

# HELICOPTERS

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## Bristow and Schiebel SAR aircraft trials



Bristow, in partnership Schiebel Group, is carrying out what the company describes as the UK's first trial of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for lifesaving operations in maritime and land environments. Bristow is the provider of the HM Coastguard Search and Rescue Helicopter Service.

Bristow is operating the Schiebel CAMCOPTER S-100 system – a rotary UAV – from Caernarfon Airport in Wales, to evaluate its capabilities in a search-and-rescue role. Bristow explains Caernarfon Airport offers a dynamic operational area, including mountainous and maritime environments, making it an ideal location to incorporate the unmanned aircraft technology into a complex airspace environment.

The trial is being led by Bristow and, explains the company, is complementary to the work being carried out by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency to develop the regulation under which UAVs can operate in a range of scenarios beyond visual line of sight, as well as in unsegregated airspace where other aircraft are operating. The aircraft is also being used by international agencies like the European Maritime Safety Agency.

With the capability to travel 200 kilometres from its home base, Bristow explains 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.

### Developing the CAMCOPTER

“This trial allows us to carry out demanding evaluation of the aircraft, the broader system capability and future suitability as an evolutionary step beyond the current helicopter-focused approach to search and rescue missions,” said Alan Corbett, chief executive of Bristow Helicopters Ltd. “Schiebel’s technology has already been operationally proven globally. Integrating unmanned aircraft with our current capability is the logical next stage in the development of search in support of rescue activities.

Corbett continues to explain Bristow’s teams have already undertaken significant training and testing of these aircraft in less-active environments, but the Caernarfon environment is allowing the company to test the potential for operational, public service.

“The CAMCOPTER S-100 is a proven and reliable UAS for maritime and land-based operations,” said Neil Hunter, business development director at Schiebel Group. “In total, we have collected more than 82,000 flight hours so far and we’re looking forward to demonstrating the full range of our capabilities to Bristow in the UK.”