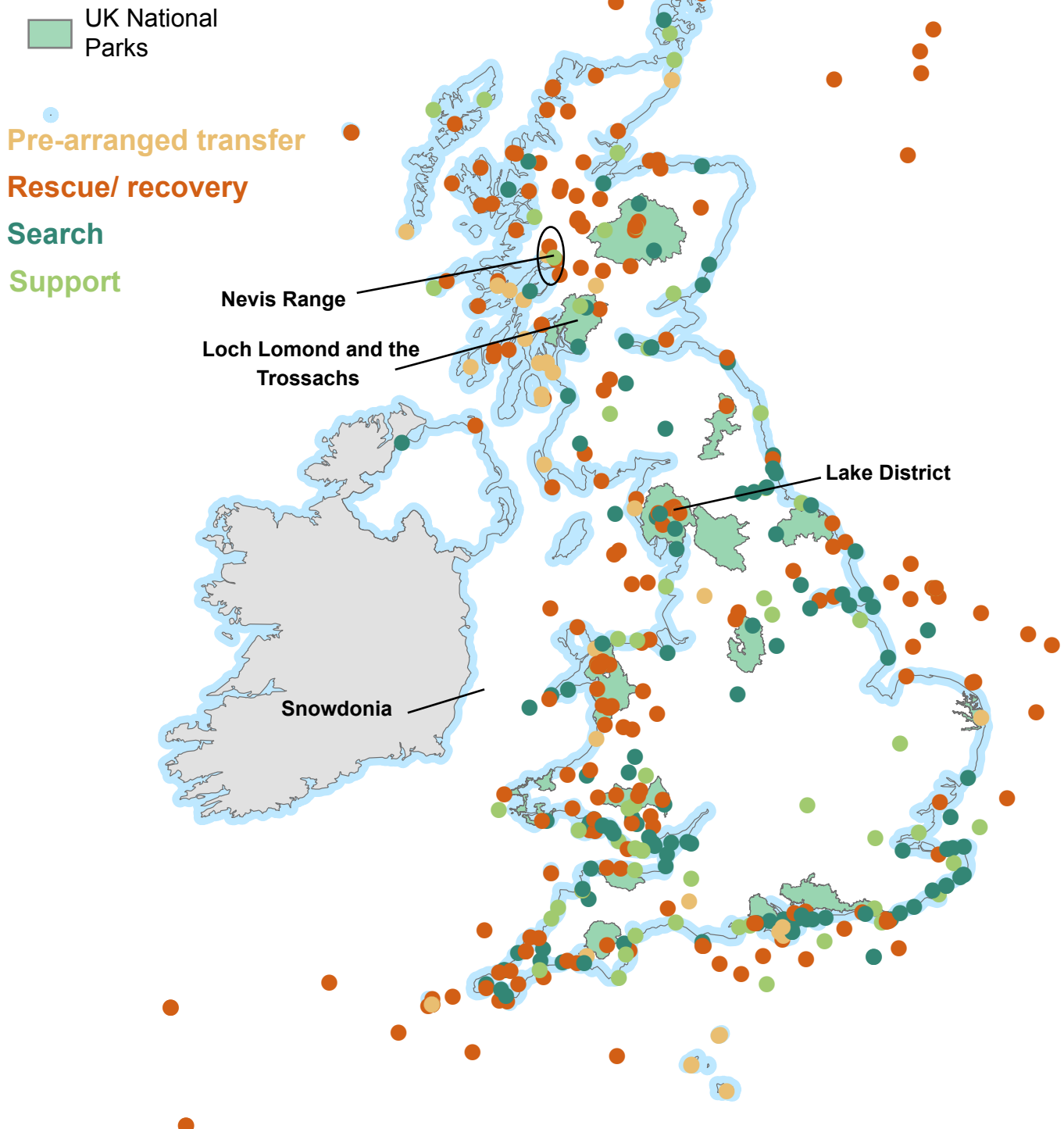
Map 2: Tasking location by base, October to December 2017



Map of tasking category

Map 3: Location of taskings by tasking category, October to December 2017

Where a tasking resulted in a rescue or recovery, the final location in latitude and longitude (e.g. where a person was rescued from) is marked on the map. For other tasking types (e.g. where only a search took place), then the location is based on the latitude and longitude of where the search started from.



Users and user feedback

We are always happy to receive [feedback](#) by email on this publication, the interactive dashboard or the underlying data source and variables. Please could you also fill in the user survey to help us improve the statistics, which should not take you longer than 5 minutes to complete: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Search-and-rescue-helicopter-statistics/>.

Within the Department for Transport and Maritime Coastguard Agency, the statistics are used:

- For ministerial briefing and to answer public enquiries;
- As background to policy development;
- For monitoring trends in search and rescue activity; and,
- By analysts in modelling overall search and rescue operations.

Outside of DfT, users include:

- Search and rescue partners, national parks, tourist boards, mountaineering/ walking groups and others monitoring the use of search and rescue services by tourists/ members;
- Air ambulance charities monitoring SAR activity in their areas; and,
- Maritime organisations monitoring SAR activity related to their businesses (e.g. near ports).

For any queries relating to the statistics present in the release, you can contact us by emailing SARH.Stats@df.t.gsi.gov.uk. For queries relating to other SARH areas, please contact SAR.data@mcga.gov.uk.

To hear more about DfT statistics publications as they are released, please follow us on Twitter via our [@DfTstats account](#). TWITTER, TWEET, RETWEET and the Twitter logo are trademarks of Twitter, Inc. or its affiliates.



We thank all respondents for taking the time to give us their views.

Strengths and weaknesses of the data

This is the third statistical release which uses data originating from the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre (ARCC). ARCC are responsible for the co-ordination of the search and rescue helicopters, from answering the initial request through to the conclusion of the tasking. Previously, data was derived from the helicopter operators recording system, and provided to DfT by the MCA. Further details of the new data source can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/search-and-rescue-helicopter-information>

A separate background quality report for SARH statistics has been produced by DfT, with the purpose of providing users of the statistics with detailed information about the quality of the outputs, measured against different dimensions of statistical quality. As a result, this document helps to demonstrate how the Department complies with the Code of Practice for Statistics principle on quality. The document can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/search-and-rescue-helicopter-information>

Following a tasking, the ARCC records incident data which gets validated and verified by the MCA and DfT on a regular basis and signed off at the end of each month. It is unlikely that data would be revised at a later date therefore figures published in this release will be carried forward for use

in future publications (for time comparisons, etc.). If there are any revisions, they will be clearly signposted to users.

Variables in the current data source include:

Tasking count

A tasking is defined as the response of a UK SAR helicopter to an emergency as notified by the ARCC. If an emergency occurs where a helicopter is called out more than once, this is usually counted as one tasking. If helicopters from different bases are called out to the same emergency, this is counted separately - once for each base.

This means that the definition of “taskings” is slightly different to the definitions of “callouts” and “incidents” used by the Ministry of Defence. The statistics also include those taskings which have been stood down before lift-off. This is due to a lot of activity taking place prior to the actual lift-off whereby time and resourcing are being used.

Currently, the ARCC data can be compared to the old data source used by the helicopter operators to validate the number of SARH taskings every month. Therefore, the number of taskings is believed to be accurately recorded.

Tasking category

The tasking category (rescue or recovery, pre-arranged transfer, etc.) is derived from a free text field completed by the ARCC and coded by database administrators at the MCA using the description of the tasking. In addition, the tasking narrative derives information which DfT use to cross check information received by the ARCC.

Tasking narrative example:

Tasked by UK SAR Helicopter of a **rescue** of a male who had fallen down some stairs **on-board a cruise liner** in Plymouth. Communications established with vessel who advised that incident involved **two casualties**. Winchman Paramedic and equipment lowered to vessel. First casualty recovered to aircraft with winchman before returning and recovering second casualty in stretcher and **returning back to Plymouth for medical care**.

➔ Tasking Category, Coded as a rescue or recovery

➔ Location type: Coded as a (leisure) vessel tasking

➔ Number of people rescued: Coded as a 2 persons rescued

➔ Tasking outcome: Coded as a completed tasking

Tasking location and location type

If a rescue or recovery takes place then the location is recorded based on the coordinates of where the persons were found. If a pre-arranged transfer occurs, some operators may record the midpoint of the tasking in the database, which could mean the tasking will have been recorded to take place over maritime when in fact, should be classed as coast or land. There are checks in place to make sure all taskings involving pre-arranged transfers are consistent and uses the final location of the tasking. For other tasking types, the initial location (e.g. for where a search will take place) is recorded, as supplied by the tasking authority e.g. the police force. It is not possible to assess whether the original coordinates provided to the tasking authority for a search were accurate.

The coordinates of the tasking location are also used to define the location type (land, coast and maritime). The latitude and longitude of the tasking location are overlaid onto a map of the UK, and distances between the taskings and the outline of the map are used to categorise the data.

The definitions of the boundaries between land, coast and maritime were chosen based on other widely used definitions, what was sensible given the nature of the topic and what was possible using the data. This breakdown is only as accurate as the coordinate data. If latitude or longitude are recorded inaccurately then this may also impact upon the location, although the risk of such inaccuracies is perceived as low.

The location type of a tasking (i.e. whether the tasking took place on a beach/cliff, mountain, vessel etc) is based on the tasking narrative and standard definitions used by the ARCC. This gets validated by DfT whereby the co-ordinates of each tasking are overlaid onto a map of the UK to ensure the location type is recorded as accurately as possible (e.g. we would expect most beach/ cliff rescues to take place around coastal/ land areas of the UK.)

Confidentiality

The published statistics will not reveal any private information about any individual or organisation and confidential information will be kept securely where access to data is controlled in accordance to departmental policy.

Links to other information

- Historically, the Ministry of Defence published statistics on military and civilian SARH activity, and they continued to publish statistics on military activity until February 2016 when services were ceased. Their final release can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/military-search-and-rescue-quarterly-statistics-index>
- Details of Ministers and officials who receive pre-release access to these statistics up to 24 hours before release can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-release-access-lists-for-maritime-and-shipping-series>
- Eventually, we aim to badge these statistics as National Statistics. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>
- Alongside this publication a series of data tables have been published, where you can find the key statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/search-and-rescue-helicopter>
- In June 2017, DfT produced an interactive map of SARH taskings based on 2016/17 data: <http://maps.dft.gov.uk/sarh-statistics/>.
- More information on the number of people rescued/ assisted can be found on table [SARH0113](#) and more information on duration time can be found on table [SARH0106](#).
- In December 2017, DfT produced an interactive dashboard of SARH taskings (which will get updated quarterly) covering, all taskings from April 2015: <http://maps.dft.gov.uk/sarh-statistics/interactive-dashboard>.