



Department for Transport

Search and Rescue Helicopter Statistics: Year ending March 2019

About this release

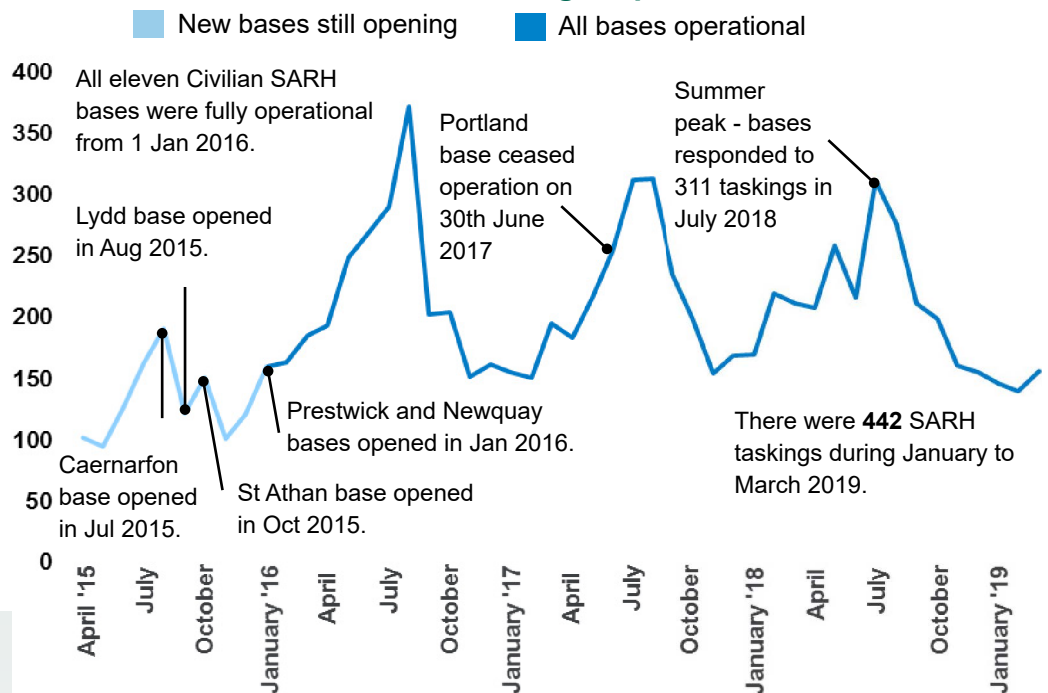
This release covers civilian search and rescue helicopter (SARH) operations in the UK. The data originates from the Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centre (ARCC) who are responsible for the co-ordination of a SAR helicopter and is provided to DfT by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). This release covers the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

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There were 2,438 civilian search and rescue helicopter (SARH) taskings in the UK in the year ending March 2019. This is an 8% decrease compared to the year ending March 2018.

Total number of civilian SARH taskings, April 2015 to March 2019



On average, SAR helicopters across the UK together responded to 7 taskings a day during the year ending March 2019. Newquay and Prestwick had the most taskings, responding to 341 and 318 taskings respectively. The Stornoway and Sumburgh bases had the least, responding to 131 and 143 taskings, respectively.



Of all taskings, 50% were rescues or recoveries. The Sumburgh base had the highest proportion of rescue or recovery taskings (83%) with the majority taking place at sea.



1,606 people were rescued and 182 assisted by SAR helicopters across all taskings during the year ending March 2019.

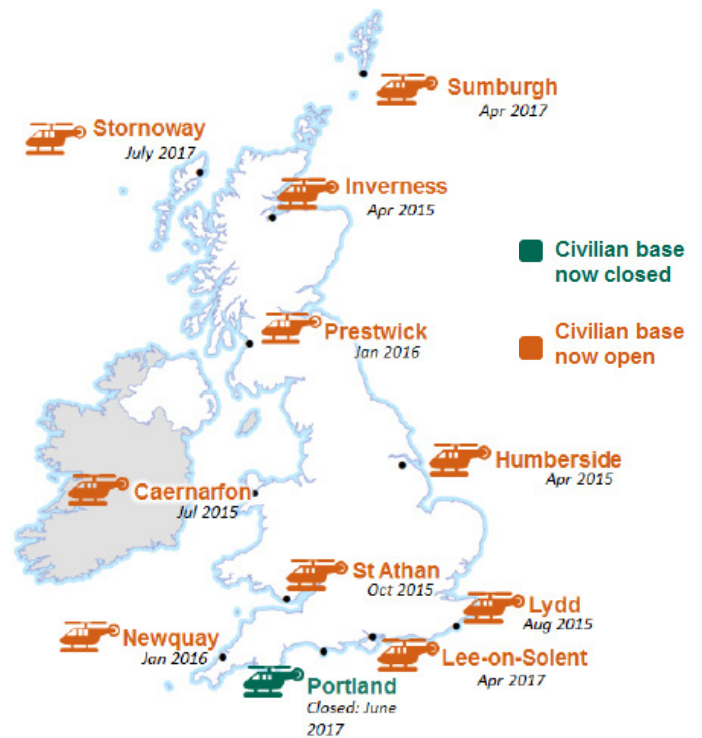
Background information

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 2019 for all ten current civilian SARH bases.

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 in March 2018, 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

Published alongside this release is an interactive dashboard, which can be explored by following the link here: <http://maps.dft.gov.uk/sarh-statistics/interactive-dashboard>. We appreciate any feedback that might help us improve our statistical outputs.

Overall trends

During the year ending March 2019 there were 2,438 taskings overall. During the latest quarter (January to March 2019) there were 442 taskings, a 26% decrease compared to the same quarter in the previous year. The decrease in taskings may in part be due to the adverse snowy weather in February and March 2018, which may have contributed to an increase in helicopter call outs from some of the 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, Newquay and Prestwick had the most taskings in the year ending March 2019, responding to 341 and 318 taskings respectively.

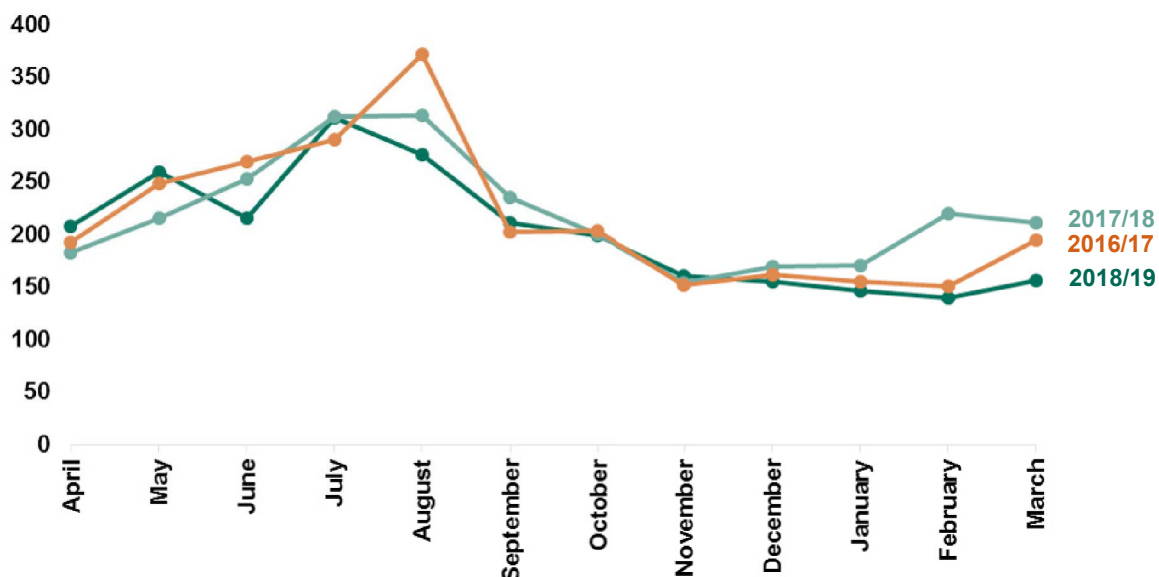
Table 1: Summary of SARH taskings by year

Helicopter Base	2017/18	2018/19	% Change
Caernarfon	303	291	↓ -4%
Humberside	246	222	↓ -10%
Inverness	271	254	↓ -6%
Lee-On-Solent	286	296	↑ 4%
Lydd	189	214	↑ 13%
Newquay	359	341	↓ -5%
Portland	31	0	↓ -100%
Prestwick	361	318	↓ -12%
St Athan	311	228	↓ -27%
Stornoway	145	131	↓ -10%
Sumburgh	134	143	↑ 7%

Increases seen in the year ending March 2018 have not been replicated in the latest year. Previously, the number of taskings responded to by the Lee-On-Solent base increased by 38% compared to the year before, whilst the St Athan base increased by 26%. The year ending March 2019 saw a return to previous levels for St Athan, but a further 4% increase for Lee-on-Solent. These increases could be due to various factors, including the closure of the Portland base in June 2017.

There were lower levels of taskings during the last quarter (January to March) of 2018/19 compared to the same period the previous year, possibly reflecting the adverse snowy weather in February and March 2018. Otherwise, the monthly pattern in taskings for the 2018/19 year was generally in line with the 2016/17 and 2017/18 trends.

Chart 1: Civilian SARH taskings by year and month, April 2016 to March 2019 [SARH0112](#)

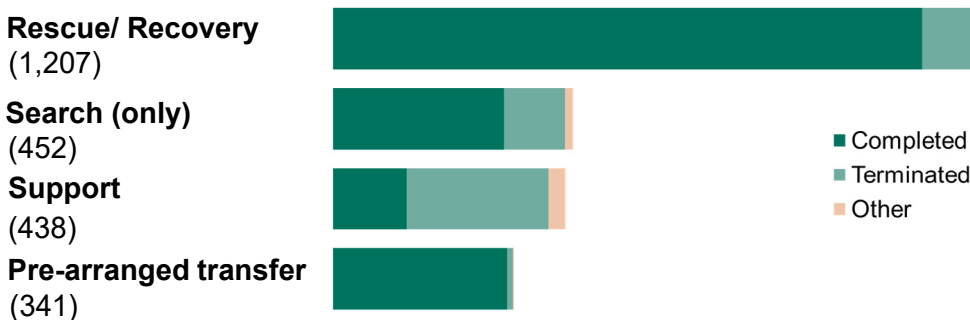


Tasking categories

In the year ending March 2019, there were 1,207 rescue or recovery taskings, accounting for 50% of all taskings. This was a 14% 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 Newquay bases accounting for 15% and 14% of the total rescue / recovery taskings respectively. When looking at each base in isolation, the Sumburgh base had the highest proportion (83%) of its taskings as rescues or recoveries, most of which were carried out at sea - 119 taskings in total. This base responded to 143 taskings in total over the year.

Pre-arranged transfers accounted for 14% of all taskings during the year ending March 2019. 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 2019 [SARH0102](#)



Tasking Outcome

SAR helicopter services supported and completed around 78% of all taskings during the year ending March 2019. A further 20% were terminated and 2% were diverted, suspended or cancelled (other).

Of all rescue or recovery taskings 92% were classified as complete, 8% were terminated, with a further 1% being recorded as other.

Of all support taskings 61% 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 2019, there were 1,606 people rescued across all taskings.

Of all those rescued, 40% were rescued by the four helicopter bases in Scotland. Newquay was the base with the highest number of rescues over the year, 282 in total.

During the year ending March 2019, 182 people were assisted, of which 45% were accounted for by the Lydd and the Prestwick bases.

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.

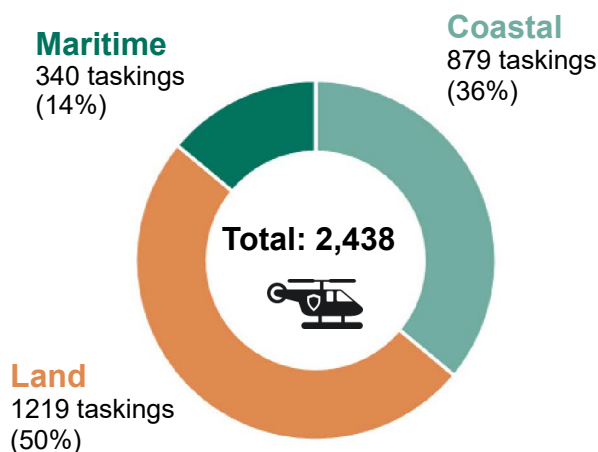
Note that in some cases, a SAR helicopter may respond to a tasking where more than one person was rescued. On occasion, this can be a large number of people from one emergency for example, a rescue involving a fishing vessel. Therefore, this should be taken into account when interpreting the statistics.

Location of tasking

Land based taskings accounted for half of SARH taskings during the year ending March 2019 at 50%. This is a 3 percentage point decrease on the previous year.

The majority of pre-arranged transfers took place on land (71%). The majority of searches took place on land and coastal areas (89%) with 11% taking place at sea.

Chart 3: Proportion of taskings by location type, year ending March 2019
SARH0112

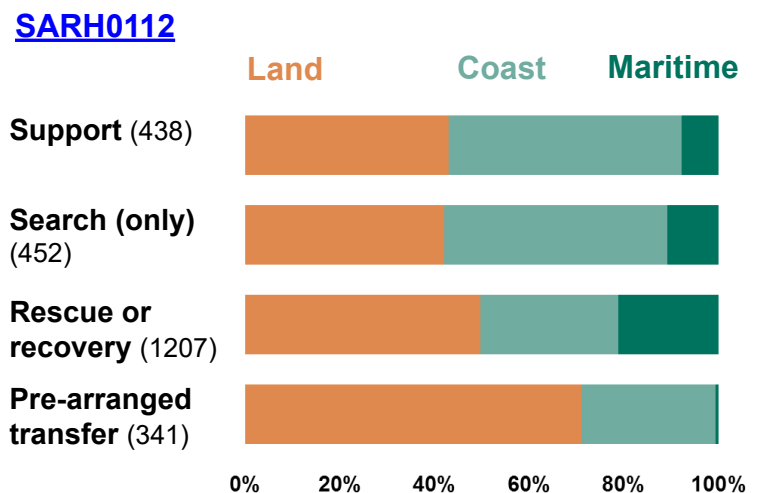


Coast: Taskings occurring between 0.2 miles inland and 3 nautical miles out to sea.

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 4: Proportion of taskings by tasking type and location type, year ending March 2019
SARH0112

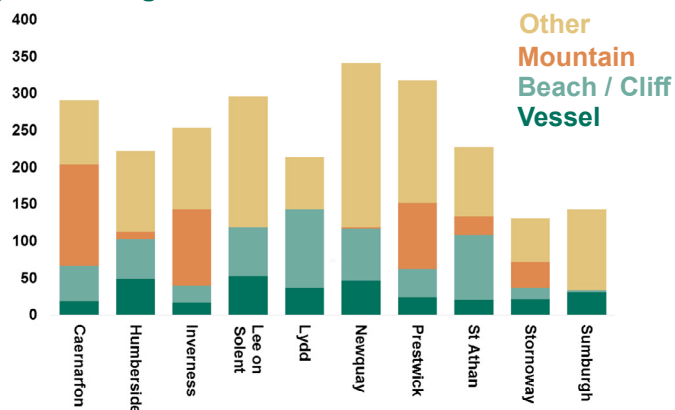


Breakdown of location type

Where helicopter bases operate in areas with high quantities of coastal leisure activity, taskings taking place in beach or cliff areas were the most common location type (aside from other) during the year ending March 2019. Over all bases, beach or cliff taskings accounted for 21% of total taskings.

A total of 401 taskings took place in mountain areas, accounting for 16% of all taskings. 82% of mountain taskings were responded to by the Caernarfon, Prestwick and Inverness bases. In particular, a lot of the mountain rescues were in regions that include Snowdonia, Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Parks.

Chart 5: Breakdown of taskings by location, year ending March 2019 SARH0114



Taskings involving a vessel (commercial and leisure) accounted for 13% of all taskings. Vessel taskings accounted for 22% of all Humberstone and Sumburgh taskings.

The "Other" location type category accounted for 49% of all taskings during the year ending March 2019.

In the year ending March 2019, taskings occurred more frequently during the weekend, reflecting previous years' trends. Saturday was the busiest day of the week with 465 taskings, with Sunday being the second busiest with 451 taskings. Rescue or recovery taskings accounted for around half of all taskings every day of the week.

In the year ending March 2019, nearly half (43%) of taskings started between 12pm and 5:59pm. The quietest 3 hour period was 3am to 5:59am accounting for 4% 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 2019 SARH0112

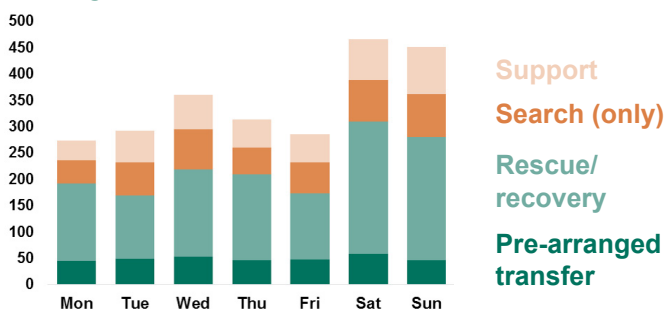
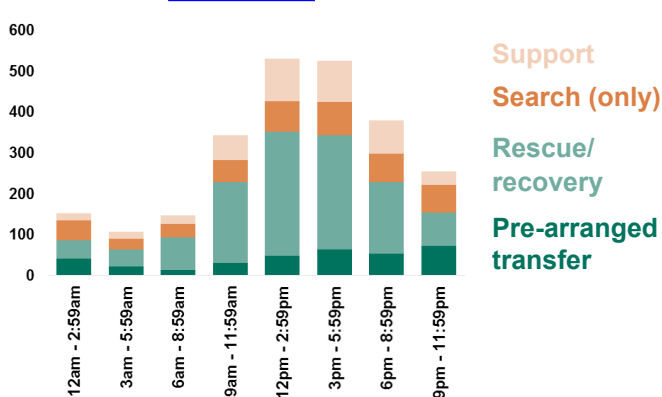


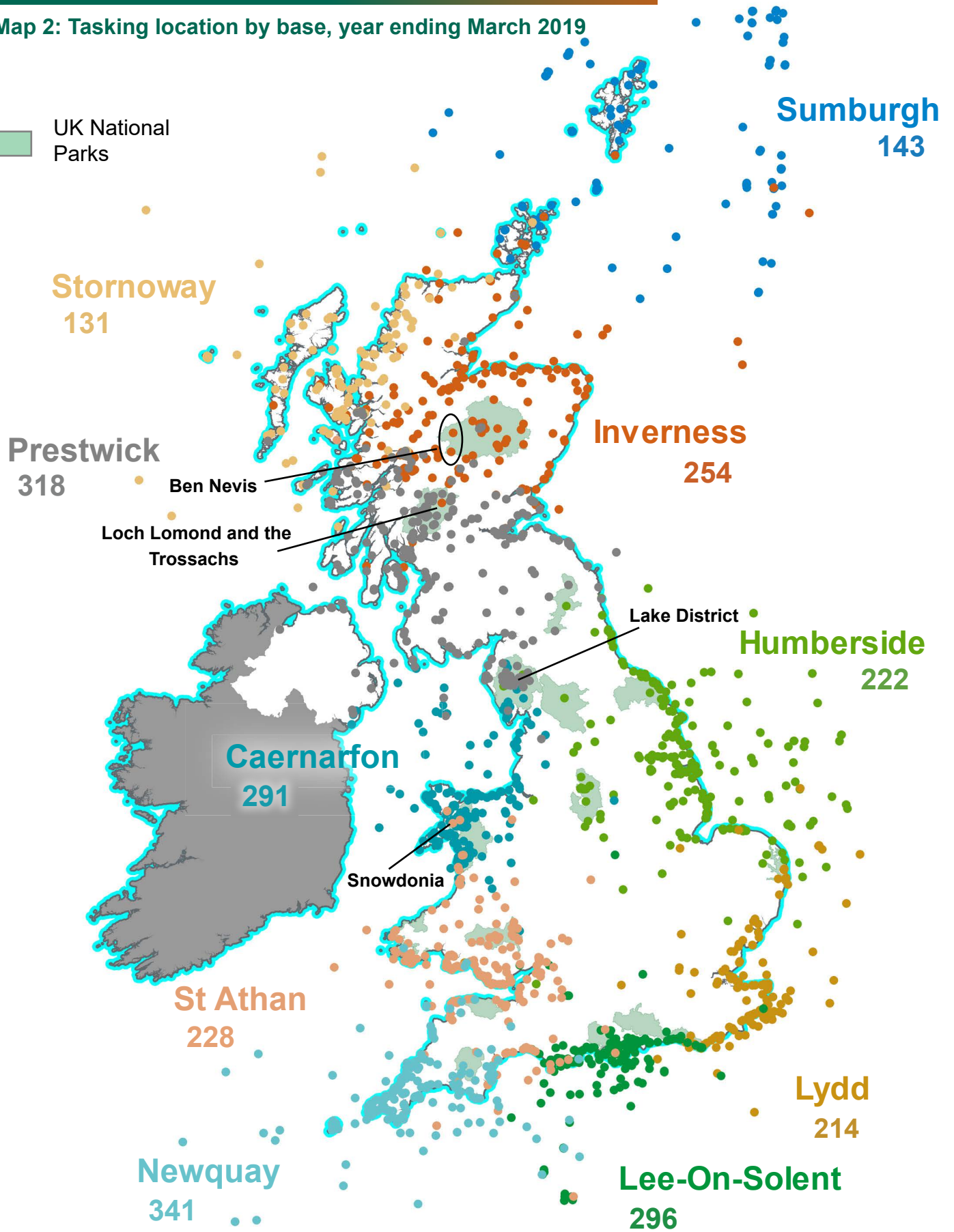
Chart 7: Taskings by time of day, year ending March 2019 SARH0112



Map of tasking locations by base

Map 2: Tasking location by base, year ending March 2019

 UK National Parks

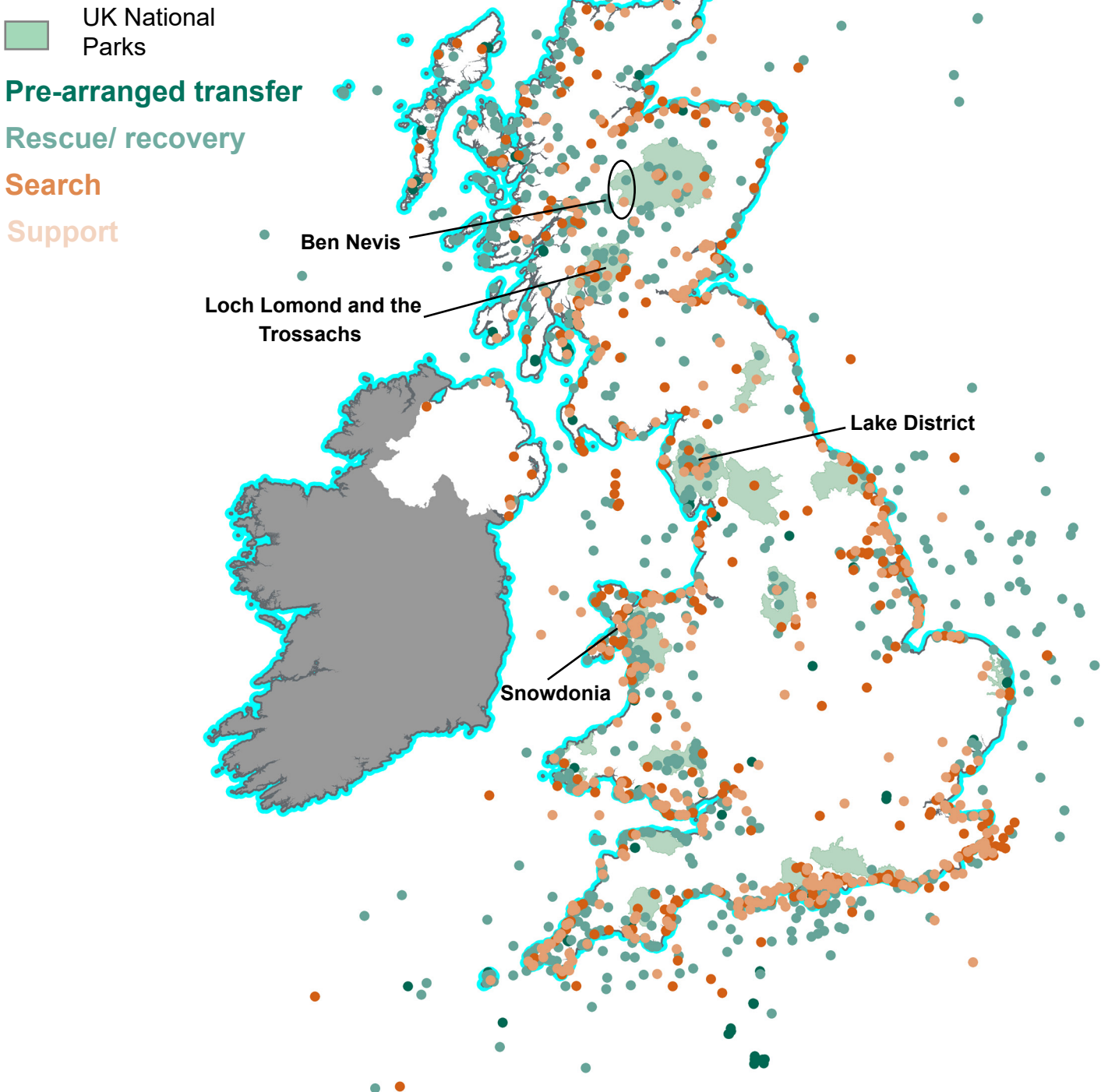


In the year ending March 2019, a further three taskings occurred outside the boundaries of this map.

Map of tasking category

Map 3: Location of taskings by tasking type, year ending March 2019

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.



In the year ending March 2019, a further three taskings occurred outside the boundaries of this map.

Tasking by region

During the year ending March 2019, of the 2,438 civilian SARH taskings, 32% took place in Scotland. More than half (59%) 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 22% of all taskings taking place in this region. Just over half (56%) of taskings in this region took place on the coast. Wales was another busy area, with 15% of taskings taking place in this region. 65% were land based - with many taking place in or near the Snowdonia national park.

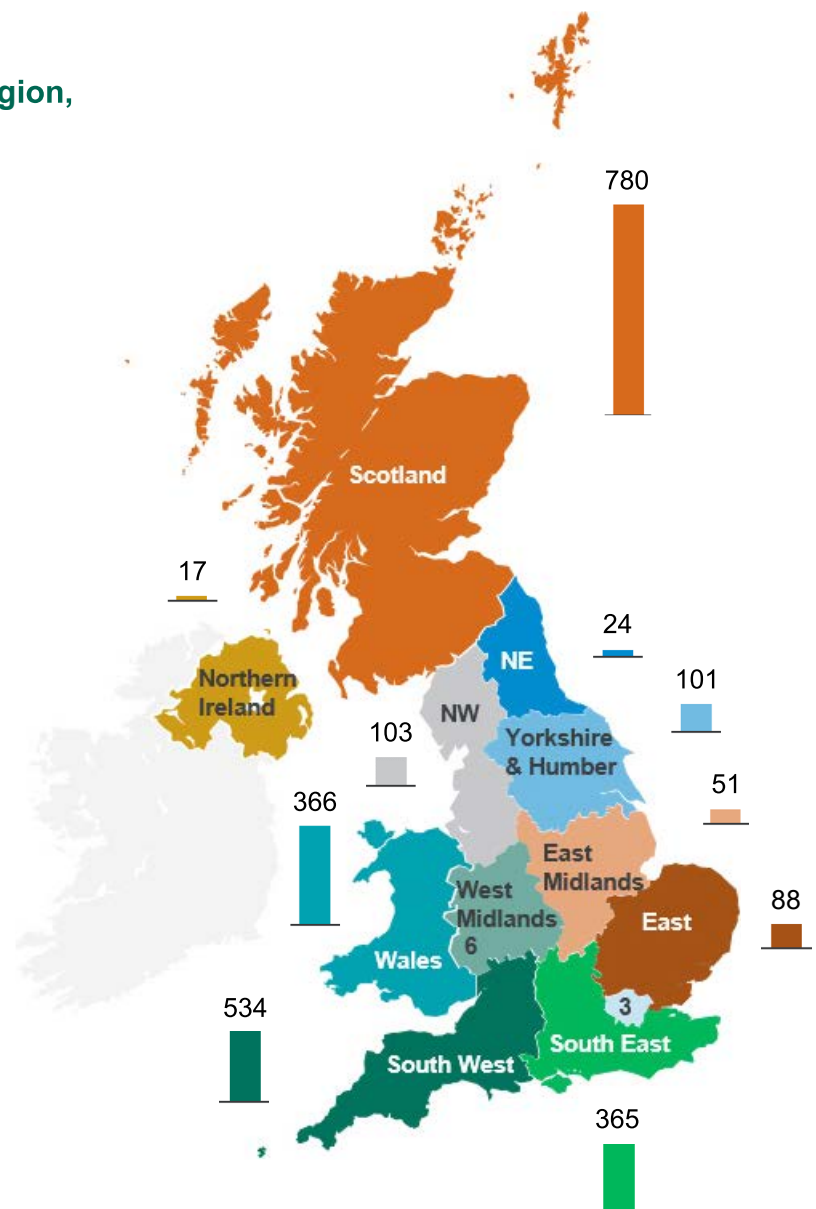
Only 3 taskings took place in London. Emergencies in London are more likely to be taken care of by other emergency services. The land-locked region of the West Midlands had only 6 taskings during the latest year.

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 UK region, year ending March 2019 [SARH0112](#)

SARH Incidents that take 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 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 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 the subsequent actions: <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>



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