



Meeting	SPA Policing Performance Committee
Date	15 June 2023
Location	Video Conference
Title of Paper	RPAS Update
Presented By	ACC Mark Williams
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	No

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on replacement of Police Scotland’s drones fleet.

The paper is presented in line with

- Scottish Police Authority Committee Terms of Reference in relation to Police Scotland use of RPAS (drones).

Members are invited to discuss the contents of this paper.

1 Overview

- 1.1. Police Scotland utilises remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS), referred to as drones, from Aberdeen, Inverness and Glasgow providing air support to local policing, specialist departments and partners.
- 1.2. Police Scotland currently has six operational drones. The current fleet also contains assets used primarily for training and aerial image tasking.
- 1.3. An update was provided at the March 2022 Policing & Performance Committee that the 3 drones used operationally by Police Scotland Air Support Unit (ASU) would be replaced with newer models in order to maintain and improve current service delivery and support to Local Policing and partners.
- 1.4 The models purchased by Police Scotland in 2019, are no longer marketed by the manufacturer.
- 1.5 In April 2022, a Capital spend budget totalling £170,000 was secured for the upgrade of the fleet. This was approved by Police Scotland Air Support Monitoring Group.
- 1.6 Drones are currently deployed to events on a regular basis supporting policing commanders and local delivery partners in making key public safety decisions.

2 Best Value

- 2.1. Market research carried out by the ASU since the original report to the SPA PPC, has identified a model which was released to market in March 2022 and has been extensively used by other UK Forces. Given the pace at which drone technology moves, and to ensure best value, Police Scotland has opted to purchase the most up to date drone available. This model is more lightweight, more portable, cost effective and with better ingress protection (IP) than previous models. The chosen model will also be capable of flying in adverse conditions and battery capability advancements ensure longer flying time.
- 2.2. Sustainability and innovation are key aspects of the air support strategic plan over the next 10 years. The ASU continues to engage with partners, industry and academia to help influence drone development based on our operational experience and insight. This includes working with Glasgow University on a Research & Development project.

2.3. Procurement

- 2.4. A tender process was commenced in October 2022 with a number of bid responses received. These were evaluated and a bidder chosen. To ensure operational security the details of the manufacturer and supplier is not included within this paper.
- 2.5. The new drones have now been received by Police Scotland ASU and their deployment will be rolled out across the next 3-6 months across Scotland to maximise accessibility to the resource across the country.
- 2.6. The existing drones will now be used to support training and operational competence.
- 2.7. All Police Scotland drones are manufactured by a company which provides drones to 39 of 44 UK police forces.
- 2.8. As a result of recent queries from UK Government regarding the security of data/information supplied by drones, security measures were examined to ensure the appropriate mitigation is in place. This has been done in conjunction with NPCC colleagues and Police Scotland's Information Manager with relevant additional measures now in place.
- 2.9. All documentation including the data protection impact assessment, assurance review and safety case have all been reviewed in line with Police Scotland executive officers direction.
- 2.10. Crucially, Police Scotland does not deploy drones at counter terrorism incidents, incidents relating to national security or incidents where the drone would be used covertly.

2.11. Next Steps

- 2.12. All new drones will be rigorously tested by ASU staff prior to being used operationally.
- 2.13. Police Scotland have notified the Civil Aviation Authority of the new drones and an amendment made to the Operational Safety Case. We await formal approval of the revised Operational Safety Case.
- 2.14. Both the Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) and Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EqHRIA) have been updated to reflect the introduction of the new drone fleet.

- 2.15. An RPAS pilot training programme has been developed and will shortly be submitted to Civil Aviation Authority for consideration and approval. The course will then form the basis of the roll out programme across Police Scotland. Once implemented the vision is to have 18 officers trained to pilot the drones within 12 months.
- 2.16. The Police Scotland Air Support Strategy is in the final stages of being developed and will be presented to the SPA in September 2023.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. There are no financial implications associated with this paper. Replacement drones were procured using capital funds.
- 3.2. The ongoing running and maintenance costs will be absorbed by ASU budgets.
- 3.3. The deployment of drones, in place of helicopter flights, is anticipated to offer significant financial savings.

4 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. There are no personnel implications in this report.

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. There are no legal implications in this report.

6 REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. There are no reputational implications in this report.

7 SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. There are no social implications in this report.

8 COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 8.1. There are no community implications in this report.

9 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. EqHRIA has been updated to reflect the newer drone model.

10 ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. The continued increase in use of Police drones at incidents/events, as an alternative to the Police helicopter where appropriate, will support the Police Scotland Environmental Strategy and help reduce the organisations carbon footprint.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the contents of this paper.