

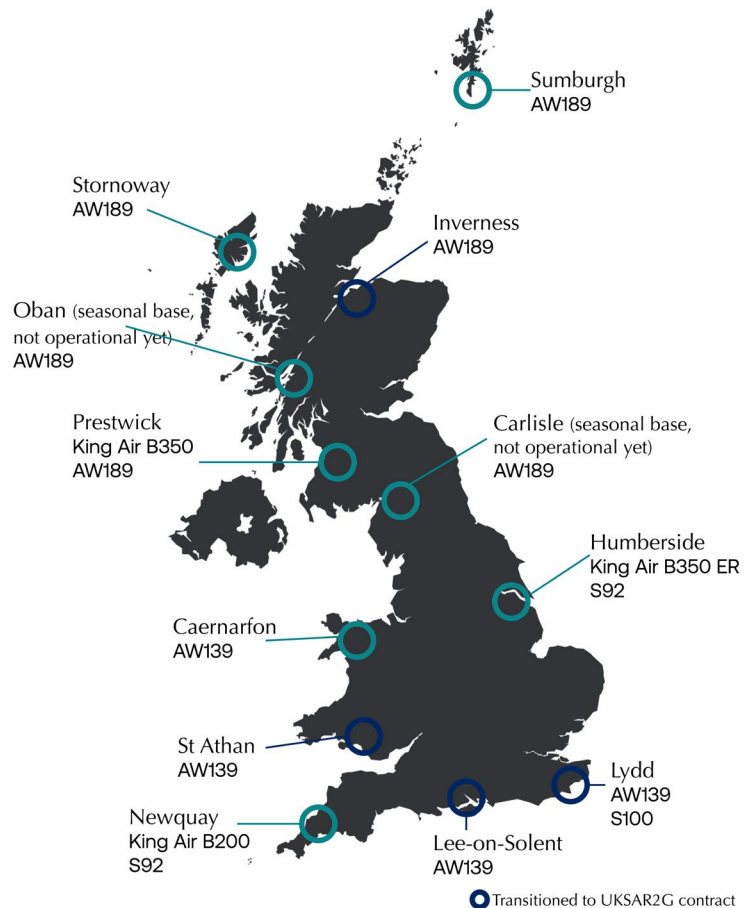


Maritime & Coastguard Agency

UKSAR2G Update

December 2025

As the year draws to a close and we reflect on 2025, there are a few things to share. It has been a busy year for HM Coastguard's Major Programmes team as they manage and work through the transition period between search and rescue contracts. Brand new AW139 aircraft have been introduced at Lydd, St Athan and Lee-on-Solent. The new communication and operational situational awareness system which was not much more than a concept in 2022 when the contract was awarded is now in the latter stages of being built and is undergoing testing ready to be implemented in 2026. Construction began on the new seasonal base at Oban. Finally, the remaining fixed wing aircraft have now been added to the fleet, bringing their total number to 6.



UKSAR2G Helicopter bases



As HMCG transitions over to the UKSAR2G contract a number of existing bases are now operating with updated, modified or new aircraft. The UKSAR2G contract brings in new technology with enhanced digital systems implemented onto SAR modified aircraft.

Lydd was the first base to transition over to an AW139 in March. This is the first time this type of aircraft has been used for HMCG SAR since 2018. The aircraft is incredibly capable, it is lighter and more nimble than the larger models. The seating arrangements can also be flexible to adapt to each rescue situation.

Since then, St Athan and Lee-on-Solent have also transitioned to an AW139 aircraft. Additionally Inverness is now operating a UKSAR2G specified AW189. Therefore 4 of the 10 SAR bases are operating under the UKSAR2G contract. The programme is on track to have fully transitioned by early 2027.



Fixed Wing Aircraft

Additional aircraft have been added to the fleet to bolster existing capability. Prestwick and Newquay were opened in April and June as fixed wing bases to increase national coverage. Alongside Humberside this increases the basing solution to three strategic locations. The fixed wing aircraft cover a diverse range of missions including search and rescue, maritime surveillance, counter pollution monitoring and civil contingencies work.



Humberside King Air B350ER	Newquay King Air B200	Prestwick King Air B350
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Seasonal Bases



October brought the announcement of the locations for HM Coastguard's new seasonal helicopter bases, increasing search and rescue provision in two of the busiest locations for summer tourism. These locations will be Oban and Carlisle.

Due to circumstances outside of both the MCA and Bristow Helicopter Ltd's control, the previously proposed site near Fort William was no longer a viable option. Plans for development in the area mean it was no longer safe to conduct search and rescue operations from that location. Therefore the base will relocate to Oban.

On Monday 6 October, His Majesty's Coastguard in conjunction with Bristow Helicopters Ltd began construction of the new base at Oban. The base will include a modern, Search and Rescue hangar, an operational planning room, offices and rest areas for crews.

While there has been a change in location, the timeline for both seasonal bases, how they operate, and the areas they will cover all remain the same. These bases will each operate one aircraft from April to September, 9am to 9pm, with a readiness state (the time from when an aircraft is tasked to the time it takes off) of 15 minutes. The area will continue to be covered by Inverness and Prestwick helicopters, or indeed any other SAR rotary wing base as needed outside of those operating periods.



Operations from both seasonal bases will begin in 2026 with AW189 aircraft.



At the start of construction Paddy O'Callaghan, Chief Coastguard said:

“Our new seasonal bases are a huge step forward in expanding HMCG’s search and rescue capability during those periods when we experience a rise in incidents. The additional aircraft will provide greater flexibility in a national network, and most importantly enhance our ability to respond quickly to those in need.”

“The UKSAR2G programme is very much underway, and we are looking forward to completion of the seasonal bases in both locations. People are alive today because a HM Coastguard helicopter came to their aid, and these seasonal bases will improve search and rescue response further still. By selecting sites that are near popular areas for outside activity, those in need can be responded to quickly and with the appropriate resources.”

Steve Bentley, Senior Responsible Owner for the UKSAR2G Programme



Website
www.gov.uk/mca/uksar2g

