



Department for Transport

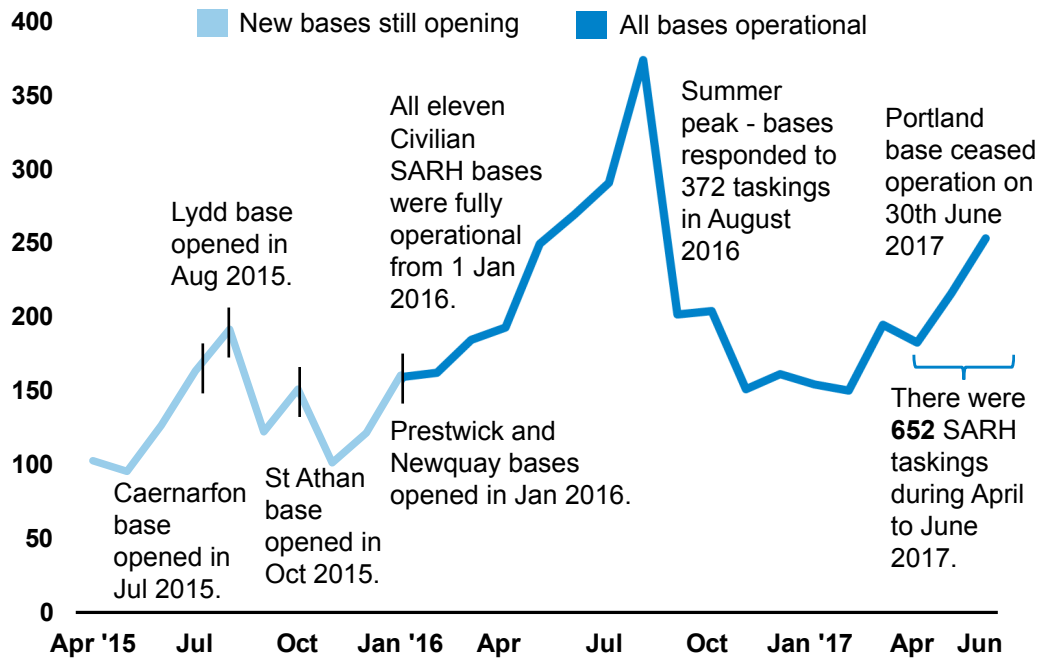
# Search and Rescue Helicopter Statistics: April to June 2017

## 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 April 2017 to 30 June 2017.

There were 652 civilian search and rescue helicopter (SARH) taskings in the UK during April to June 2017.

Total number of civilian SARH taskings, Apr 2015 to June 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
- Breakdown by base.....p8
- User feedback..... p12
- Strengths & weaknesses p12
- Links to other info.....p14



On average, SAR helicopters across the UK responded to 7 taskings a day during the latest quarter. The Newquay base was the busiest, responding to 91 taskings during the latest quarter. The least busy bases were Sumburgh and Portland, responding to 30 and 31 taskings respectively.



Of all taskings, 57% were rescues or recoveries during the latest quarter. The Sumburgh base had the highest proportion of rescue or recovery taskings (83%) with the majority taking place out to sea.



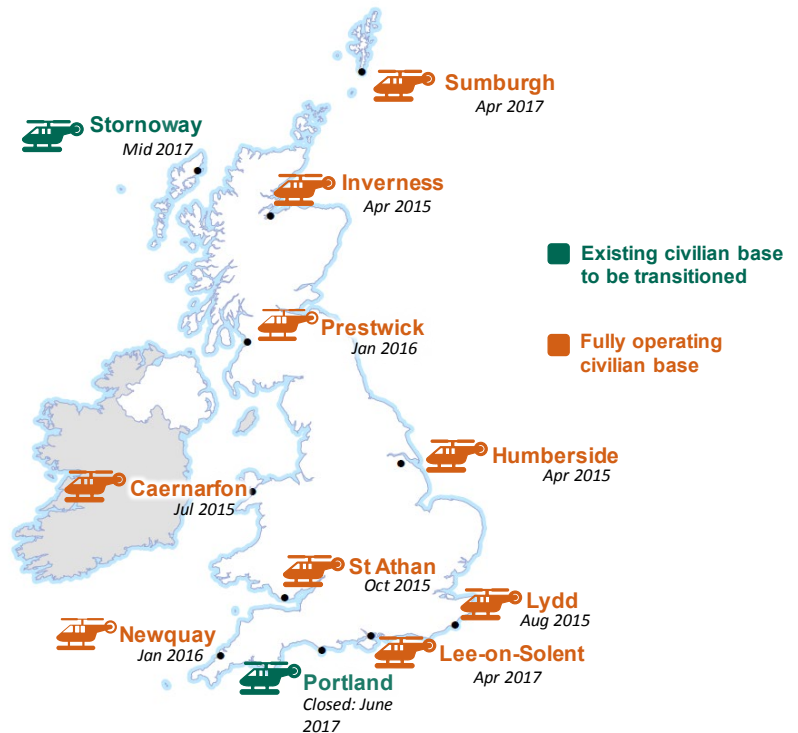
There were 444 people rescued by a SAR helicopter across all taskings during April to June 2017.

### 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 covers the period April to June 2017 on all eleven civilian SARH bases. The Portland base ceased operation on 30th June 2017 due to the introduction of the new contract and therefore statistics on this base will not be available after this publication.

It is worth noting that the Portland base operated a 12 hour (daytime) service in comparison to the other bases that operate 24 hours a day. Therefore, this should be taken into account when interpreting the results.

### Changes to data source

This is the first 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: [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/search-and-rescue-helicopter-statistics-year-ending-march-2017](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/search-and-rescue-helicopter-statistics-year-ending-march-2017)

In this publication, additional analysis is presented on the number of people rescued or assisted and exact location type of a tasking which has been assessed by DfT and the MCA. This analysis will be developed to take into account user needs in the future. Comparing the new data source with the old data source shows there to be minimal impact on past trends, therefore comparisons can be made with previous years' data.

There has been a change in the definitions of the tasking outcome category seen in table [SARH0102](#). This change took place to reflect a general wider terminology used by the aviation sector.

## Overall trends

During April to June 2017, there were 652 taskings overall. Taskings decreased by 8% compared to the same period last year.

Of the eleven bases, the Newquay base was the busiest base, responding to 91 taskings whilst the Sumburgh base responded to the lowest number of taskings (30 taskings).

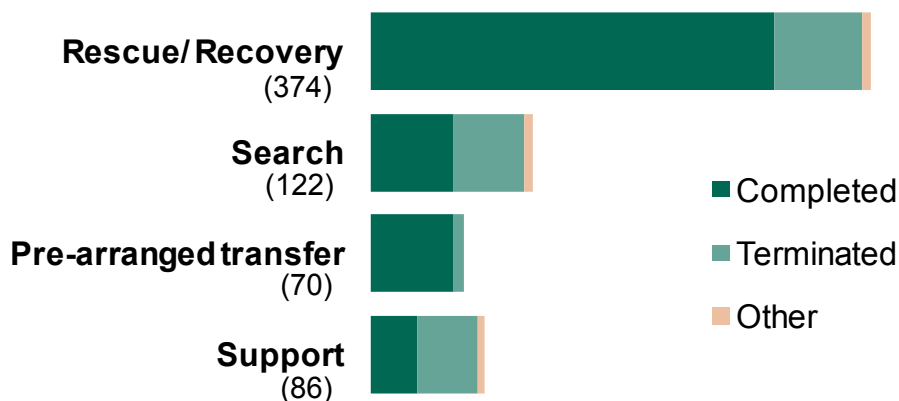
The Portland base (which ceased operation at the end of June 2017) responded to 31 taskings during the latest quarter.

## Tasking categories

Rescue or recovery taskings accounted for 57% of all taskings during April to June 2017.

Pre-arranged transfers accounted for 11% of all taskings during the latest quarter. The greatest proportion of these taskings were carried out by the Newquay and Lee-On-Solent bases (57%), 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, April to June 2017 [SARH0102](#)**



SAR helicopter services supported and completed around 71% of all taskings during the latest quarter, a further 26% were terminated and 3% were diverted, suspended or cancelled (other)<sup>1</sup>.

Of all rescue or recovery taskings, 81% were classed as complete, 18% were terminated and the remaining consisted of taskings that were diverted, suspended or cancelled (2%)<sup>1</sup>.

Over half of all support taskings 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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 is 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 April to June 2017, there were 444 people rescued across all taskings and a further 137 people assisted.

Nearly half of all persons rescued (49%) were by one of the four Scotland helicopter bases. Although Sumburgh responded to the lowest number of taskings during the latest quarter (30 taskings), it rescued around 100 people.

The Newquay base rescued 66 people (across 91 taskings) and the Caernarfon base rescued 48 people (across 86 taskings).

### 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 nearly half (49%) of all taskings during April to June 2017. A further 33% of taskings took place in coastal areas and 18% took place over maritime.

The majority of pre-arranged transfers took place on land (70%). The majority of searches took place on land or in coastal locations, with only 18% of search taskings taking place more than 3 nautical miles out to sea.

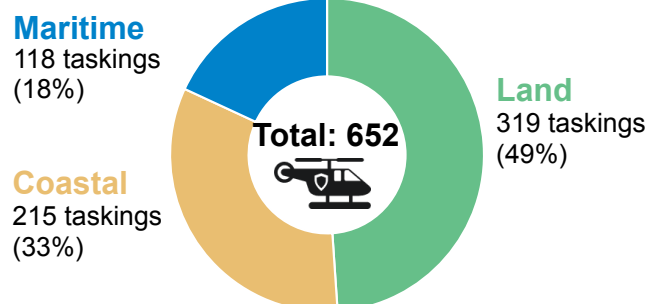
### Definition - Land, coast and maritime

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

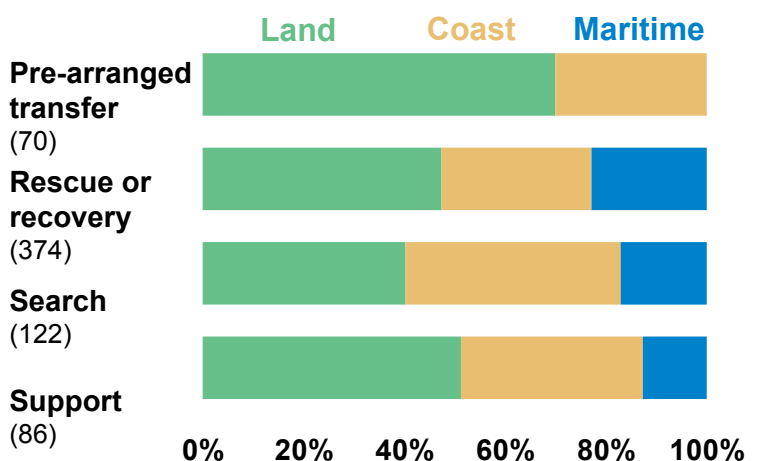
**Maritime:** Taskings that occur more than 3 nautical miles out to sea.

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

**Chart 2: Proportion of taskings by location type, April to June 2017**  
[SARH0103](#)



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



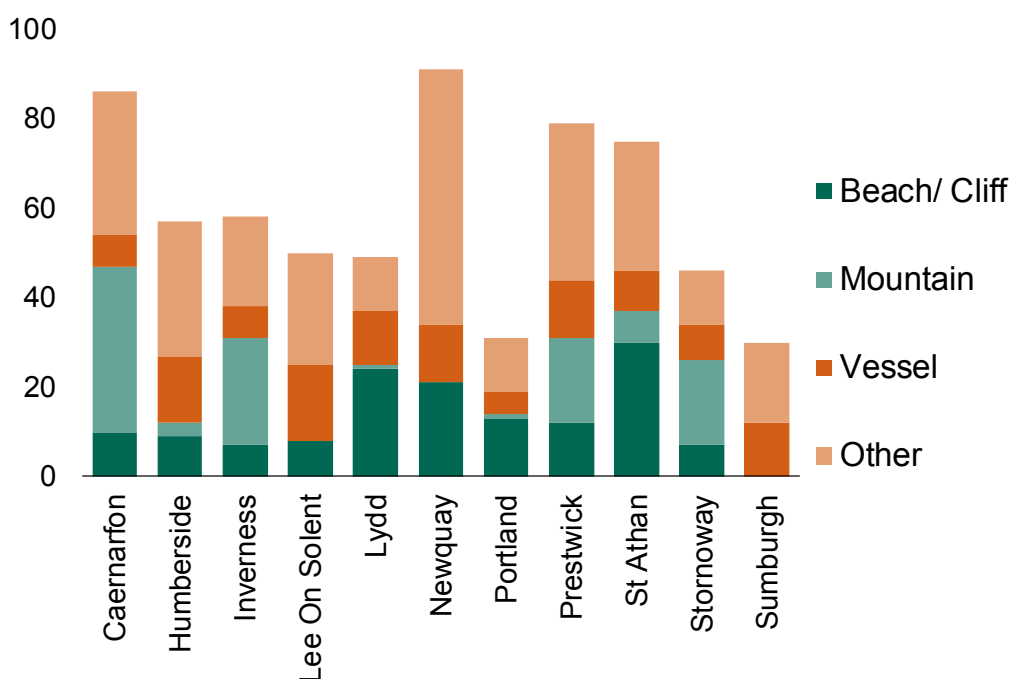
## Location type

Taskings taking place in beach or cliff areas were the most common location type during April to June 2017, accounting for 22% of all taskings. This was more common in areas in South of England where Southern England bases provide services to areas with a large amount of leisure activity.

There were 111 taskings taking place in mountainous areas, accounting for 17% of all taskings. A third of mountainous taskings were responded to by the Caernarfon base and in particular rescues from the Snowdonia National Park.

Taskings involving a vessel (commercial and leisure) accounted for 18% of all taskings during the latest quarter. Vessel taskings accounted for 40% of all Sumburgh taskings.

**Chart 4: Breakdown of taskings by location type April to June 2017**



### Definition - Location type of tasking

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

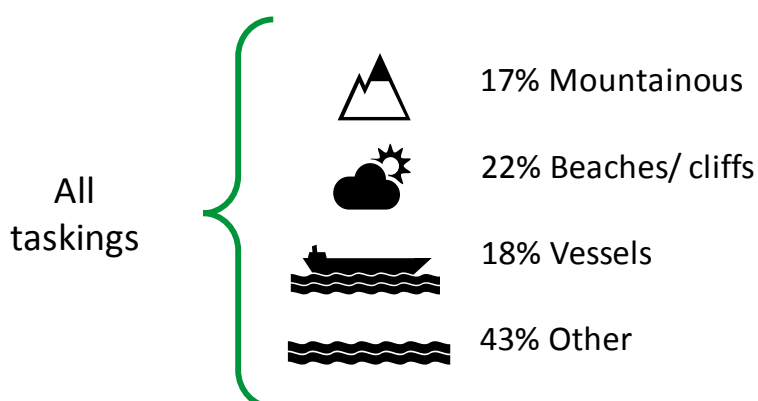
**Mountain:** Includes areas of significantly high ground such as a mountain side, ridge, summit or group of hills.

**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.

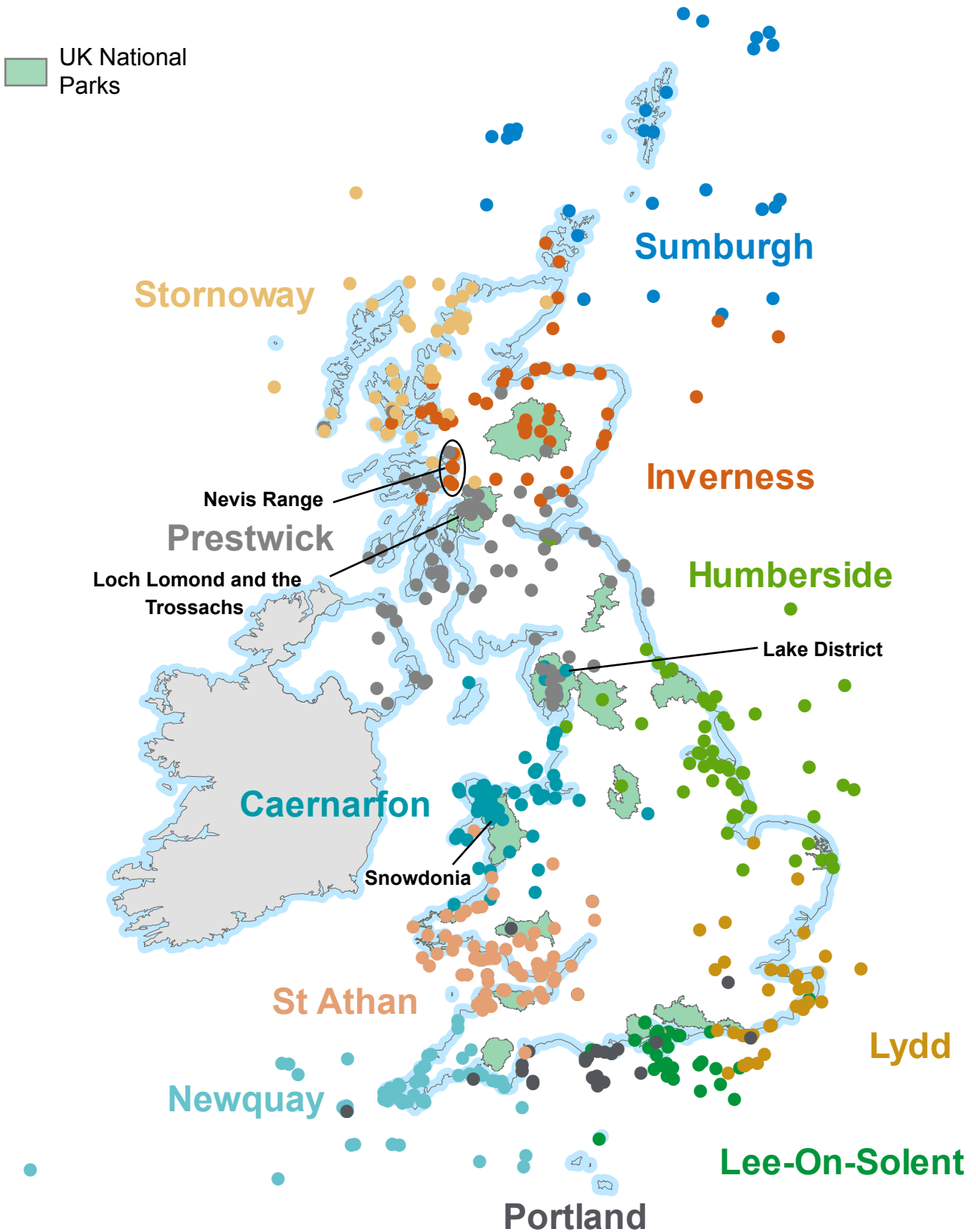
**Chart 5: Location type tasking breakdown, April to June 2017 SARH0114.**



The "Other" category accounted for 43% of all taskings during the latest quarter, of which a quarter of these taskings were a pre-arranged transfer to a medical facility.

# Map of tasking locations by base

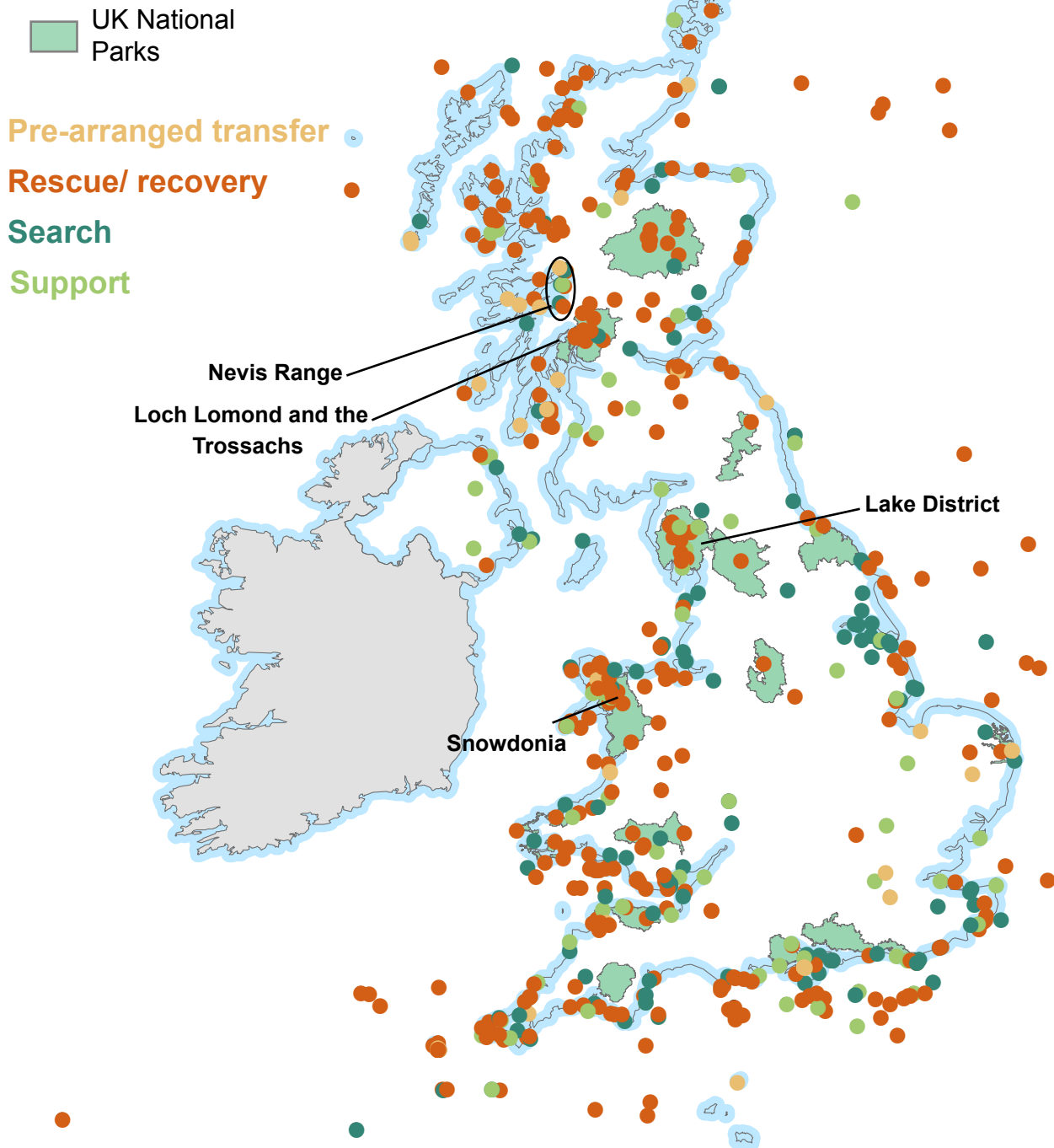
Map 2: Tasking location by base, April to June 2017



## Map of tasking category

Map 3: Location of taskings by tasking category, April to June 2017

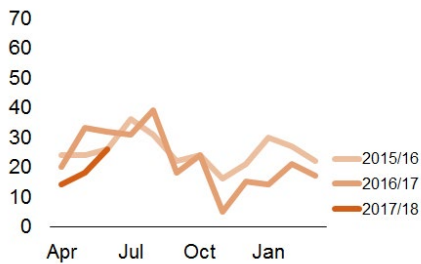
Where a tasking resulted in a rescue or recovery, the final location in latitude and longitude (e.g. where a person was rescued from) is marked on the map. For other tasking types (e.g. where only a search took place), then the location is based on the latitude and longitude of where the search started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



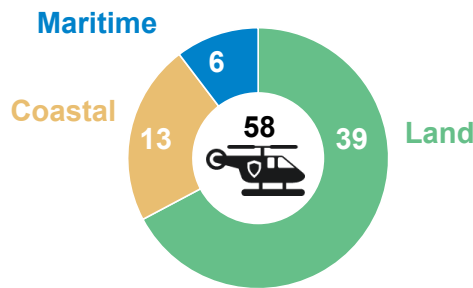
## Breakdown by base, April to June 2017

### Inverness

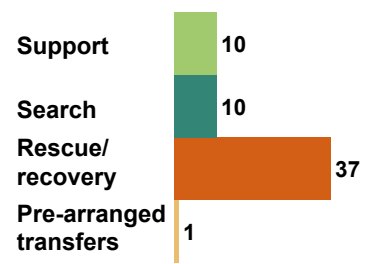
#### Number of Taskings



#### Location



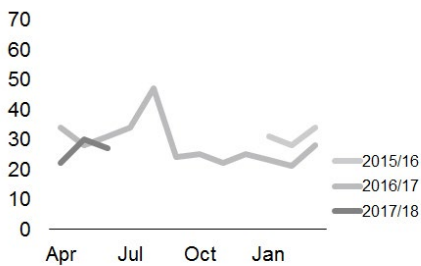
#### Type of tasking



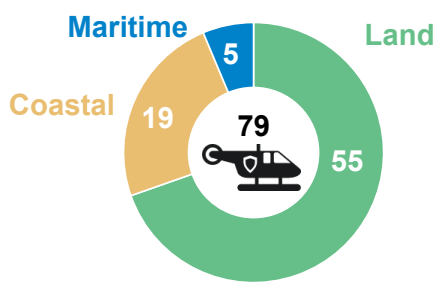
- The Inverness base responded to 58 taskings during April to June 2017, a 32% decrease from the same quarter last year.
- Land based taskings accounted for 67% of all Inverness taskings - the majority of Inverness land taskings took place in the Highlands and Islands region and the Cairngorms National Park.

### Prestwick

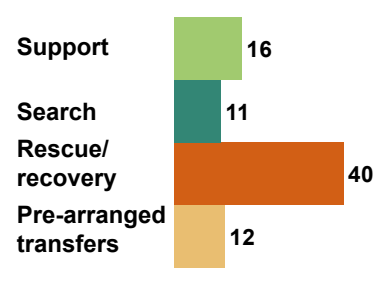
#### Number of Taskings



#### Location



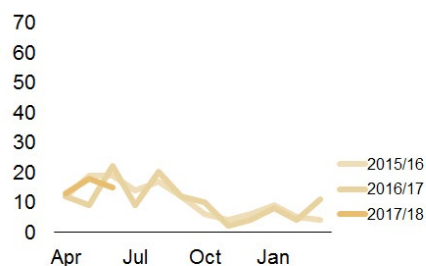
#### Type of tasking



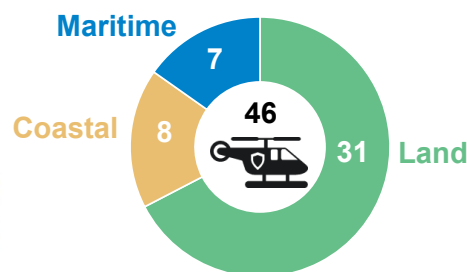
- The Prestwick base responded to 79 taskings during April to June 2017, a 15% decrease from the same quarter last year.
- The base carried out the second highest number of land taskings, with many in or near Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. More than half of taskings were rescue or recovery.

### Stornoway

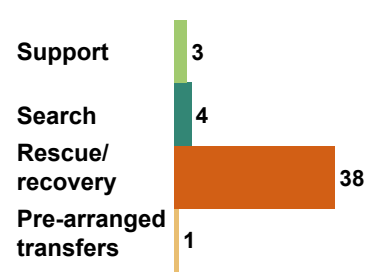
#### Number of Taskings



#### Location



#### Type of tasking



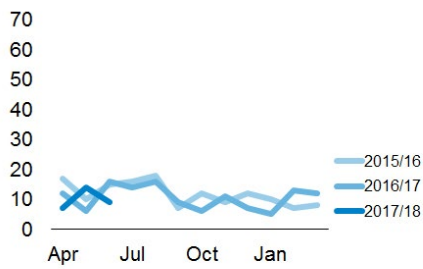
- Stornoway responded to 46 taskings during the latest quarter, a 7% increase from the same quarter last year. Of all taskings, 67% were land taskings, 17% coastal and 15% maritime<sup>1</sup>.
- Rescue or recovery taskings accounted for 83% of all Stornoway taskings and around 41% of all Stornoway taskings took place in mountainous areas.

<sup>1</sup> figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

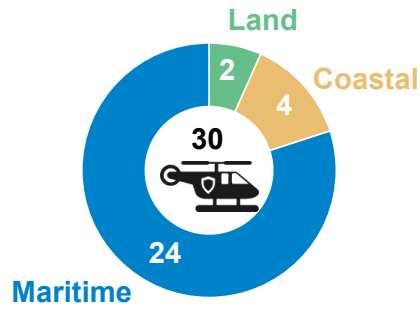


## Sumburgh

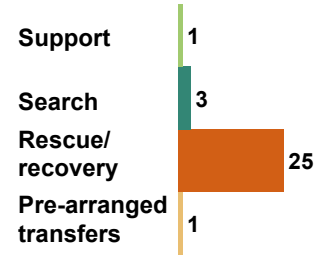
Number of Taskings



Location



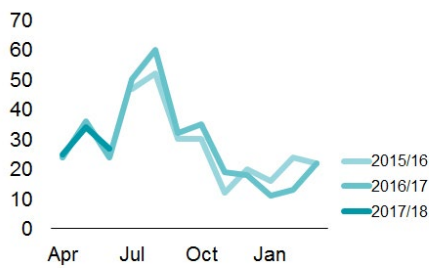
Type of tasking



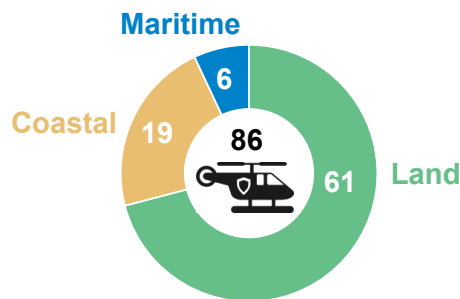
- The Sumburgh base responded to the lowest number of taskings of any bases during the latest quarter.
- Of all Sumburgh taskings, 83% were rescue or recovery, with the majority taking place over maritime.

## Caernarfon

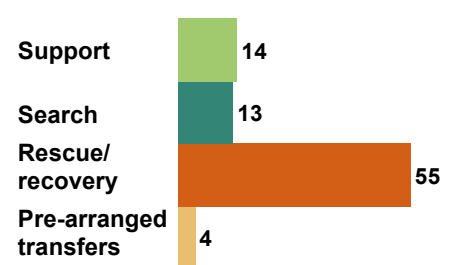
Number of Taskings



Location



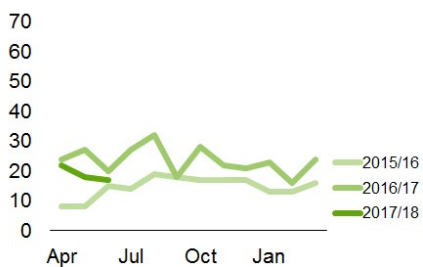
Type of tasking



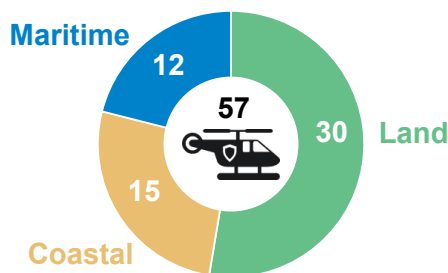
- The Caernarfon base responded to 86 taskings (the second highest compared to other helicopter bases) during April to June 2017, similar to the same quarter last year.
- Land based taskings accounted for 71% of all Caernarfon taskings. Most taskings taking place in or near the Snowdonia National Park were responded to by the Caernarfon base.
- The Caernarfon base responded to the most rescue or recovery taskings out of all eleven bases.

## Humberside

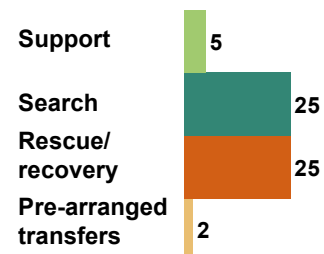
Number of Taskings



Location



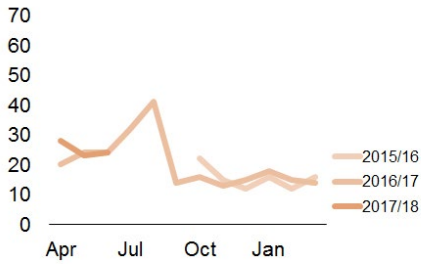
Type of tasking



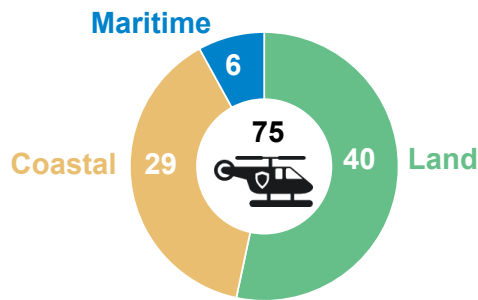
- Taskings responded to by the Humberside base were 20% lower in the latest quarter compared to the same quarter last year.
- Of all Humberside taskings, 53% took place over land, 26% were over coastal areas and a further 21% were maritime taskings during April to June 2017.

## St Athan

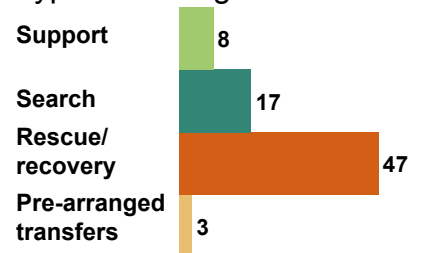
### Number of Taskings



### Location



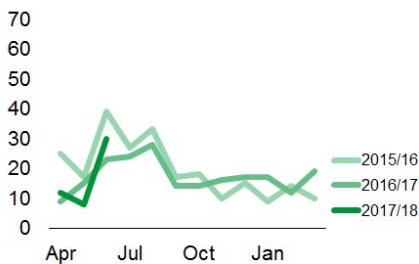
### Type of tasking



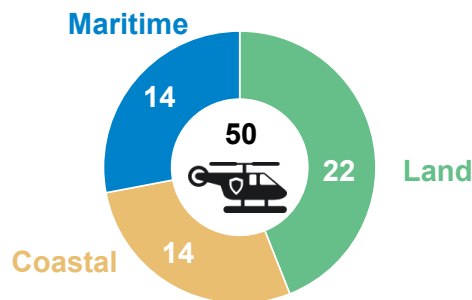
- The St Athan base responded to 75 taskings, a 10% increase compared to the same quarter last year.
- During April to June 2017, land based taskings accounted for over half of all St Athan taskings (53%) including in and around the Brecon Beacons National Park.
- The St Athan base responded to 47 rescue or recovery taskings during the latest quarter, accounting for around 63% of all St Athan taskings.

## Lee-On-Solent

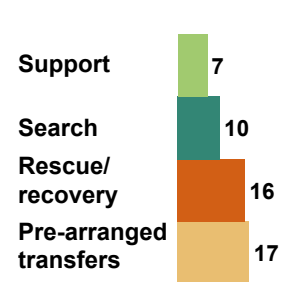
### Number of Taskings



### Location



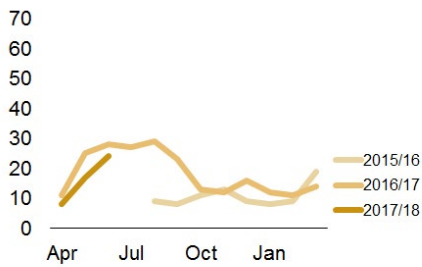
### Type of tasking



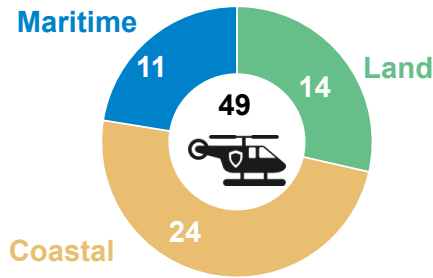
- The Lee-On-Solent base responded to 50 taskings during April to June 2017, a 6% increase from the same quarter in 2016.
- Land based taskings accounted for 44% of all Lee-On-Solent taskings.
- Compared to all bases, Lee-On-Solent carried out the highest proportion of pre-arranged transfers (34%). The majority of pre-arranged transfers took place between the Isle of Wight and Southampton or Portsmouth.

## Lydd

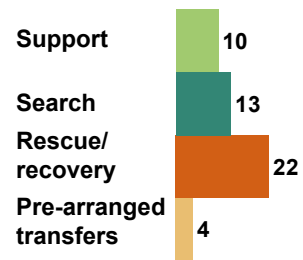
### Number of Taskings



### Location



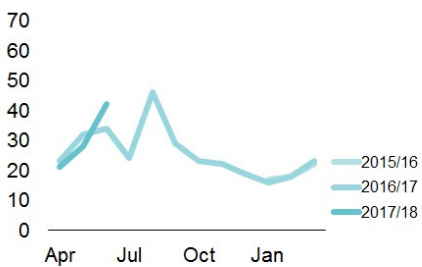
### Type of tasking



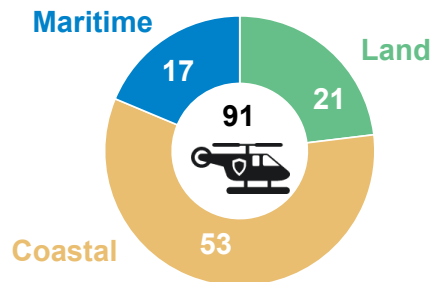
- The Lydd base responded to 49 taskings during April to June 2017, an average of 16 taskings per month. There was a 23% decrease in the number of taskings carried out compared to the same quarter last year.
- Similar to other southern England bases (with the exception of Lee-On-Solent), coastal taskings tend to dominate with 49% of all Lydd taskings taking place in coastal areas.

## Newquay

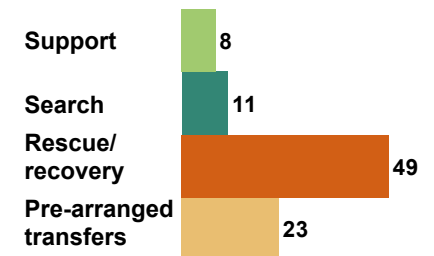
### Number of Taskings



### Location



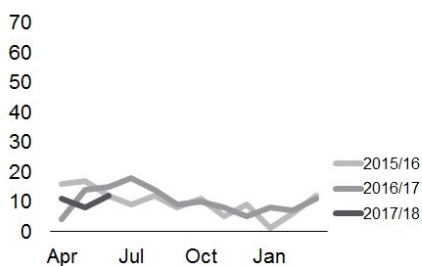
### Type of tasking



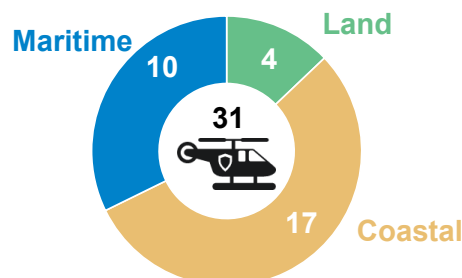
- The Newquay base was the busiest base during April to June 2017, responding to 91 taskings, a 2% increase compared to the same period last year.
- Coastal taskings accounted for 58% of all Newquay's taskings - which makes up 25% of all coastal taskings in the latest quarter.
- Of all Newquay taskings, 54% were rescue or recovery, which mainly took place in coastal areas and a further 25% of its taskings were pre-arranged transfers.

## Portland

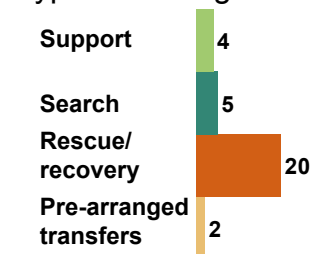
### Number of Taskings



### Location



### Type of tasking



- Portland responded to 31 taskings<sup>2</sup> during April to June 2017 and was one of the least busy bases, averaging around 10 taskings per month.
- Of all Portland taskings, 55% took place in coastal areas, 32% over maritime and 13% over land.

<sup>2</sup> Portland base operated a 12 hour (daytime) service in comparison to the other bases that operate 24 hours a day.

## 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@df.t.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:SARH.Stats@df.t.gsi.gov.uk). For queries relating to other SARH areas, please contact [SAR.data@mcga.gov.uk](mailto: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. 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.

Following a tasking, the ARCC records incident data and this is 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 mid point 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.)

## 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/>. An updated map for 2017/18 taskings will be available in May 2018.
- 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](#).