



Department for Transport

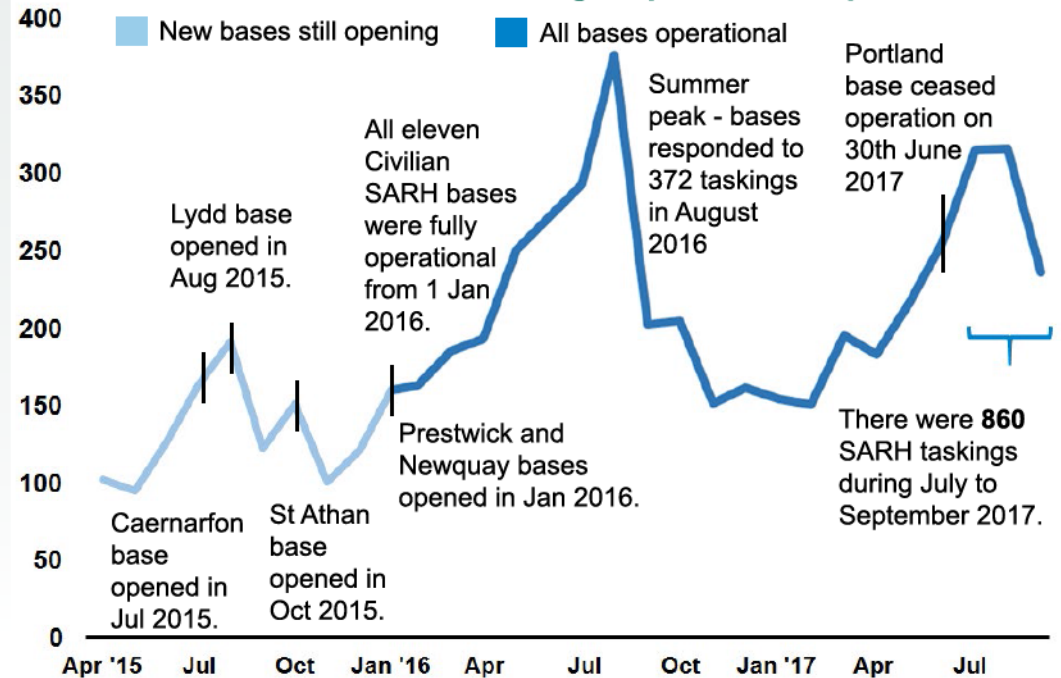
Search and Rescue Helicopter Statistics: July to September 2017

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 July 2017 to 30 September 2017.

There were 860 civilian search and rescue helicopter (SARH) taskings in the UK during July to September 2017.

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



In this publication

- Introduction p2
- Overall trends and tasking category p3
- Persons rescued or assisted p4
- Location of tasking.....p4
- Location type p5
- Map of tasking location....p6
- Map of tasking category.. p7
- User feedback..... p8
- Strengths & weaknesses p8
- Links to other information p10



On average, SAR helicopters across the UK responded to 9 taskings a day during the latest quarter. Newquay had the most taskings, responding to 134 taskings. Sumburgh had the least, responding to 24 taskings.



Of all taskings, 53% were rescues or recoveries during the latest quarter. The Sumburgh base had the highest proportion of rescue or recovery taskings (88%) with the majority taking place out to sea.



Search and rescue helicopter taskings for 2017 peaked in July and August (312 and 313 respectively). This is likely to be due to an increase in leisure activity during the summer period.

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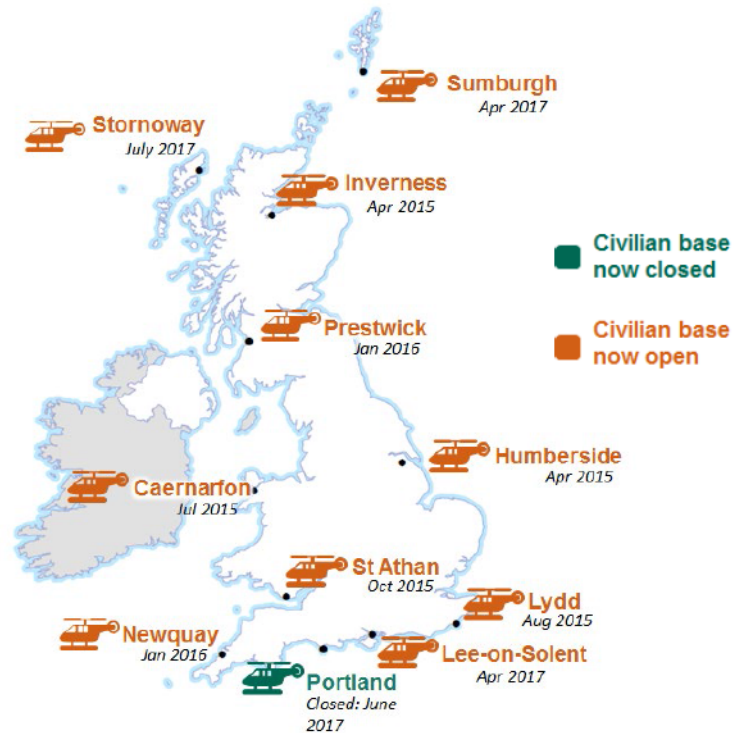


Background information

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 in which all civilian bases are now operational.

Map 1: Civilian SAR Helicopter Bases



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

Changes to data source

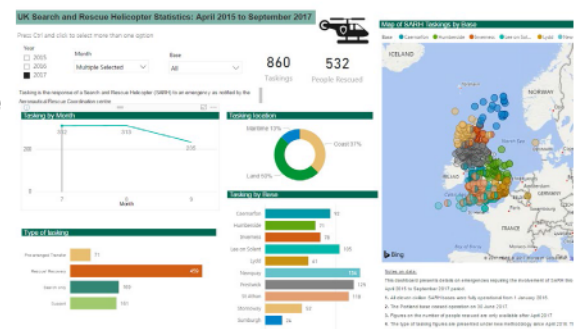
This is the second statistical release which uses data originating from the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre (ARCC). ARCC are responsible for the co-ordination of the search and rescue helicopters, from answering the initial request through to the conclusion of the tasking. Previously, data was 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/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/618846/sarh-changes-to-data-series.pdf

Background quality report

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 Official Statistics principle on quality. The document can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/search-and-rescue-helicopter-statistics-july-to-september-2017>

Interactive dashboard

This is the first SARH release to incorporate an interactive visualisation dashboard. To explore the interactive dashboard follow the link here: <https://maps.dft.gov.uk/sarh-statistics/april-2015-to-September-2017/>. We would appreciate any feedback as we are always trying to improve our statistical outputs.



Overall trends

During July to September 2017, there were 860 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, the Newquay had the most taskings, responding to 134 taskings and Sumburgh had the least responding to 24 taskings.

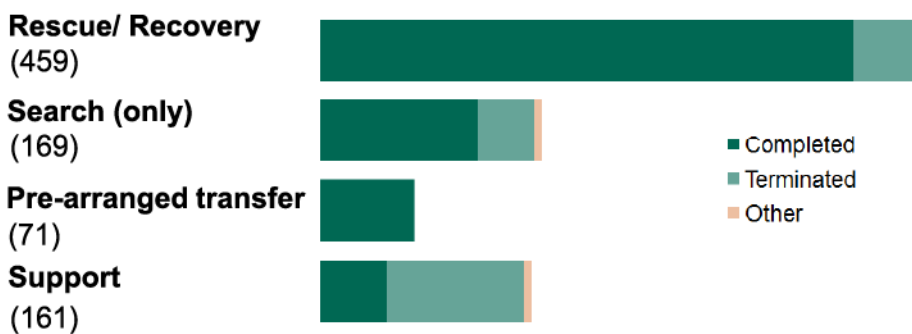
Taskings responded to by the Lee-On-Solent base increased by 59% compared to the same period last year. Other neighbouring Southern bases such as the Newquay and the St Athan base also increased by 35% and 36% respectively. The increase in the number of taskings is likely due to the closure of the Portland base in June 2017.

Tasking categories

Rescue or recovery taskings accounted for 53% of all taskings during July to September 2017.

Pre-arranged transfers accounted for 8% of all taskings during the latest quarter. The greatest proportion of these taskings were carried out by the Newquay and Lee-On-Solent bases (63%), 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, July to September 2017 SARH0102



SAR helicopter services supported and completed around 75% of all taskings during the latest quarter. A further 23% were terminated and 1% were diverted, suspended or cancelled (other)¹.

Of all rescue or recovery taskings, 89% were classified as complete, and a further 11% were terminated.

Of all support taskings 65% 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 July to September 2017, there were 532 people rescued across all taskings and a further 62 people assisted.

SARH bases located in Southern England and Wales rescued the most people (303), accounting for 57% of the total number of people rescued in the latest quarter.

More than a third of all persons rescued (37%) were responded to by the four Scotland helicopter bases. Of all Scotland bases, the Inverness base rescued the highest number of people (74) followed by the Prestwick base with 73 people rescued.

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 half (50%) of all taskings during July to September 2017. A further 37% of taskings took place in coastal areas and 13% took place over maritime.

The majority of pre-arranged transfers took place on land (72%). The majority of searches took place in land (47%) or in coastal locations (43%), with only 10% of search taskings 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, July to September 2017
[SARH0103](#)

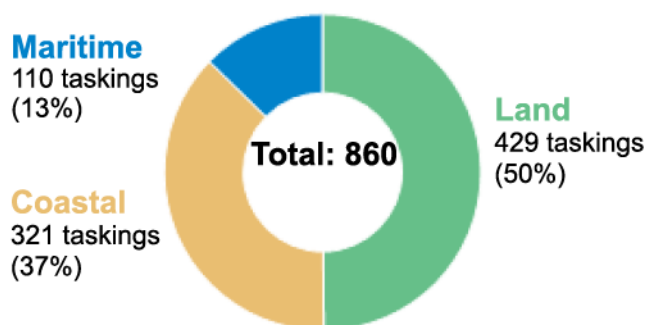
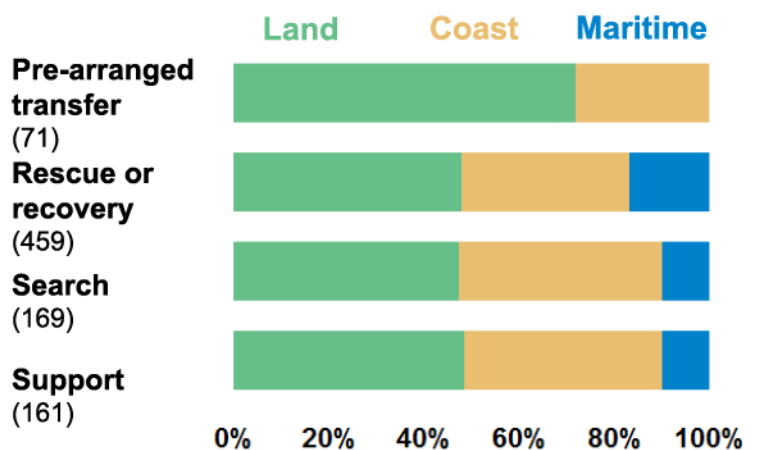


Chart 3: Proportion of taskings by category and location type, July to September 2017
[SARH0105](#)



Location type

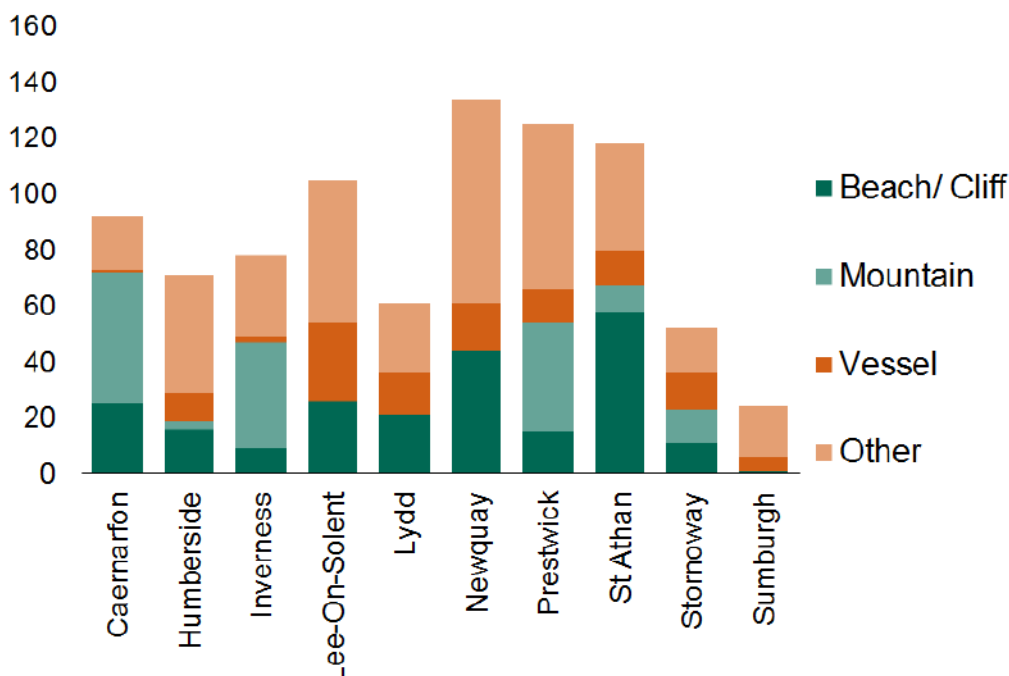
Taskings taking place in beach or cliff areas were the most common location type (aside from other) during July to September 2017, accounting for 26% of all taskings. This was more common in areas in South of England where Southern England helicopter bases operate in areas with leisure activity.

There were 148 taskings taking place in mountainous areas, accounting for 17% of all taskings. 84% 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 13% of all taskings during the latest quarter. Vessel taskings accounted for 27% of all Lee-On-Solent taskings.

The “Other” location type category accounted for 43% of all taskings during the latest quarter.

Chart 4: Breakdown of taskings by location type, July to September 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.

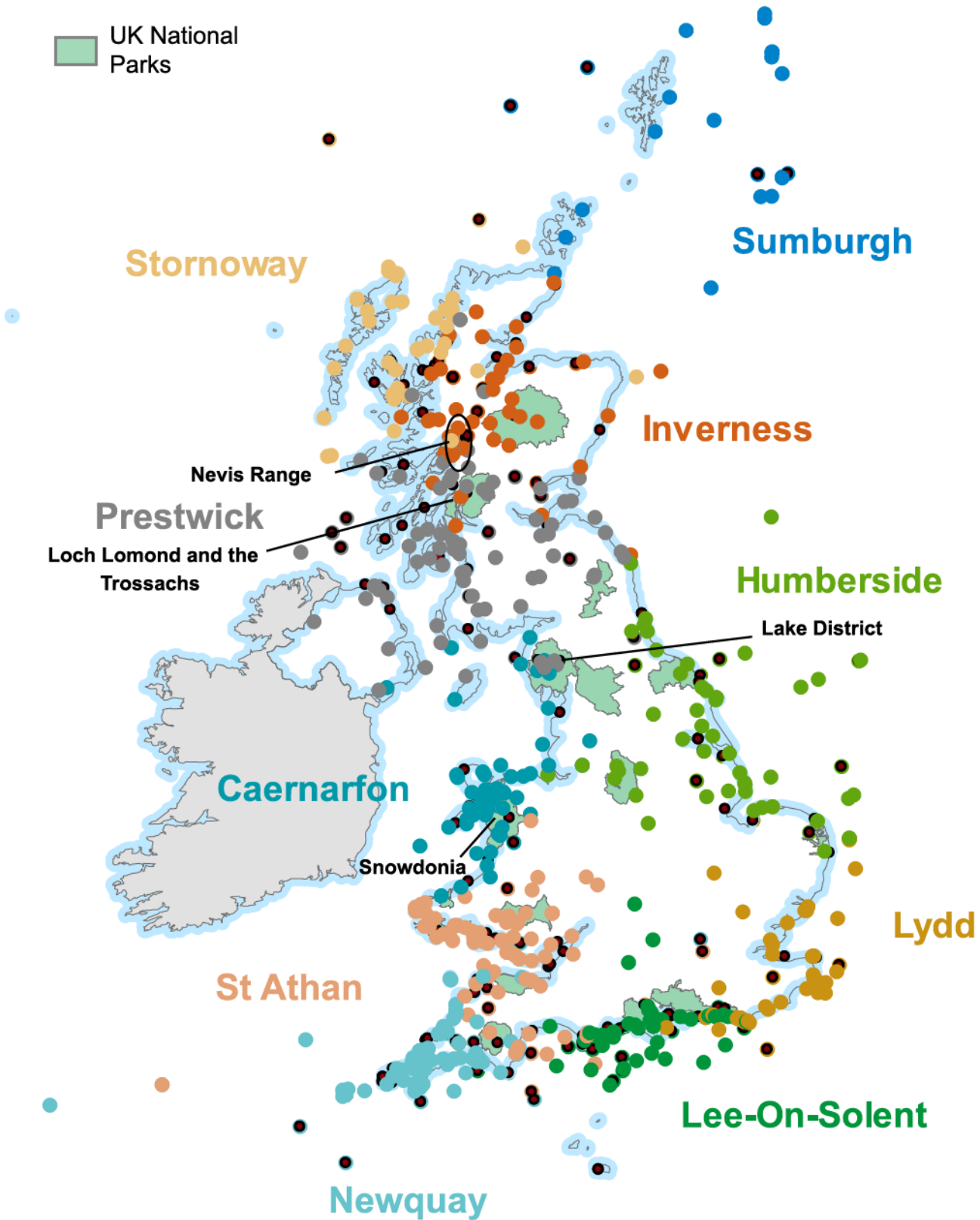
Beach/ Cliff: Includes areas on a beach, cliff face, base or top.

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.

Map of tasking locations by base

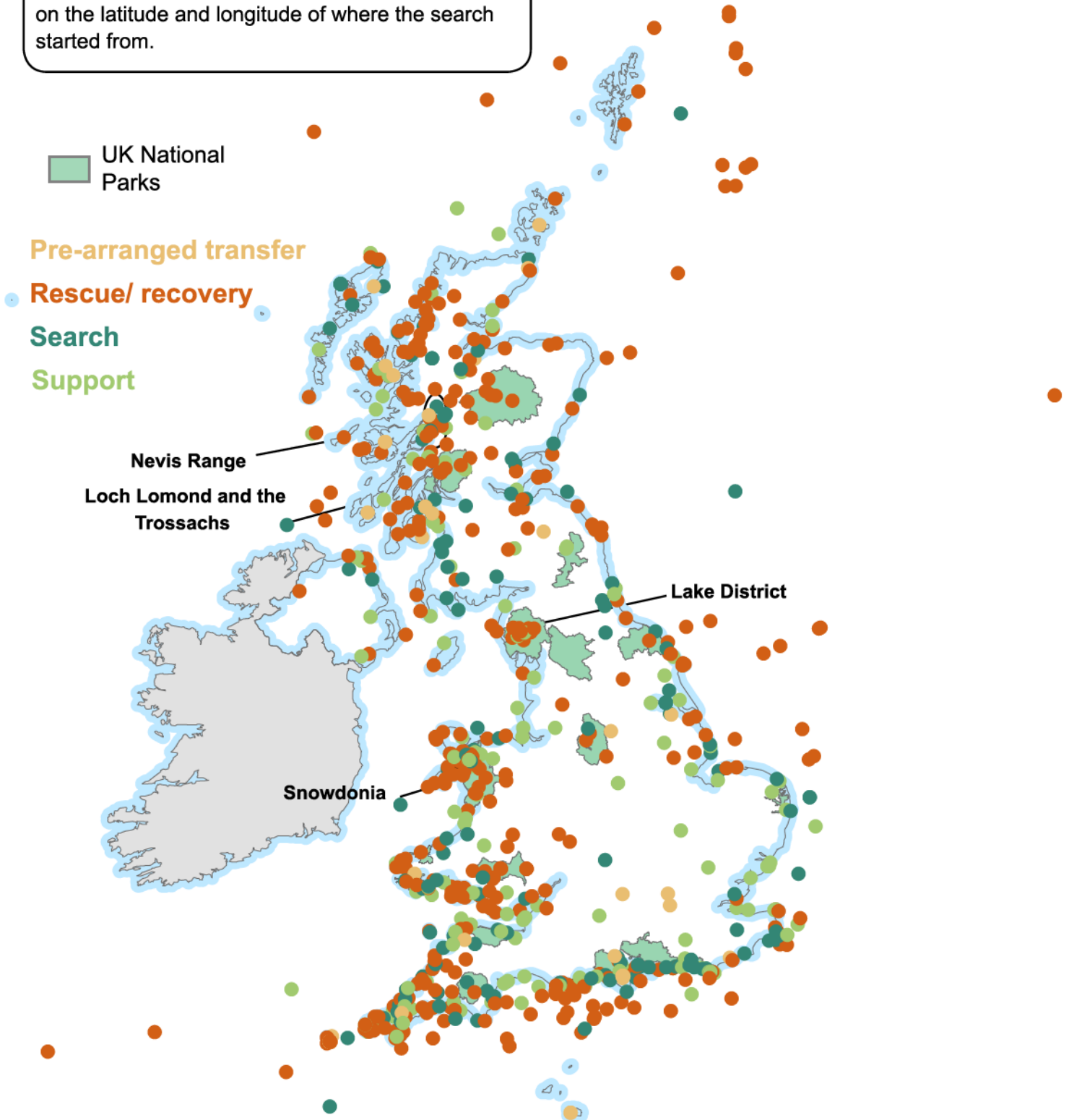
Map 2: Tasking location by base, July to September 2017



Map of tasking category

Map 3: Location of taskings by tasking category, July to September 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 would be grateful for any [feedback](#) that users have on this publication as well as feedback on the use of the new data source and its associated new variables, so that we can consider how the release can better meet user needs and how the dissemination of information can be improved.

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@dft.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

These data are derived from an administrative system which gets inputted by ARCC and provided to DfT by the MCA .

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 Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre (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 National 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](#).