

## **UNITED KINGDOM SEARCH AND RESCUE (UKSAR) OPERATORS GROUP**

### **REPORT FROM THE MEETING OF 19 SEPTEMBER 2000**

1. The minutes from the meeting of 26 June were agreed.
2. A request from the Police Air Support Unit at Clyde to become members of the Operators Group had been received, but was rejected under paragraph 8 of the Terms of Reference for the Group.
3. The terms of reference for the Operators Group had been ratified by the Strategic Group.
4. Work continued on the formation of the Consultative Groups but it was agreed that until a definition of search and rescue had been received from the Strategic Committee that further work on the formation of the Groups would be held in abeyance. Following further discussion it was agreed that the Framework Drafting Group would produce a definition of search and rescue for ratification by the Operators Group.
5. The terms of reference for the Helicopter Review Group had been discussed but had not been finalised. The group were concentrating on the collection and analysis of statistical data.
6. The terms of reference for the Framework drafting group had been agreed and ratified by the Operators Group. The Group had agreed that they intended to produce a descriptive document for Ministers and the public.
7. The Communications Working Group had submitted their proposed terms of reference, but there was some concern that they related to an existing committee, this was to be clarified before the TORs could be ratified,
8. One meeting of the Offshore Firefighting Helicopter Working Group had been held. Formal arrangements for the training of County Fire Brigades in offshore work had been discussed.
9. The minutes from the Strategic Committee meeting were discussed.
10. The SAR risk assessment for the Thames had been completed and had been submitted to the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions for consideration. The report put forward a number of options for SAR co-ordination on the Thames. The formal MARCHIONESS enquiry would commence on 2 October 2000. It was noted that although HM Coastguard had a responsibility to provide a search and rescue service it did not have a statutory duty, or a duty of care. HM Coastguard had received requests to provide SAR co-ordination on some inland waters and lochs. Each request would be treated on an individual basis in conjunction with the Police who held the responsibility for inland SAR.

11. The Group had received a copy of the draft Inland Waterways Scooping Study. The Group were asked to provide their comments on the study to the author and to also circulate the study within their own organisations for further comments.

12. The RNLI were to undertake research with regard to SAR on inland waters where there were growing concerns about the number of lives being lost. It was suggested that this would be one of the ways that the Group could look at for a joined up approach for UKSAR.

13. The Group were asked to review and ratify the standard operating procedures for the use of helicopters for fire brigade offshore operations. The members of the Group agreed to circulate the procedures within their own organisations and report back to the next meeting with a view to endorsing the procedures. The procedures were also passed onto the Strategic Committee for information.

14. The Group were concerned that there was no longer any committee to review helicopter deconfliction issues, it was agreed that a standing working group to review deconfliction issues would be established under the aegis of the Operators Group.

15. Concerns had been raised about the use of Air Ambulances in search and rescue incidents. The Group were reminded that the operational procedures of the Air Ambulances did not permit them to deal with search and rescue incidents.

16. The Group agreed to collate information and advice on working in unsafe areas/environments with the intent of looking at best practice.