

Humberside Coastguard Search and Rescue Helicopters

Captain Jonathan Stanley, Deputy Chief Pilot



Routine maintenance on 'GE.



Never, ever moan about having to wash a car...

Hello again folks,

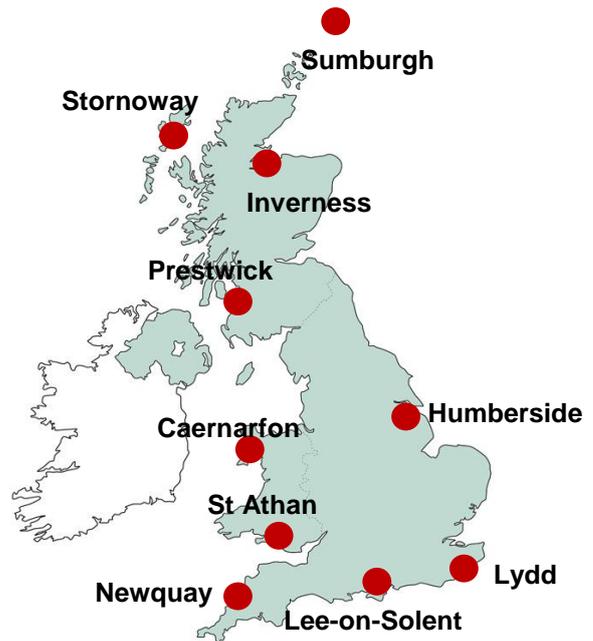
The daily routine at the SAR base continues in its temporary 'Coronavirus' routine which sees set teams of four aircrew and two engineers on the base for 72 hours at a time and our small number of day workers on reduced hours or working from home, all in an effort to reduce social contact. So far this significant change in routine seems to be working as, although a very small number of our staff have undertaken periods of precautionary self-isolation, we have all remained free from COVID-19 symptoms. The base is designed to be suitable as a living space for the six-person duty SAR crew, with basic kitchen, dining area, laundry, fitness and shower room facilities as well as the more 'workaday' areas, so the extended shifts really aren't much of a hardship.

One of the more obvious effects to us of people remaining at home in response to the coronavirus restrictions, and of offshore facilities generally being at minimum manning levels for similar reasons, is that our already-quiet 'jobs' count has dwindled even further. If people don't go out then they can't fall off cliffs or break their legs whilst hillwalking, and fewer offshore staff reduces the risk of accident or illness on oil and gas platforms and support vessels. The other UK SAR bases are seeing a similar trend; the Caernarfon base, for example, was tasked only five times in April, which included incidents in the Lake District, the Isle of Man and near Morecambe as well as North Wales, whereas it would normally experience a big increase around Easter as people take to the hills (22 callouts in April 2019). Having mentioned tasking, perhaps I ought now to explain our national disposition and how we are tasked to incidents.

Now that SAR helicopters are no longer operated by the armed forces, the country's SAR helicopter service is provided by Bristow Helicopters Ltd on contract to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency from ten bases around the country and Scottish islands (see below). Although the Coastguard's normal remit extends from the coastline outwards, it is really the

most appropriate UK government agency for ‘ownership’ of the SAR contract which is why Coastguard rescue helicopters respond to overland as well as overwater incidents.

Agencies that require SAR helicopter assistance will contact the air desk at the Coastguard’s National Maritime Operations Centre (NMOC) and, if the request is approved, the NMOC staff will ‘scramble’ the most appropriate base to respond to the task. The NMOC remains the focal point for the co-ordination of SAR missions, although the SAR helicopter crew will usually also work closely with on-scene management agencies such as local coastguard units, police or mountain rescue teams when responding to an incident.



The Coastguard’s contract requirements led to two aircraft types being operated within UK SAR. Five bases operate the Sikorsky S-92, like ours at Humberside, whereas the other five use the slightly smaller Agusta-Westland AW189. Apart from their passenger capacity they are very similar in terms of capability, and two types in the inventory reduces the risk of an unforeseen aircraft fault or design issue grounding the entire rescue fleet.



Agusta-Westland AW189

Date	Times	Tasking
2 April	19:24 – 19:48	Diverted from routine training to investigate a report of a red flare off Flamborough Head. Nothing found, so reverted to training.
10 April	18:28 – 21:26	Tasked to assist the ambulance service in dealing with a 32 year old male mountain biker who had fallen down a slope in a disused quarry near Lincoln and who had a branch impaled in his neck. The casualty was carried to the aircraft and taken to Hull Royal Infirmary.
12 April	08:55 – 10:05	Tasked following a report of a person in the River Ouse near Goole. An extensive search was carried out but nothing was found, so the aircraft and crew returned to base.