July 20, 2020

HM Coastguard's First Unmanned Search and Rescue Missions Undertaken in Wales

Unmanned aircraft will be flown as safety overwatch in support of search and rescue missions for HM Coastguard for the first time this weekend.

The unmanned aircraft will be supporting search and rescue response in north Wales both in maritime and in the mountains.

It is an operational trial and will potentially have the benefits of showing operations staff for HM Coastguard live situations and incidents to provide the best response.

Operated by Bristow, provider of the HM Coastguard Search and Rescue Helicopter Service, the unmanned aerial vehicles will launch from Caernarfon in Wales.

They will provide supporting safety patrols across beaches from Conwy Bay to Llandudno and across Snowdonia.

HM Coastguard's helicopters provide support for inland search and rescue which includes the mountain regions, as well in maritime environment and the unmanned aircraft will work alongside those.

Initially, the unmanned aircraft will operate only at weekends for HM Coastguard with Bristow carrying on its routine testing during the week.

Bristow is flying two Schiebel CAMCOPTER® S-100 systems, following a rigorous, three-month test programme which began in March this year.

That programme was designed to complement work being carried out by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency to develop regulations under which UAVs can operate as SAR aircraft. Unmanned aircraft are expected to play a key role when UKSAR2G, the second-generation of search and rescue service due to begin operations in 2024.

Maritime Minister Kelly Tolhurst said: "We will stop at nothing to keep people safe on our shores and in our seas, exploring new and innovative ways to further bring search and rescue into the 21st century.

"Drones have the potential to help our coastguard teams help save even more lives so I'm excited we're pioneering these advances in the UK."

Director of Her Majesty's Coastguard, Claire Hughes said: "Search and rescue is about saving lives. Every second counts and every minute saved can prove the difference between life and death. This kind of technology has a big part to play in those moments alongside our helicopters, coastguard rescue teams and our partners from the RNLI to independent

lifeboats and hovercraft."

Russ Torbet, Director UK Search and Rescue, Bristow Helicopters Ltd, said: "UAV technology has advanced to the stage where its deployment significantly enhances the capability of air search and rescue operations, improving the reach of the service and reducing risk for the public and our crews.

"These systems provide us with an option to keep our Sikorsky S92 helicopter crew at Caernarfon on standby for lifesaving events, while the unmanned aircraft are tasked with providing safety overwatch and monitoring which those manned aircraft would otherwise have been sent to carry out.

"Bristow began initial testing with Schiebel in 2018, with a view to bringing these UAVs into service during the current UKSAR contract. We are proud to have successfully completed these first missions on behalf of HM Coastguard."

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About HM Coastguard

HM Coastguard is a frontline delivery and emergency response organisation which is part of the Maritime & Coastguard Agency.

HM Coastguard provides a UK-wide maritime emergency prevention and response capability which responds to calls for help by radio, satellite or the 999 service and coordinates maritime search and rescue (SAR) within the UK SAR region. The agency helps approximately 25,000 people each year with 21,000 incidents coordinated by its rescue centres.

About Bristow Helicopters Ltd

Bristow Helicopters Ltd is the provider of helicopter search and rescue (SAR) services in the UK, on behalf of Her Majesty's Coastguard, having been awarded the UK SAR contract and the Gap SAR contract for Northern Scotland. Bristow Helicopters has a long history of providing world class SAR services, beginning in 1971 at RAF Manston, and has flown more than 60,000 SAR operational hours in the UK and conducted over 15,000 SAR missions, during which more than 7,000 people have been rescued by Bristow crews and helicopters. For more information on Bristow's SAR operations, please visit www.bristowsar.com

Bristow Helicopters Ltd. has served the offshore oil transport industry in the UK for nearly 60 years. Bristow Helicopters Ltd. is an affiliated company of Bristow Group Inc.

About Schiebel

The CAMCOPTER® S-100 is a vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) rotary UAV, which is used extensively around the world in land and maritime environments, by international agencies such as the European Maritime Safety Agency.

With the capability to travel 200 kilometres from its home base, the S-100 is flown by a pilot in a remote location using digital control and imaging technology to allow them to see through the eyes of its on-board cameras.

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