



Department for Transport

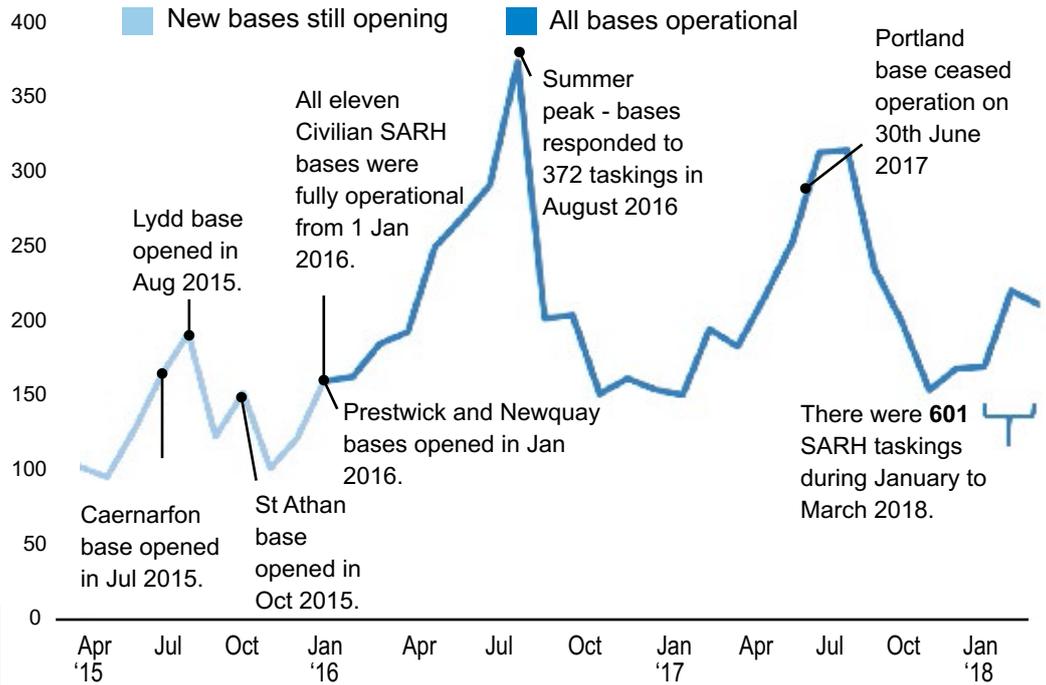
Search and Rescue Helicopter Statistics: Year ending March 2018

About this release

This release covers 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 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

There were 2,636 civilian search and rescue helicopter (SARH) taskings in the UK in the year ending March 2018. This is a 2% increase compared to the year ending March 2017.

Total number of civilian SARH taskings, Apr 2015 to March 2018



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On average, SAR helicopters across the UK together responded to 7 taskings a day during the year ending March 2018. Prestwick and Newquay had the most taskings, responding to 361 and 359 taskings respectively. Of the bases open for the entire year, the Sumburgh base had the least, responding to 134 taskings.



Of all taskings, 53% were rescues or recoveries. The Sumburgh base had the highest proportion of rescue or recovery taskings (84%) with the majority taking place out at sea.



1,693 people were rescued and 329 assisted by SAR helicopters across all taskings during the year ending March 2018.

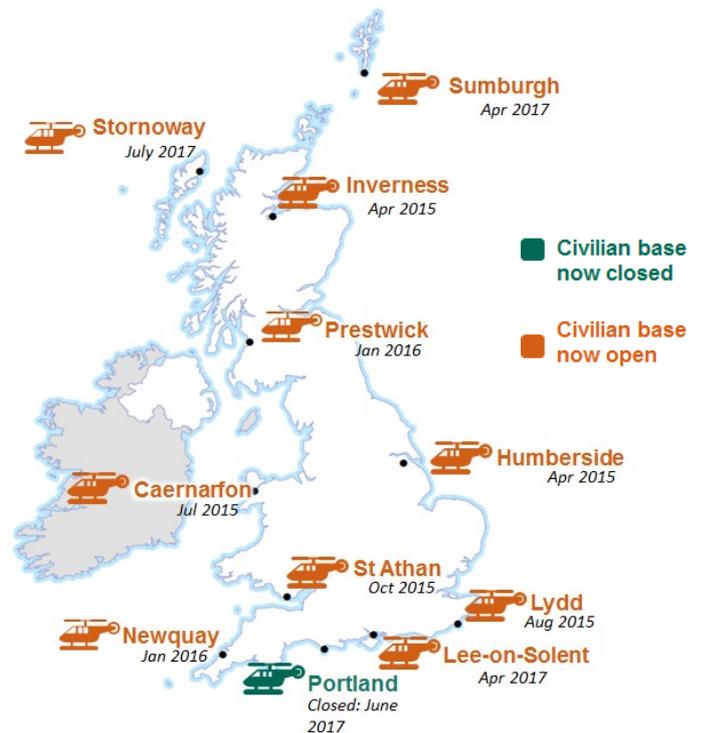
Background information

In April 2015, the operational phase of a new contract to operate civilian search and rescue helicopter (SARH) 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.

The statistics presented in this document cover the year ending March 2018 for all ten current civilian SARH bases and the Portland base which ceased operation on 30th June 2017.

Map 1: Civilian SAR Helicopter Bases



National Statistics

These statistics are now designated as National Statistics. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards as set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. The Code of Practice for Statistics plays an essential role in ensuring that statistics published by government inspire public confidence through demonstrating trustworthiness, and providing high-quality statistics that enhance public value. National statistics undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they continue to meet customer needs: <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/>.

User feedback summary

We carried out a short survey which allowed us to assess how well the statistics are meeting user needs and get an insight to user views on proposed changes as well as any suggestions for how the statistics could be improved. To see the summary of the user survey and our response to user feedback visit our guidance page: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/search-and-rescue-helicopter-information>.

Interactive dashboard

This is the third 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 that might help us improve our statistical outputs.

Overall trends

During the year ending March 2018, there were 2,636 taskings overall. During the latest quarter (January to March 2018) there were 601 taskings, a 20% increase compared to the same quarter in the previous year. The increase in taskings may in part be due to the adverse snowy weather in February and March, which may have led in part to an increase in helicopter call outs from the Lee-On-Solent, St Athan, Stornoway and Newquay bases.

Tasking count

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

Of the ten bases, Prestwick and Newquay had the most taskings, responding to 361 and 359 taskings respectively.

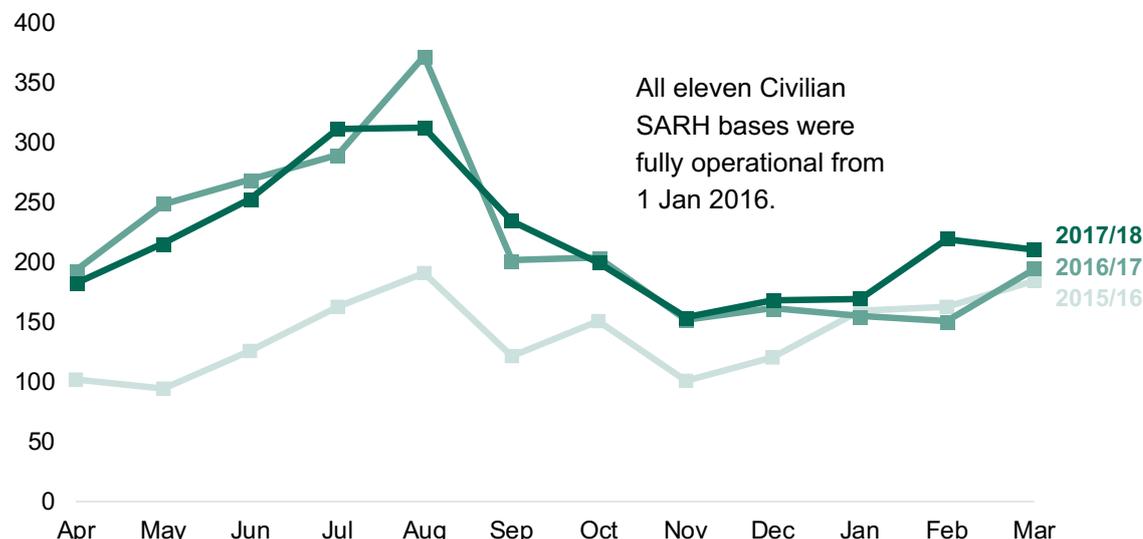
Table 1: Summary of SARH taskings by year

Helicopter Base	2016/17	2017/18	%Change
Caernarfon	344	303	↓ -12%
Humberside	282	246	↓ -13%
Inverness	269	271	↑ 1%
Lee-On-Solent	208	286	↑ 38%
Lydd	221	189	↓ -14%
Newquay	309	359	↑ 16%
Prestwick	342	361	↑ 6%
St Athan	246	311	↑ 26%
Stornoway	123	145	↑ 18%
Sumburgh	127	134	↑ 6%

In the year ending March 2018 the Lee-On-Solent base increased in taskings by 38% compared to the year before. The St Athan base increased by 26%. The increase in the number of taskings for Lee-on-Solent and St Athan could be due to various factors, including the closure of the Portland base in June 2017.

Taskings were considerably higher in 2016/17 and 2017/18 than in 2015/16. This difference is due to the eleven SARH civilian helicopter bases not being fully operational prior to January 2016. The 2016/17 period reported a higher peak in taskings during the month of August compared to the same month in the 2017/18 year. The 2017/18 period reported a higher peak in taskings during the latest quarter (January to March) compared to the 2016/17 year. Otherwise the monthly pattern in taskings for the 2017/18 year was generally in line with the 2016/17 year.

Chart 1: Civilian SARH tasking by year and month

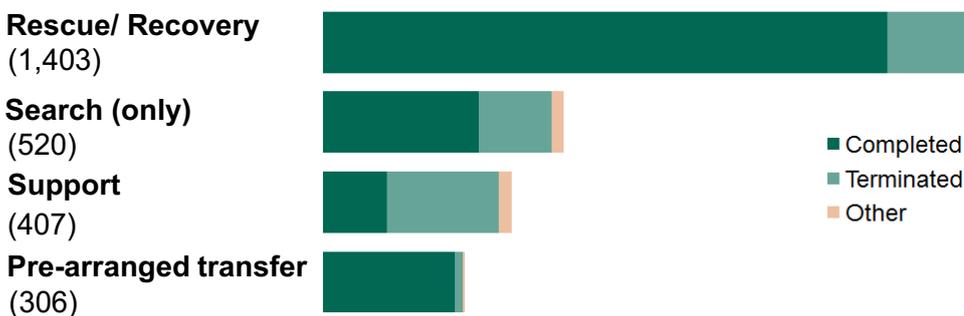


Tasking categories

In the year ending March 2018, there were 1,403 rescue or recovery taskings, accounting for 53% of all taskings. This was a 9% decrease in rescue or recovery taskings compared to the previous year. The proportion of rescue or recovery taskings varied by base with the Caernarfon and the Newquay bases each accounting for 14% of the total rescue / recovery taskings. The Sumburgh base had the highest proportion (84%) of rescues or recoveries, most of which were carried out at sea - this base responded to 113 taskings in total over the year.

Pre-arranged transfers accounted for 12% of all taskings during the year ending March 2018. The greatest proportion of transfer taskings were carried out by the Lee-On-Solent, Prestwick and Newquay bases, which together accounted for 81% of all pre-arranged transfers. Within the three bases a number of transfers took place between the Channel Islands (Jersey, Guernsey), the Isle of Wight and the Isles of Scilly to mainland UK.

Chart 2: Number of taskings by tasking type and outcome, Year ending March 2018 [SARH0102](#)



Tasking Outcome

SAR helicopter services supported and completed around 75% of all taskings during the year ending March 2018. A further 22% were terminated and 3% were diverted, suspended or cancelled (other).

Of all rescue or recovery taskings, 87% were classified as complete, 12% were terminated with a further 1% being recorded as other.

Of all support taskings 59% were terminated. This was largely due to another emergency service or partner agency being able to resolve the emergency.

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, resulting in the helicopter no longer being required, or the emergency was resolved by other means.

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

Number of people rescued or assisted

During the year ending March 2018, there were 1,693 people rescued across all taskings.

Of all those rescued, 42% were rescued by the four helicopter bases in Scotland. Newquay was the base with the highest number of rescues over the year - 258 in total.

During the year ending March 2018, 329 people were assisted, of which 45% were accounted for by the Inverness and the Sumburgh base. One of the Sumburgh taskings involved assisting over 50 people.

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 the year ending March 2018 at 53%. This is a 4 percentage point increase on last year.

The majority of pre-arranged transfers took place on land (73%). The majority of searches took place on land and coastal areas (91%) with 9% taking place at sea.

Chart 3: Proportion of taskings by location type, year ending March 2018

[SARH0104](#)

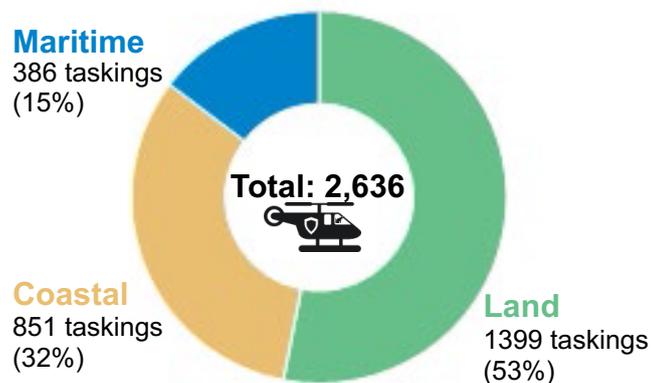
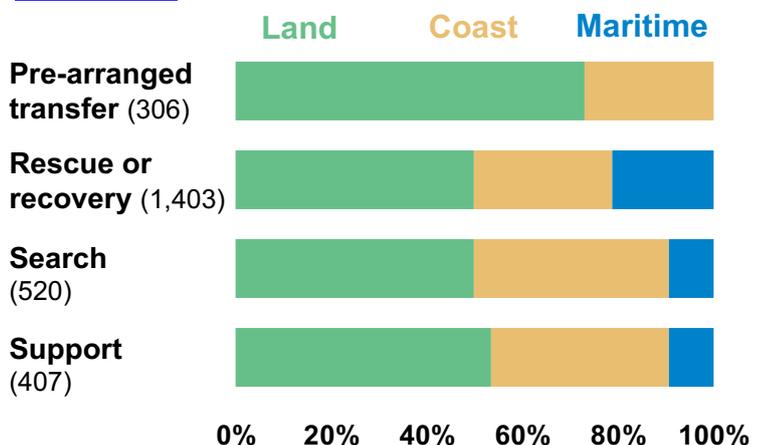


Chart 4: Proportion of taskings by tasking type and location type, year ending March 2018

[SARH0105](#)

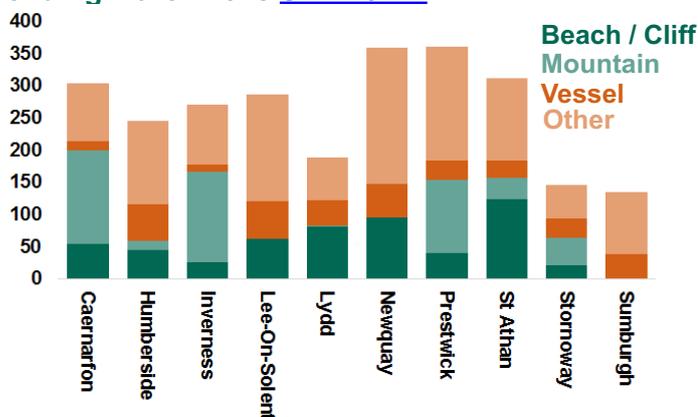


Breakdown of location type

Where helicopter bases operate in areas with high quantities of leisure activity, taskings taking place in beach or cliff areas were the most common location type (aside from other) during the year ending March 2018. Over all bases, beach or cliff taskings accounted for 21% of total taskings.

A total of 493 taskings took place in mountainous areas, accounting for 19% of all taskings. 81% of mountainous taskings were responded to by the Caernarfon, Inverness and Prestwick bases. In particular a lot of the mountainous rescues were from Snowdonia, Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Parks.

Chart 5: Breakdown of taskings by location year ending March 2018 [SARH0114](#)



Taskings involving a vessel (commercial and leisure) accounted for 14% of all taskings. Vessel taskings accounted for 28% of all Sumburgh taskings.

The “Other” location type category accounted for 46% of all taskings during the latest quarter.

In the year ending March 2018 taskings occurred more frequently during the weekend. Saturday was the busiest day of the week with 499 taskings, with Sunday being the second busiest with 464 taskings. Rescue or recovery taskings accounted for over a half of all taskings every day of the week.

During the year ending March 2018, nearly half (46%) of taskings started between 12pm and 5:59pm. The quietest 3 hour period was 3am to 5:59am accounting for 4% (97) of all taskings.

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.

Chart 6: Taskings by day of the week, year ending March 2018 [SARH0107](#)

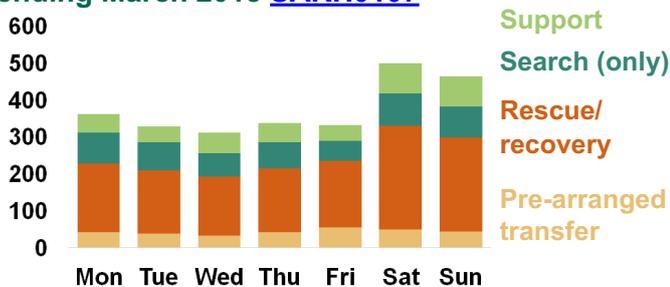
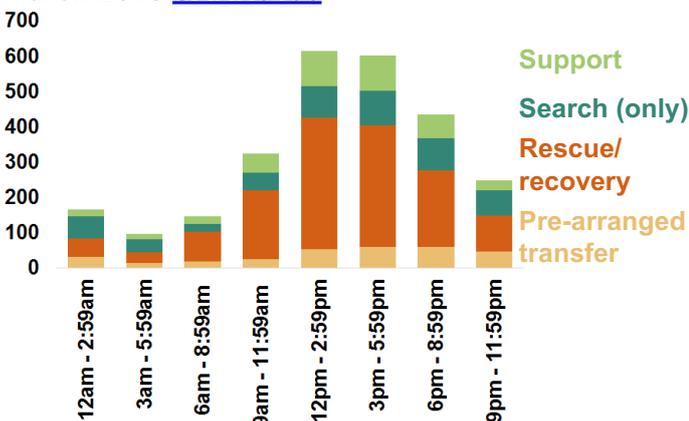


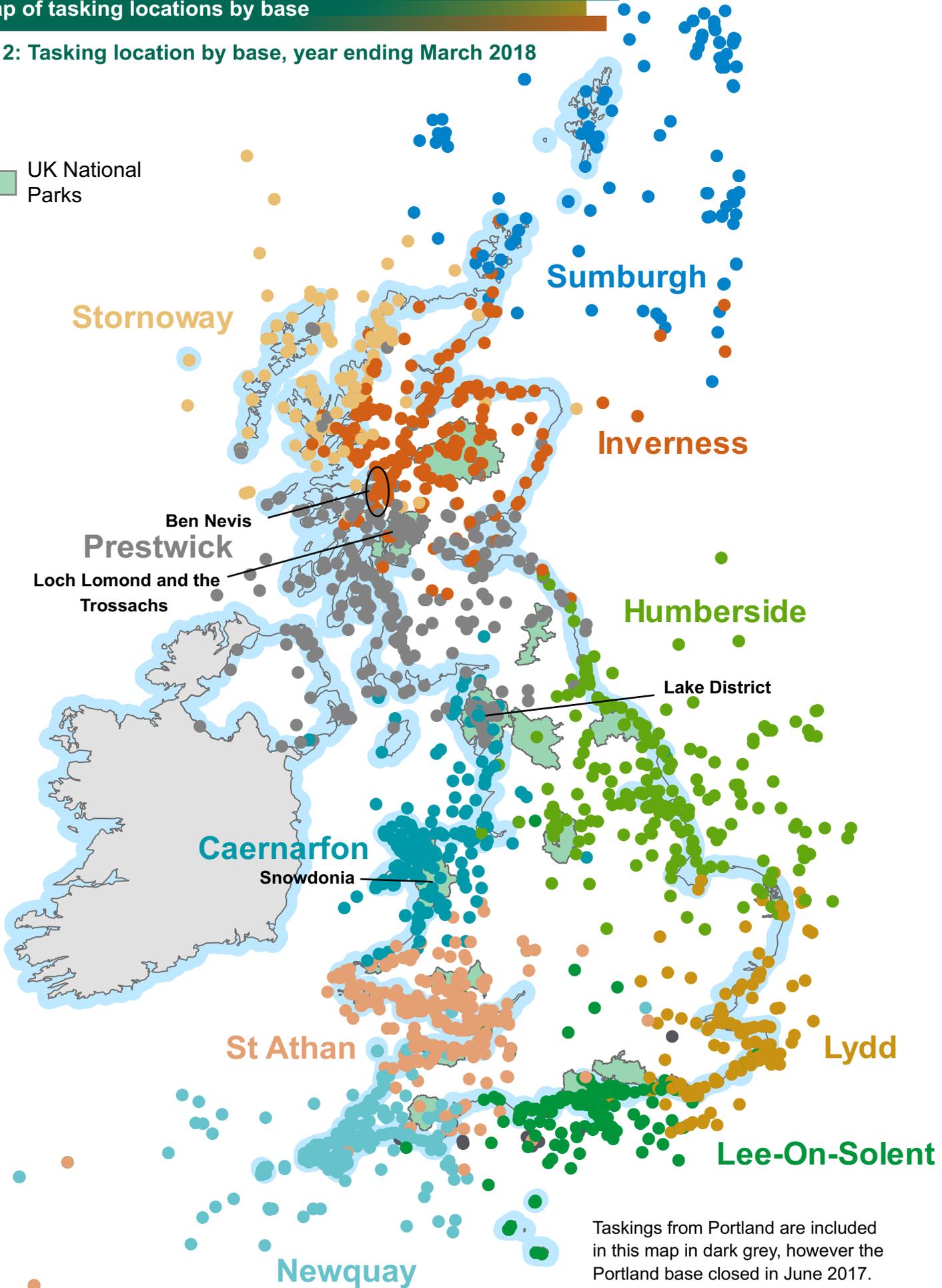
Chart 7: Taskings by time of day, year ending March 2018 [SARH0108](#)



Map of tasking locations by base

Map 2: Tasking location by base, year ending March 2018

UK National Parks

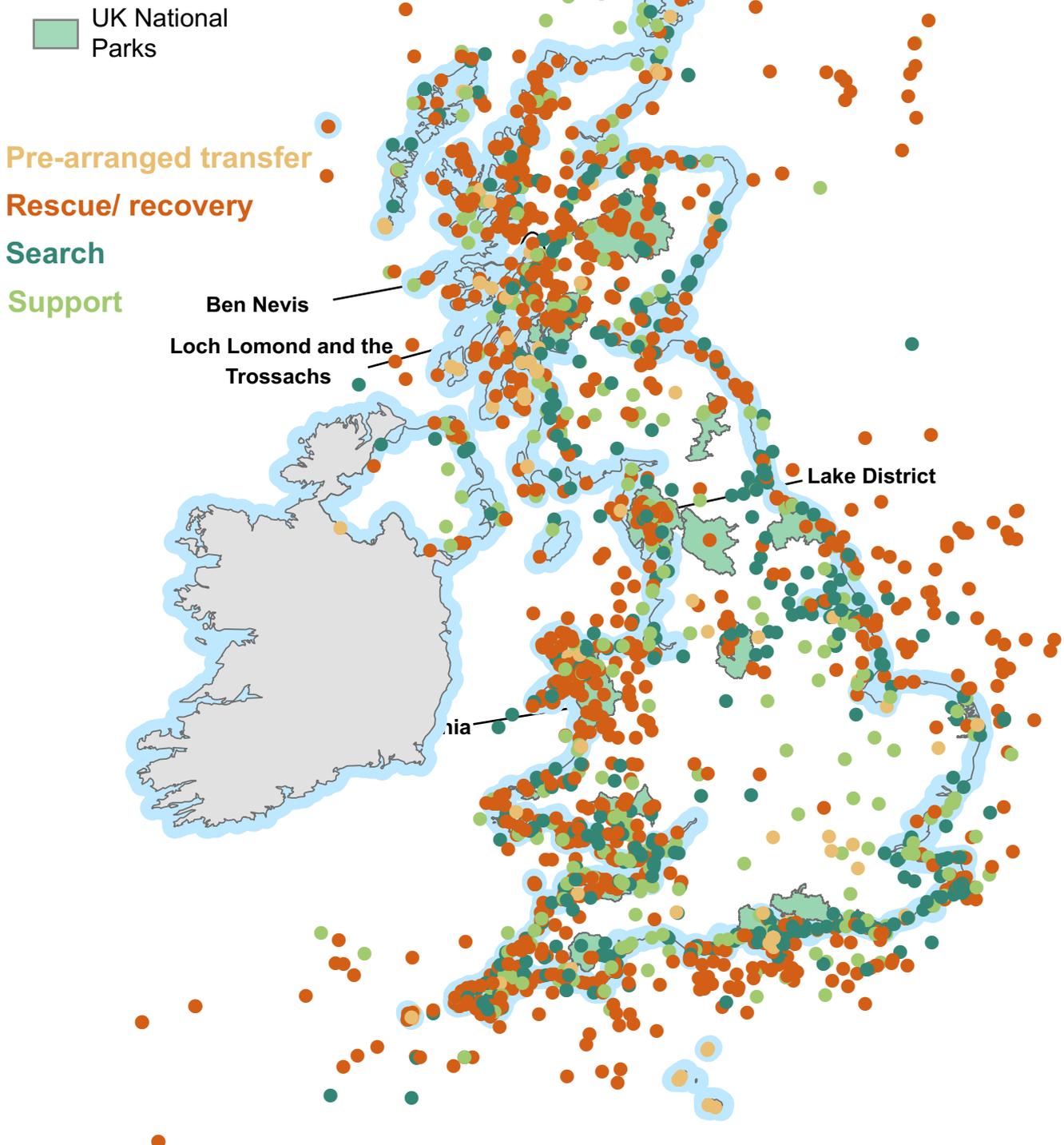


Taskings from Portland are included in this map in dark grey, however the Portland base closed in June 2017.

Map of tasking category

Map 3: Location of taskings by tasking type, year ending March 2018

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.



Tasking by region

During the year ending March 2018, of the 2,636 civilian SARH taskings, 24% took place in the Highlands and Islands region of Scotland. More than half (63%) of the taskings in the Scotland region were land based and taskings in this region were dominated by rescues or recoveries.

The South West England region was the second busiest in the UK, with 567 taskings during the year ending March 2018. Just over half (51%) of taskings in this region took place on the coast. Wales was another busy area, with 447 taskings, of which 66% were land based - with many taking place in or near the Snowdonia national park.

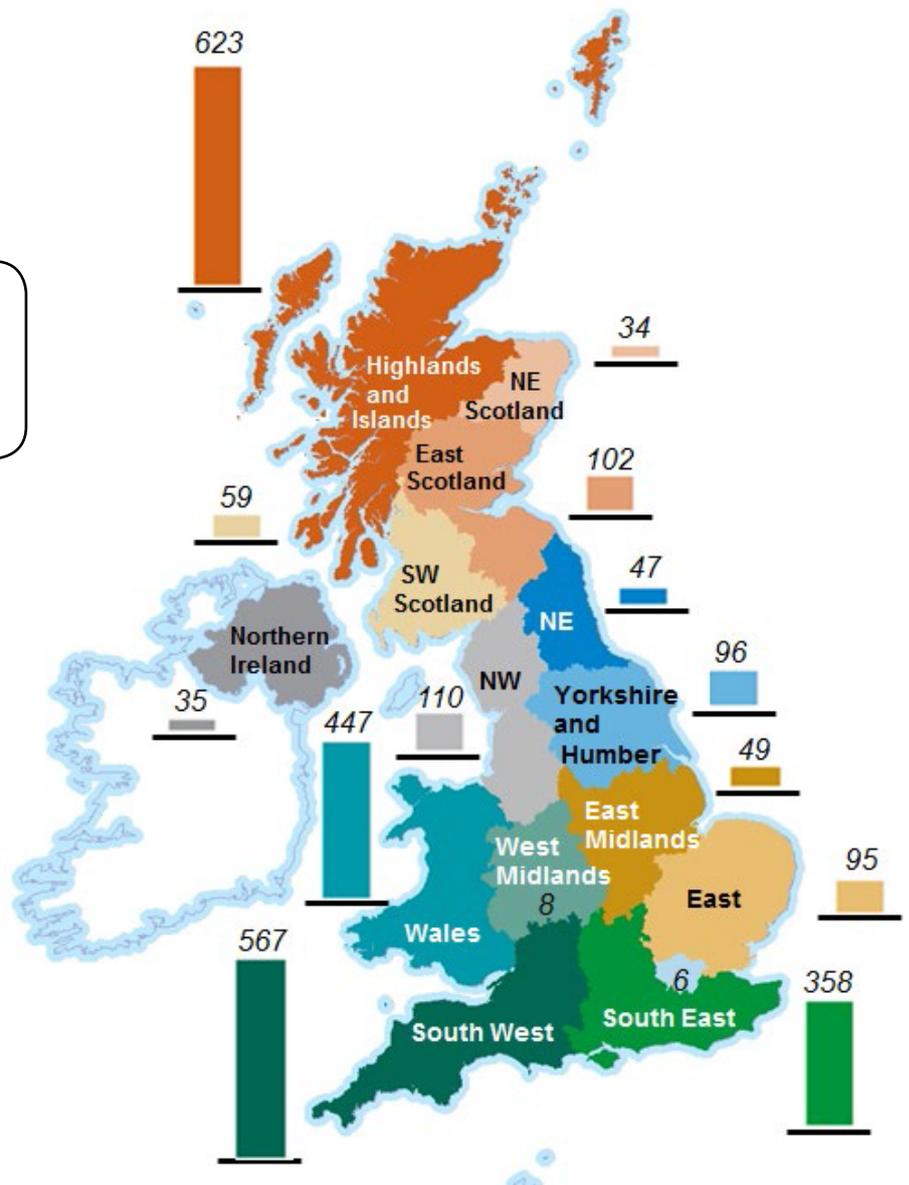
Only 6 taskings took place in London (mainly responded to by the Lydd base) in the year ending March 2018, with no taskings taking place during the latest quarter. Emergencies in London are more likely to be taken care of by other emergency services. The land-locked region of the West Midlands (which is covered mainly by the St Athan base) had 8 taskings during the latest year

Region

Taskings which took place in maritime and coastal locations have been classified to the nearest region. The breakdown was obtained by calculating the distance between the taskings and the outline of the UK regions using the longitude and latitude of the tasking location.

Map 4: Number of taskings by region, year ending March 2018
[SARH0109](#)

SARH Incidents that takes place in Northern Ireland can also be responded to by the Irish coastguard helicopters.



Notes, definitions and information about the quality of these statistics

- These statistics are now designated as National Statistics. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the Code of Practice for Statistics. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure they meet customer needs: <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>
- We now publish a separate document that showcases the strengths and weaknesses of the SARH statistics. To see our strengths and weaknesses and our background quality report visit our guidance page: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/search-and-rescue-helicopter-information>

Data tables and interactive dashboard

- 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 December 2017, DfT introduced an interactive dashboard of SARH taskings. The dashboard which gets updated quarterly covers all SARH taskings from April 2015 onwards: <http://maps.dft.gov.uk/sarh-statistics/interactive-dashboard>.

Uses of these statistics and user engagement

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).

We carried out a short survey in March 2018. Visit our guidance page to see the user survey summary and next steps: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/search-and-rescue-helicopter-information>

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>