

Home > Technology > **Schiebel's uncrewed aircraft chosen for National Police Air Service trials**

TECHNOLOGY

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Lanna Deamer ♦ 10 March 2025

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Photo credit: Schiebel

The [National Police Air Service](#) (NPAS) has selected global manufacturer, Schiebel to support its most ambitious trial so far of 'Beyond the Visual Line of Sight' (BVLOS) uncrewed aircraft operations.

The trial – which, in 2024, successfully achieved a place in the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA) BVLOS integration sandbox – will evaluate the feasibility of using uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) to work alongside crewed police helicopters and aeroplanes in support of policing operations across England and Wales.

David Walters, NPAS Head of Futures and Innovation, said the aim of the trial was to determine if advancements in aviation technology can bring future benefits to policing and, if they can, how they could be safely introduced into UK airspace.

“We will be evaluating how we might integrate uncrewed aircraft into the existing NPAS operating model, under the current management of our CAA-approved Accountable Manager and Form 4 certificate-holders, who are qualified and accountable for the delivery of safe police air operations over England and Wales.”

— David Walters, Head of Futures and Innovation, NPAS.

Schiebel will be flying the CAMCOPTER S-100 in a carefully selected and controlled environment to assess the UAS capabilities, as part of the concept for a future blended fleet, operated by NPAS.

Schiebel will join the National Air Traffic Control Service (NATS) as part of the team supporting the NPAS Futures and Innovation team with the trial, which is funded by the Home Office and scheduled to see its first test flight in summer 2025.

After extensive consultation, an area in the Severn estuary, in South West England, has been selected for the trial flights, away from any built-up environments.

For the last 24 months, NPAS has been building a robust safety case, which has included testing a 'detect and avoid' solution, to ensure the trial can operate safely and with minimum disruption to the public and other airspace users. Along with the potential capabilities for policing operations, the trial will also evaluate the effectiveness of the 'detect and avoid' solution.

“We cannot predict the outcome of the trial, but it is imperative we deliver the same, or improved, capability that we have today with our crewed aircraft. The desired outcome is to be able to offer police forces in England and Wales a way of supporting their operations in an even more flexible way, with a continued emphasis on public safety.”

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Lanna Deamer



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