

UNITED KINGDOM SEARCH AND RESCUE (UKSAR) OPERATORS GROUP

MARITIME AND AVIATION CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

REPORT OF MEETING OF 12 JUNE 2002

1. The minutes of the meeting of 27 November 2001 were accepted.
2. The Committee were provided an update on the progress of the production of the UKSAR Framework Document. Unfortunately the production process had suffered a number of delays. The MCA had taken over the production of the document, which was now at the proof stage.
3. Members of the Committee were invited to request copies of the final draft of the document for information, with the caveat that it was only at the final draft stage.
4. The Committee were provided with an update on the progress of the helicopter harmonisation project.
5. The Committee were provided details of the updating of the Irish Coast Guard SAR helicopter fleet. The Committee were also informed that following a study in Ireland that 4 Air Ambulances had also been commissioned, however the Air Ambulances would not be used for SAR purposes.
6. The Committee were provided an update on SAR provision on the River Thames. Following the launch on 2 January 320 services had been provided. The establishment of the new arrangements had been deemed to be a major success with all the Agencies involved working well together.
7. The Committee were provided a report on the UKSAR Operators Group meeting. One of the main areas of concern within the Emergency Services in general was the increasingly litigious society they now operated in. There were concerns that due to the constraints being place on SAR activities that their effectiveness was being put at risk.
8. The issue of the use of mobile phones had again been discussed. It was noted that a number of organisations had concerns and some had issued advice individually.
9. The Committee were informed that the MCA had ceased to monitor the distress watch on MF 2182 as of 31 May 2002. However a loudspeaker watch would be maintained until at least January 2003.
10. The MCA were in discussions with the Radiocommunications Agency to look at VHF Frequency Band allocations. The MCA had made available with the Radiocommunications Agency permission VHF Channels 0 & 73 for use by inland SAR. The Channels would only be available by licensed users under strict operating conditions.

11. The RYA had raised whether there was a possibility of a dedicated weather channel. The MCA did not have the resources or the capacity to provide a channel. It was noted that HMCG do broadcast weather information at scheduled times subject to SAR action and that weather information was available from other sources.

12. The Committee were given an update on the concerns and progress of the Inland SAR Consultative Committee.

13. The Committee were asked to consider applications to join the Committee from British Helicopters Advisory Board, and the Confederation of Helicopter Ambulance Services. It was agreed that there needed to be an agreement between the various air bodies as to who should be the representative. The Committee later agreed that the representative body would be the Confederation of Helicopter Ambulance Services

14. The Committee were provided with a presentation on the RNLI beach rescue project.

15. The Committee were informed that the MCA and Isle of Man had recently completed an Memorandum of Understanding.