

Search and Rescue Task Group

September 2014

1. Recommendations

The task group ask the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet to endorse and action the recommendations below, including sending to the appropriate organisation.

	Recommendation	Agency
1	The 50 hours flying time per month allocated to training hours is prioritised and distributed across search and rescue organisations in liaison with the local resilience forum (LRF)	Local Resilience Forum
2	Maintenance of the ARCC as the coordination centre.	DCC to DfT Seek assurance from DfT that the ARCC will not be replaced or changed, currently or in the future
3	Revisit and review of performance and training arrangements after first year of operation	DCC
4	Ask Bristow to continue to communicate with partner agencies but also with communities affected by the changes.	Bristow

2. Introduction

- 2.1. Concerns over the changes to the Search and Rescue Service were raised by a notice of motion submitted to Cabinet on the 10th April 2013, extracted as follows:

'Councillor Greenslade's written submission, reported at the meeting, proposed that representations should be made to Government over its decision to remove all search and rescue facilities from Devon and seeking clarification as to why, for example, the new contractor could not still use the facilities at Chivenor.

The Leader of the Council undertook to examine the concerns and arguments being put forward and to respond accordingly; strongly advocating that the proposed arrangements and their wider implications should be a matter for close scrutiny by the new Council, examining also the evidence base for the proposal which would not, it was understood, actually come into effect until 2015/17.¹

- 2.2. After the elections in 2013, the matter was referred to the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee, who subsequently established this task group on September 25th 2013. The task group first met on the 12th November 2013 and since this time has held six evidence gathering sessions.
- 2.3. From the outset the task group recognised that the decision to privatise the search and rescue service had been taken nationally. The line of enquiry that the task group therefore took was to investigate whether the decision to privatise the service would have an impact on the Search and Rescue service received by residents and visitors in

¹ Cabinet Minute 10th April 2013

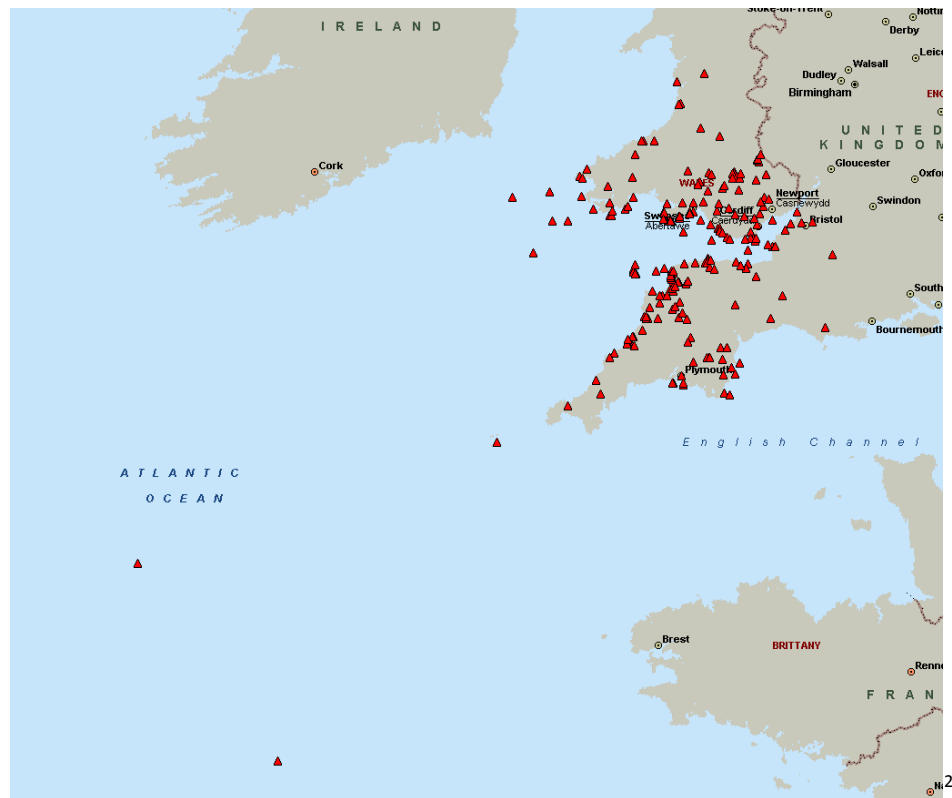
http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/councildemocracy/decision_making/cma/cma_document.htm?cmadoc=minutes_exc_20130410.html

Devon. This investigation was never designed to draw conclusions on the company which was awarded the contract, but to seek reassurance that people in Devon would not be adversely affected by any change.

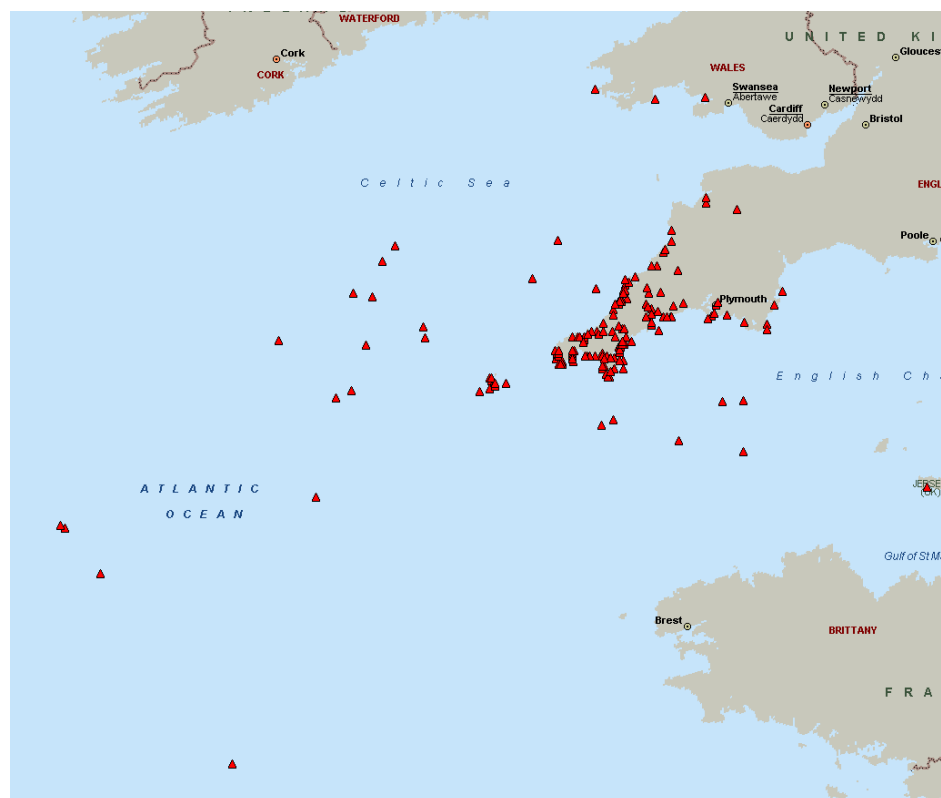
3. The Current Service

- 3.1. The military providing search and rescue capabilities was historically established and the RAF Search and Rescue Force celebrated its 70th anniversary in February 2011 and the Royal Navy celebrating its 60th anniversary of search and rescue operations in 2013.
- 3.2. The Royal Air Force (RAF) and Royal Navy (RN) provide the search and rescue capability with SAR Sea King helicopters at eight bases around the UK and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) contracted SAR service at four further bases.
- 3.3. The helicopter service is currently based at the following locations: Sumburgh, Stornoway (Isle of Lewis), Culdrose, Wattisham, Valley, Boulmer, Portland, Lee-on-Solent, Chivenor, Leconfield, Lossiemouth and Prestwick. The service currently operates 365 days a year on a 24 hour basis, apart from Portland which operates on a 12 hour basis.
- 3.4. Located on the North Devon Coast, typically RAF Chivenor responds to incidents in the south west of England, particularly along the coast of Devon and Dorset. The unit also provides coverage across south Wales. The SAR unit forms part of the "A" Flight 22 Squadron.
- 3.5. The task group commend the outstanding service, which has been run from Chivenor, and thank the RAF for accommodating the task group visit.

- 3.6. Each triangle on the two maps represents an incident. The first Map shows those incidents where a helicopter from Chivenor was called out:



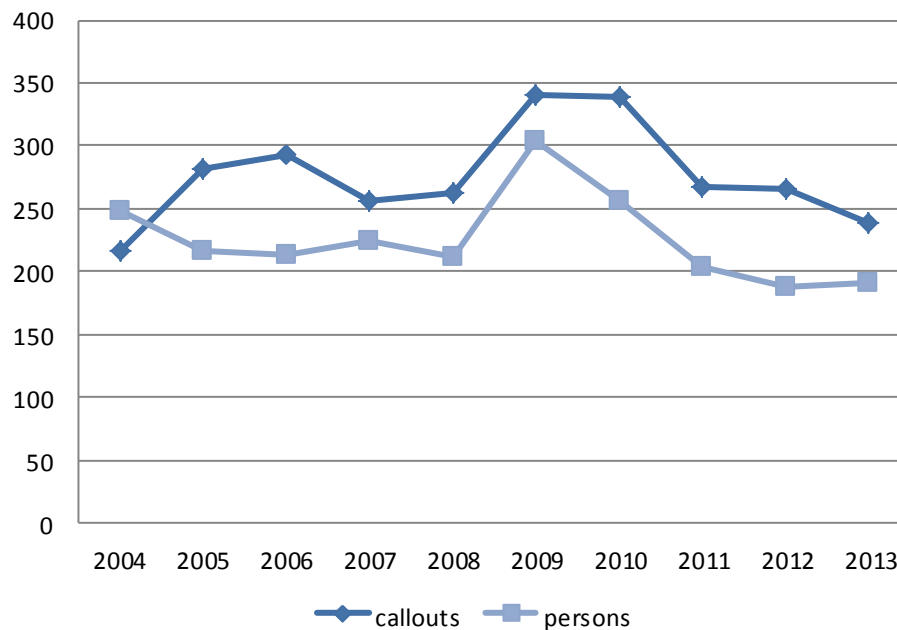
The map below shows the incidents responded to from the base in Culdrose.



² Distribution of SAR incidents 2013 taken from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/284469/SAR-annual2013.pdf

- 3.7. In the past ten years the activity levels at Chivenor have remained steady, with the number of calls ranging between just under two hundred, to more than three hundred at a peak in 2009/10. This is demonstrated on the chart below. The chart also shows the relationship between the number of times a helicopter was scrambled and the number of people rescued. With the exception of 2004, there does appear to be a correlation between callouts and the number of people.

Chivenor SAR activity



3

- 3.8. The Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre (AARC) at RAF Kinloss tasks co-ordinates all aeronautical SAR activity across the UK search and rescue region, drawing from a variety of SAR helicopters, fixed wing aircraft and RAF Mountain Rescue Teams. The UK ARCC also detects and notifies emergency distress beacon alerts worldwide.
- 3.9. The task group heard from a number of sources about the importance of the maintenance of the independent nature of the AARC due to its ability to prioritise and to task a range of search and rescue organisations.

4. Why is change necessary?

- 4.1. Quite simply, the question arises that if the current service is working well, why is there a need to change it? The answer lies with the Sea King helicopters (see pg 5 for specifications), which are between 40 and 50 years old and are reaching the end of their effective service.
- 4.2. In 2005 the Government established a Joint Search and Rescue Harmonisation project with a view to replacing the UK's search and rescue helicopter capabilities provided by the Royal Air Force, the Royal Navy and the MCA with a single SAR entity. It was envisaged that this would comprise a mix of civilian and military personnel. However the Government abandoned a first attempt to secure a private sector bidder for the contract in February 2011. When it re-launched the process, the decision was taken to

³ Call outs from Chivenor 2013, information taken from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/284469/SAR-annual2013.pdf

make the service entirely civilian operated and to end the military contribution to search and rescue.⁴

- 4.3. The Department for Transport is the lead agency on procuring a SAR service with sufficient capabilities to enable the transition out of service of the RAF and RN Sea King by March 2016 and the transition out of the MCA contract by July 2017. The requirements that were specified are set out in the box below.

SAR requirements

On 28 November 2011, the Department for Transport (DfT) commenced the procurement process for UK Search and Rescue (SAR) helicopter services by issuing a contract notice in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU).

The contract will be for the provision of the UK SAR helicopter services on behalf of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) to cover UK search and rescue region covered by the current helicopter rescue capability. This will require an all-weather SAR helicopter service able to operate throughout the UK and in the maritime environment.

The helicopter service must be responsive, able to search a wide area of interest, locate and recover personnel and stabilize casualties from all risk areas including mountainous terrain and the maritime environment.

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5. The future

- 5.1. The national contract is worth £1.6 billion (ex VAT) and it was very clear that the stated aspiration is for the service to be at least as good if not better than the current service.

Bristow Group Wins UK SAR Award

March 26, 2013

The Department for Transport awarded its UK affiliate Bristow Helicopters Limited (Bristow Helicopters) a new contract to provide civilian Search and Rescue (SAR) services for all of the UK. The SAR services contract has a phased-in transition period beginning in April 2015 and continuing to July 2017 and a contract length of approximately ten years.

Under the terms of this contract, Bristow Helicopters will provide 11 Sikorsky S-92 and 11 Augusta Westland AW189 helicopters that will be located at ten bases across the UK. Each SAR base will operate either two S-92s or two AW189s. There will also be two fully SAR-equipped training aircraft that can be deployed to any base as needed.

⁴ House of Commons Library, Military Search and Rescue to end in 2016, 25th April 2013

⁵ Department for Transport and Maritime Coastguard Agency

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-search-and-rescue-helicopter-service>

written 8th May 2012

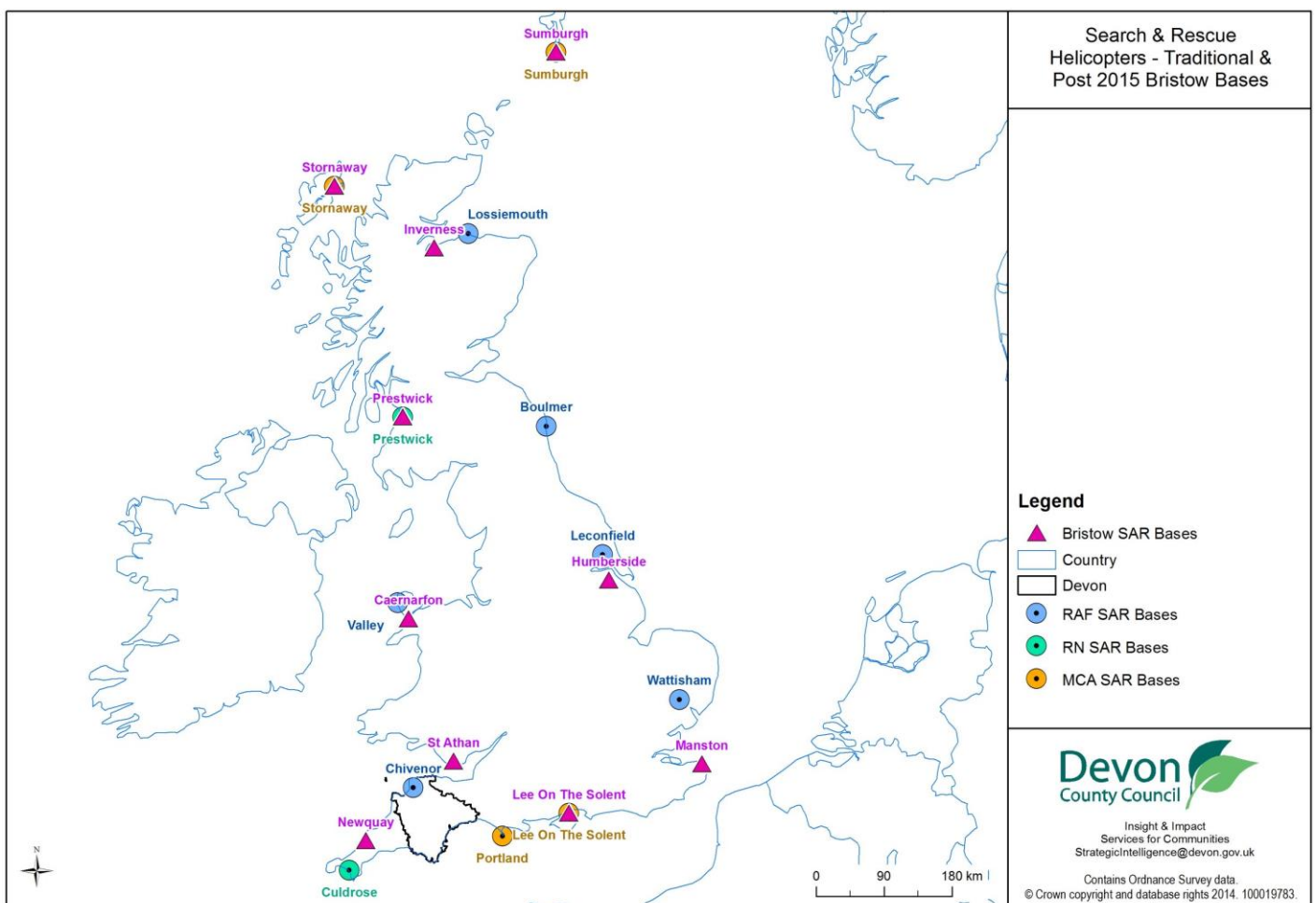
What does this mean in Devon?

Training

- 5.2. The task group is aware that the two new helicopters will be significantly different from the old Sea Kings. As demonstrated in Appendix 1, the sizing, specification and equipment are all new. The task group has received evidence to suggest that this is a key issue and would therefore like to seek reassurances from Bristow on its commitment to involving partner agencies in ongoing training.

Location

- 5.3. The most obvious change in Devon is that SAR services will no longer be operational from Chivenor. In fact there will be no SAR helicopters bases located in Devon.
- 5.4. The firm Atkins was commissioned to undertake the 'Specification for a Search and Rescue Helicopter Basing Assurance Review'. This work looked at the possible impact of reducing the number of bases. It concluded that there in fact would be no adverse impact from reducing the number of bases.
- 5.5. The map below shows the current location of the 12 bases (circles colour coded dependent upon the current operator) and the future distribution of bases (pink triangles).



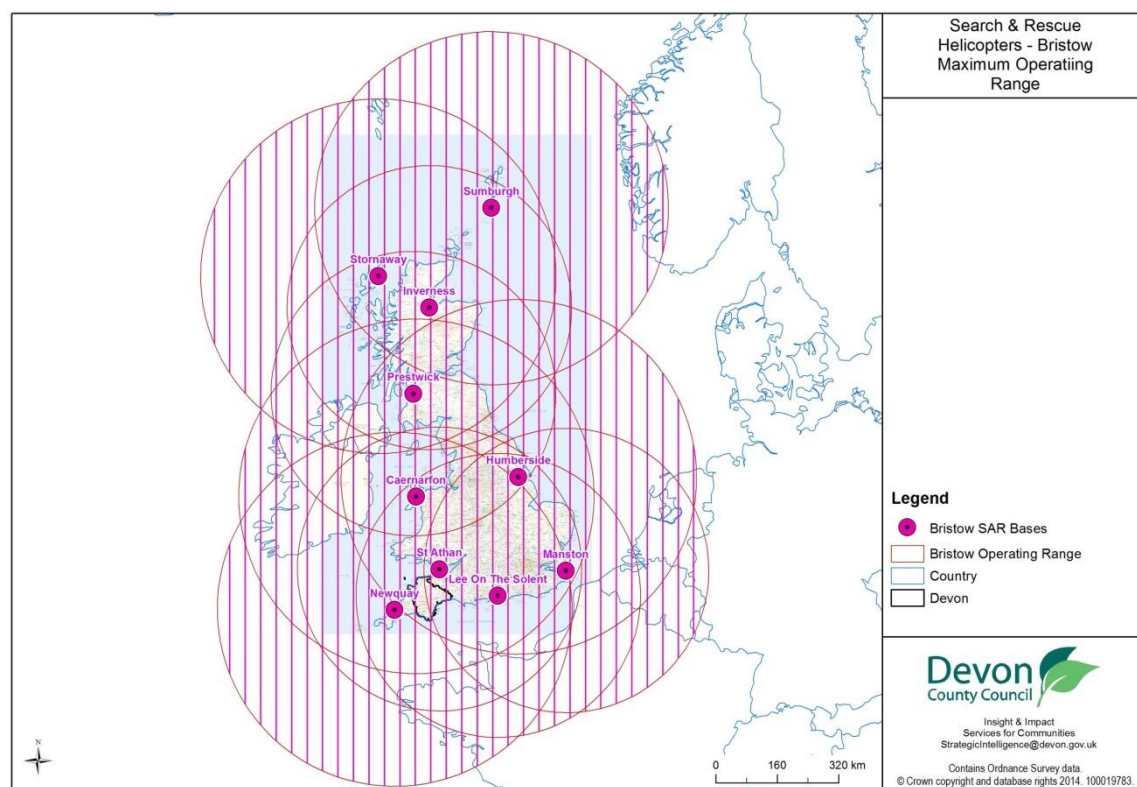
5.6. Bristow plans to operate from 10 bases across the UK. These have been determined by looking at the incident rates over years. They will utilise the MCA purpose built facilities at:

- Lee-on-Solent
- Sumburgh
- Stornoway - which will be refurbished.

New SAR bases will also be built in the following locations:

- Inverness
- Manston
- Prestwick
- Caernarfon
- Humberside
- Newquay
- St Athan

5.7. The two nearest bases to Devon will be St Athan and Newquay. The primary concern about moving bases to different locations is that it will increase the distance and therefore the time taken to find and rescue a casualty. The map below demonstrates the maximum operating range from the new bases

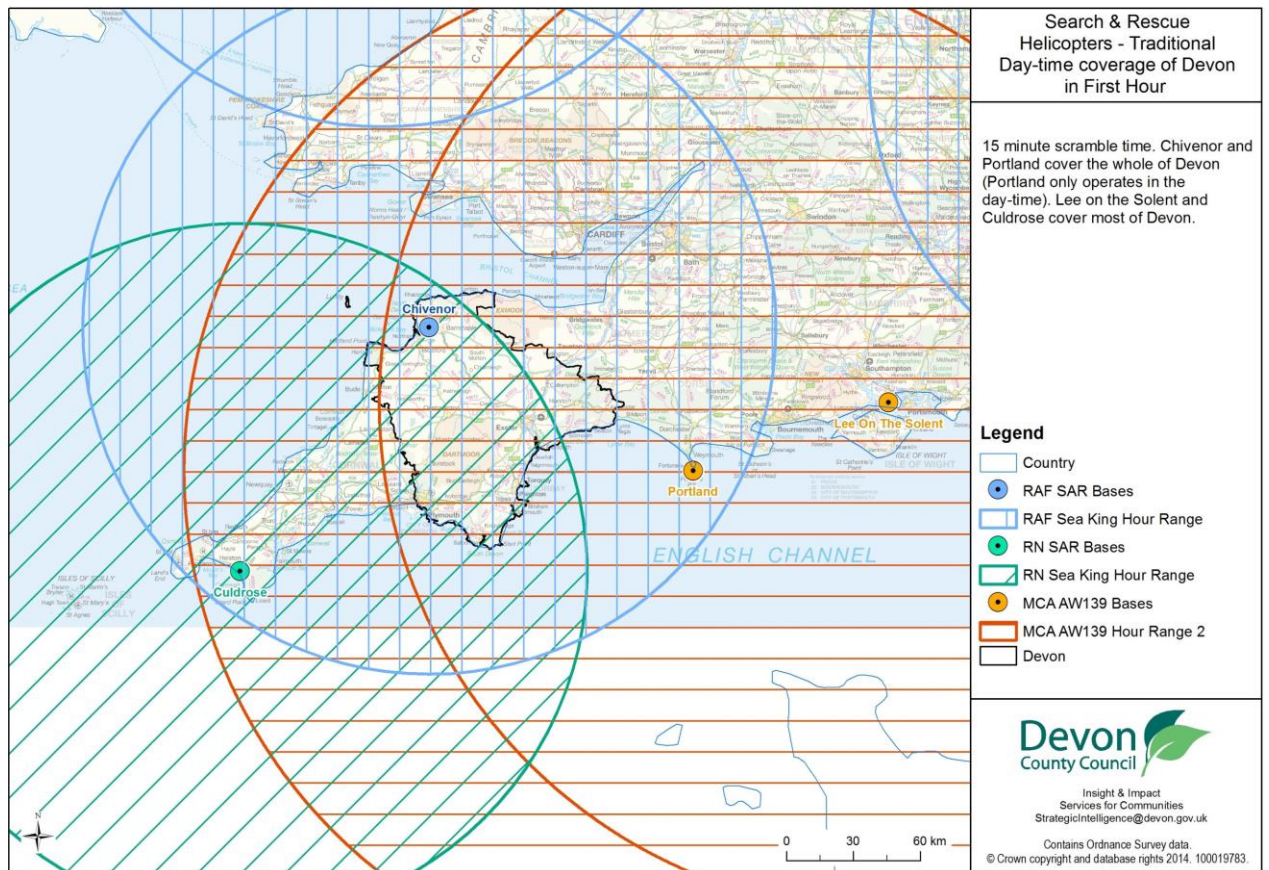


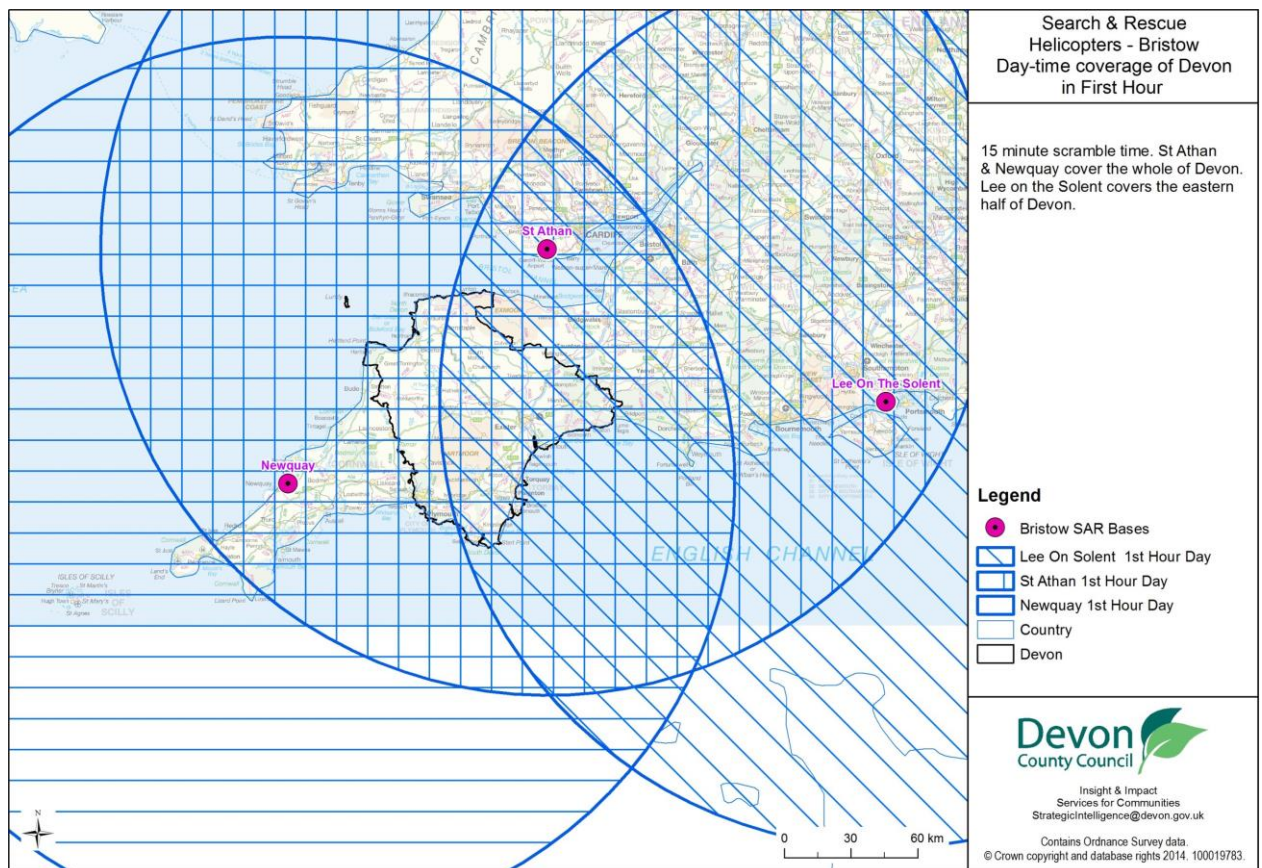
Response time

5.8. The task group had concerns about the further distance with the base moving from Chivenor to St Athan. There are two aspects to response time; firstly the time to mobilise the helicopter; secondly the time it takes to reach the incident. If there is a casualty, the time to transfer to a hospital must also be taken into account.

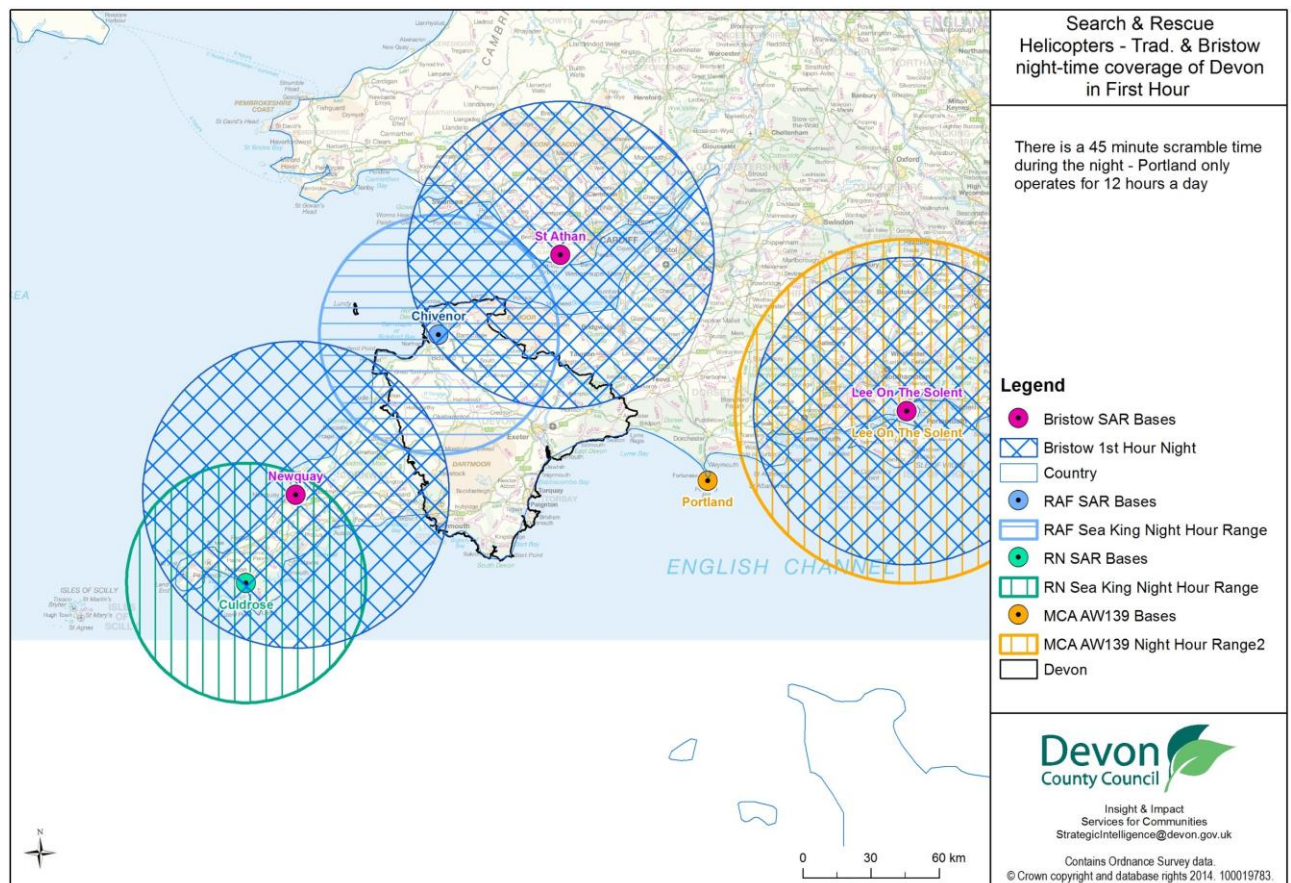
5.9. The current service specifications state that there should be a response to SAR incidents within 15 minutes by day and 45 minutes by night. This requirement will be maintained under the new service. The Department for Transport has asserted that there will be an overall reduction in flight time from the current average of 23 minutes to 19 minutes.

- 5.10. The new helicopters will be faster than the current Sea Kings. The technology on the new helicopters is likely to improve search times. For example the S-92 search and rescue aircraft are the first type in Europe to be certified for night vision goggle (NVG) technology. This is combined with improved forward-looking infrared (FLIR) and thermal imaging camera technology for more effective searches.
- 5.11. The two maps below demonstrate the theoretical flight reach under the service specifications, within one hour of flight time. The top map shows the current service and the bottom, the future. Devon is well covered by at least three helicopter crews in both the current and future plans.





5.12. The map below demonstrates both the night time current first hour of coverage and the future planned first hour of coverage. This is based on the service specification.



Impact upon other agencies

- 5.13. Many other agencies provide search, rescue and search and rescue services across Devon. These include statutory services, the police, the fire and rescue service, the ambulance service, as well as others such as the air ambulance trust, Dartmoor and Exmoor search and rescue. One of the starting points for this investigation was a concern that there would not be an increase in pressure put on other agencies with the changes to the SAR service. For example Devon and Cornwall Police has flown 320 lost/missing person searches in 2013, which makes up about 26% of their helicopter activity.⁶
- 5.14. The task group is clear that the service will still be managed by HM Coastguard and tasked by the military ARCC as today. By ensuring maintenance of the current service specifications and many of the same personnel, there is no anticipated impact upon other agencies. This is an area that really will only be possible to review once the contract is up and running.

One off events

- 5.15. The task group has had concerns over the potential disparity between the current service and the future one when it comes to flying and assisting in events where there is no immediate danger to human life. For example there are a number of large events such as the Ten Tors walk on Dartmoor that have been supported with military flying capability, although not SAR. Whilst this is a military event, there are others that are civilian. The task group would like to express their desire that the SAR service under Bristow would be able to assist in emergencies where there would not be immediate danger to human life.

6. Conclusion

This task group investigation was initiated to investigate local concerns over anticipated changes to the Search and Rescue Service as a result of significant changes to the service. In particular that in the future there will be no Search and Rescue Service based in Devon.

The scrutiny task group has found no evidence to suggest that the service due to come into effect will have an adverse effect on the outcomes for people in need of SAR services. In fact the need to replace the old Sea King helicopters with significantly improved technology and specifications looks likely to improve the service. Whilst the loss of the SAR base at Chivenor marks the end of an era, and has an associated sentimentality with it, it also heralds the start of an exciting new service.

The task group would like to place on record admiration and commendation for the work that the Search and Rescue Teams throughout the Country have undertaken. Particular mention must be made of the exemplary work of Squadron Leader Stu Cunliffe's team in Chivenor.

7. Evidence

The task group would like to individually thank the following expert witnesses for contributing to the investigation:

⁶ Devon and Cornwall Police, 'where we have flown and why?' 2013 http://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/AboutUs/SpecialistOperations/Helicopter/Pages/Whereflown.aspx#dcc_contentinner accessed August 2014

Witness	Representing
Squadron Leader Stu Cunliffe	RAF 22 Squadron
Wing Comd Lester Pearce OBE	RAF Liaison Officer
Nigel Hare, Operations Director	Devon Air Ambulance
Lorrie Adams Group Manager (Response & Resilience)	Fire and Rescue Service
Damien Oliver Programme & Change Manager	UK Search and Rescue Helicopter Programme (UK SAR H) Department for Transport
Neil Grant SAR technical manager	
Mark Randall Medical Officer	North Dartmoor Search and Rescue
Martin Thornton, Training Officer	
Jonathan HOLLIS Operations and Contingency Planning	Devon and Cornwall Police
Dom Maxwell-Batten Emergency Planning	Devon County Council

The task group would also like to thank Shaun Carter for the analysis and production of the maps in this report.

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http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/councildemocracy/decision_making/cma/cma_document.htm?cmadoc=minutes_exc_20130410.html

8. Task Group Membership

Membership of the Task Group was as follows:

Councillors Polly Colthorpe, Chair, Kevin Ball, Mike Edmunds

9. Contact

For all enquiries about this document or its contents please contact

Camilla de Bernhardt, Camilla.de.bernhardt@devon.gov.uk 01392 383143

Appendix 1: SAR Helicopters

The Sea King HAR3/3A



Specifications

Radius of Action	
Operational Range	250 nautical miles
Duration	6hrs
Speed	125kts
Altitude (Max)	10,000ft
Payload	17 x PAX
Length	17.01m
Rotor diameter	18.9
Thrust	2 x 1,389shp

Sikorsky S-92



⁷ Images all taken from Wikipedia August 2014

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AgustaWestland_AW189#mediaviewer/File:AgustaWestland_AW189_I-PTFF_PAS_2013_01.jpg

Specifications

Radius of Action	250 nautical miles
Operational Range	600 nautical miles
Duration	4 hours
Speed	145knts
Altitude (Max)	14,000ft
Payload	3 x stretchers/10 seated PAX
Length	17.1m
Rotor diameter	17.17m
Thrust	2 x 2,520shp

Agusta Westland AW189



8

Specifications

Radius of Action	200 nautical miles
Operational Range	500 nautical miles
Duration	4 hours
Speed	145knts
Altitude (Max)	
Payload	2 x stretchers/6 seated PAX
Length	17.6m
Rotor diameter	14.6m
Thrust	2 x 2,000shp

⁸ Photo taken from <http://www.agustawestland.com/product/aw189>

Appendix 2: DfT Press Release

From:

[Department for Transport](#) and [The Rt Hon Justine Greening MP](#)

Delivered on: 28 November 2011

Search and rescue capability to be provided by civilian crews, enabling armed forces to focus on front line operations.

I wish to inform the House of the government's intentions for the future of the search and rescue helicopter service in the UK. Following the cancellation of the SAR-H Private finance initiative in February, the Department for Transport will today publish a [notice](#) in the Official Journal of the European Union to commence procurement for a new UK wide service contract.

My Rt. Hon Friend the Defence Secretary has agreed that the new contract will provide a search and rescue capability provided by civilian crews, enabling our armed forces to focus activity on their front line operations. The Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force crews have shown great dedication and professionalism in delivering an exemplary search and rescue service for many years, and we owe them all great thanks for this. Looking forward, we are confident that, building on nearly 30 years of civilian service provided under contract to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), a fully civilian service will be able to maintain the same standards in the future.

This competition will procure a contracted search and rescue helicopter service for the whole of the UK, for a period of approximately 10 years. The Royal Air Force and Royal Navy will continue to provide search and rescue coverage until the replacement for this capability is in place, and it is my intention that the contract I let will require this to be the first part of the new service to become operational. This will ensure that the Ministry of Defence is able to meet its previously announced intention to withdraw from service and retire its fleet of Sea King helicopters by March 2016. The replacement for the capability currently provided by the MCA will follow on from this. This transition will ensure continuity of service.

Bidders for the future service will be able to put forward options which will utilise a mixed fleet of modern helicopters based on the capabilities required at each of the bases (such as range, carrying capacity and endurance). The services will be capable of delivery by different contractors providing complementary services.

The introduction of a modern fleet of fast, reliable helicopters will lead to major improvements in the capability available from the present mix of helicopters. Modern helicopters operating from 10 full-time bases can not only continue to meet all current service requirements but also provide faster flying times to a large part of the UK search and rescue region, as well as providing a more reliable service. This will therefore be reflected in the new contract.

It is my intention that search and rescue operations will cease at RAF Boulmer in 2015 and at MCA Portland when the interim arrangements that were announced in July expire. Other operations at RAF Boulmer will be unaffected by this. Given the complexity of the issues that need to be considered by bidders during the procurement, I intend that this procurement will be undertaken using the competitive dialogue procedure. As far as is practicable however, I intend to run the competition using lean procurement principles during some stages of the procurement. This will, I hope, both expedite and simplify some stages of the procurement that would ordinarily be time consuming and costly for industry to participate in.

I expect to award a contract in early 2013 to give the future service provider time to mobilise the new capability.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/search-and-rescue-helicopters--3>