



NATIONAL POLICE
AIR SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23



Delivering public safety from the air

This report highlights the valuable and unique work of the ground and air crews of the National Police Air Service (NPAS).

NPAS is the UK's largest non-military operator of onshore helicopters.

Since its formation in 2012, it has provided vital air support to every police force in England and Wales from its regional bases and HQ Operations Centre.

With a fleet of 19 rotary and four fixed wing aircraft, the service is unrivalled in its ability to provide an aerial perspective of ongoing police operations; combining dynamic incident response and tactical search direction with a 24/7 cross-border capability.

Set against a challenging operating environment, where resources and demand are often conflicting, air support is a strategic policing requirement, delivering impact and value that is often underestimated.

Our Annual Report explains our work and achievements of 2022/23 as we proudly deliver public safety from the air.



An introduction from Chief Constable John Robins, QPM DL



I am pleased to introduce the National Police Air Service 2022-23 Annual Report.

This report marks ten years since NPAS was formed to deliver air support to police forces across England and Wales.

NPAS is a unique and complex arrangement, bringing every force together in a national collaboration to deliver efficient and effective policing from the air.

For over a decade, West Yorkshire has had the privilege of leading the service and I am incredibly proud of all it has achieved and continues to achieve every day.

There is little doubt that air support brings a distinct advantage to police operations.

Our helicopter and aeroplane crews offer an unrivalled view which saves valuable time and resources and, even more importantly, saves people's lives.

Air support not only reduces crime and safeguards vulnerable people, but it is at the forefront of keeping our officers and staff safe too.

Like all aspects of policing, the service continues to evolve and NPAS is working with forces to understand how new technologies might be used to enhance the value that air support brings to policing operations, now and in the future.

Work has begun on a comprehensive fleet replacement programme, delivering the most significant investment in police aircraft and equipment since NPAS was formed in 2012.

Additionally, the innovative work that is underway to explore the capabilities of crewless aircraft promises a potentially exciting future for police aviation.

As we transition NPAS to a new hosting arrangement and look towards the transformation of the service to meet the future needs of policing, this report looks back on the achievements of the last year and reminds us of the core purpose of police air support.

Quite simply, that is saving lives and making our communities safer. NPAS continues to do that every day.

John Robins QPM DL
Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police

The value of the National Police Air Service

Policing from the air offers better value than most people might think.

Over 80% of our taskings can be categorised as:

- Suspect searches or containments
- Vehicle searches or follows
- Missing or injured people searches

Each of these scenarios can be resource intensive for police forces, often demanding a large number of specialist and responsive ground units and support personnel, for prolonged periods of time.

This will often come at a greater financial cost than deployment of an aircraft - not to mention the potential human cost.

Key to our success, is timing. The sooner our aircraft are deployed, the greater chance of a successful outcome.

Even when a person isn't directly found by an aircrew, eliminating search areas quickly and thoroughly can be invaluable for forces, saving them time and resources and helping focus their ground operations where they need to be.

Our true value comes from the results we achieve.

Take missing people searches, for example.

A helicopter or aeroplane allows for a search to take place in the dark. It is much quicker and is capable of searching areas that ground personnel may only be able to reach with great difficulty, such as cliff edges.

In the absence of an aircraft, forces would have to engage significantly more vehicles and officers, at all levels, to maximise the probability of finding a missing person in the first hour - critical for high risk and vulnerable people.

The same can be said for the containment of suspects. In the absence of air support, more ground resources would be required to monitor a suspect's movements and cover potential escape routes.

In vehicle pursuits, air support allows roads policing officers the opportunity to maintain a safer distance from the suspect, without risking the likelihood of the suspect being lost.

In 2022/23, over 88% of taskings attended by an NPAS aircraft resulted in a positive outcome.

Response rates

In 2022/23, our aircraft crews were deployed to 4,621 priority one incidents.

These are when there is an immediate threat to a life, a crime is in action or there is a national or terrorism incident.

The average time to reach a scene from receiving a call was 12 minutes, 18 seconds.

For priority two incidents, which are incidents where deployment will lead to the prevention or detection of crime, 9,502 were attended, with the average time to reach the scene being 21 minutes and 54 seconds.

88.9% of incidents attended by an NPAS crew resulted in a positive outcome, most of which were achieved as a direct result of air support.

Our skilled team of dispatchers, based in our dedicated Operations Centre at West Yorkshire Police headquarters, assess each call for the appropriate response.

Positive outcomes	Direct result of air support	Assisted by air support
Vulnerable person located	371	155
Missing person located	613	352
Wanted suspect located	2,738	1,686
Target vehicle located	1,373	527

A case study: saving lives


In 2022/23, 984 vulnerable or missing people were found directly by a National Police Air Service crew – many of whom were at risk of serious harm had they not been found quickly.

This is especially true for people who have dementia.

One such case was that of a 77-year-old man with dementia and pneumonia who wandered from a hospital in Lancashire shortly after 9pm on a cold evening in December 2022, wearing just a hospital gown.

After one hour and 20 minutes of directed searching, with no trace of the patient, the crew returned to the last potential sighting of the man and widened their search along rural country lanes.

Using their thermal imagery kit, the crew spotted a heat source in a ditch, under a tree, on a narrow lane, set back from the main road. They identified the missing man lying in the ditch, struggling to move and in a critical condition.



Ground patrols were directed to him but they were unable to lift him from the ditch because he had sustained a pelvic fracture.

He was only mildly responsive and was showing signs of hypothermia.

With no immediate ambulance available, the aircrew took the collective decision to land on a nearby football pitch and give the aircraft's onboard stretcher to officers, enabling them to lift the man and convey him to hospital, most likely saving his life.

Our fleet

NPAS operates a fleet of 19 helicopters (15 Airbus EC135 and four EC145) and four aeroplanes (Vulcanair P68R), plus a further EC135 helicopter which was on loan in Norway.

In October 2022, the decision was taken to bring the spare aircraft G-POLU back into the fleet for the purposes of training.

The average age of our fleet is around 15 years, with four aircraft now over 20 years old.

In 2022, following a successful market engagement exercise, NPAS, in partnership with BlueLight Commercial, embarked on a major fleet replacement programme, inviting organisations to tender for a framework agreement.

At the time of writing this report, the contract had yet to be awarded.



Our fixed wing aircraft

In January 2022, the National Strategic Board voted to retain four fixed wing aircraft, enabling the service to operate two lines simultaneously and extending its reach across the whole of England and Wales.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, the fixed wing crews attended 737 calls for service and flew for 687 hours in support of 41 police forces.

The recruitment of additional pilots to operate the two simultaneous lines was unavoidably delayed after Doncaster Sheffield Airport owners Peel Group announced plans to close the airport, at which the aircraft and crew were based. However, this is now back on track; recruitment and training has resumed, and we anticipate the two lines being in operation once this is completed.

A new home for fixed wing

When Peel Group announced its plans to close Doncaster Sheffield Airport in 2022 it meant our fixed wing fleet, aircrew, engineering contractors and training facilities were forced to find a new base. Determined to avoid a break in operational service, the crew temporarily relocated to Leeds Bradford Airport whilst we sought an appropriate alternative home for the operations. This did, however, reduce availability in November 2022. Negotiations continue to secure a new permanent base.



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A case study: the benefit of fixed wing aircraft


Unlike a helicopter, which has about two hours flying time before it needs to refuel, our aeroplanes can stay airborne for up to eight hours.

This gives them great resilience – especially when it comes to policing large-scale events, protracted public order incidents and pre-planned operations.

It also means that, once in flight, the aircraft can remain in the air for almost a full shift, transiting from one job to the next.

In 2022/23, 65.1% of deployments for the fixed wing fleet occurred whilst in flight, compared to 30.1% for our rotary aircraft.

With the ability to reach areas in the North East, North West, East Midlands and West Midlands regions in 20 minutes, and areas within all other regions in 60 minutes, the aircraft complement the service delivered by our rotary fleet and offer additional resource options for our Operations Centre dispatchers. They are especially suited to operations in suburban and rural areas.



An example of the fleet's unique value was evidenced in May 2022 when NPAS 54 lifted from Doncaster Sheffield Airport to complete an intelligence-gathering tasking in Essex.

Almost immediately on taking off, the crew was alerted to a tracker activation in Worksop, Nottinghamshire, and located a stolen camper van as suspects were changing the vehicle's identification.

As the crew completed their Essex tasking, they were diverted to help in the search for a suicidal woman near Tiverton, Devon. Thankfully they located her.

On their return to Doncaster, the crew dropped on a suspect vehicle which contained a man wanted by Devon and Cornwall Police. Ground units were directed to the vehicle and, deploying a pincer movement on country lanes, they stopped the car and detained the suspect.

Our 2022/23 performance dashboard

Flying hours per region

In 2022/23, our aircraft flew a total of 11,177 hours.

Region	Total flying hours (rotary and fixed wing) 2022/23	Fixed wing flying hours only 2022/23
British Transport Police	55:33	3:14
East Midlands	504:16	99:36
East	1,183:06	18:42
London	1,596:27	0:00
North East	1,963:24	316:56
North West	1,639:37	132:46
South East	1,224:19	30:37
South West	1,292:33	16:11
Wales	832:03	13:04
West Midlands	885:41	55:52
Total	11,177:03	687:03

NPAS base	Number of deployments
Husbands Bosworth	525
Benson	401
North Weald	1,747
London	3,659
Redhill	1,082
Newcastle	1,047
Carr Gate	1,935
Barton	2,416
Hawarden	523
Bournemouth	373
Exeter	578
Almondsbury	848
St Athan	1,251
Birmingham	1,296
Other	15
Fixed wing	870
Total	18,566

Deployments per base

Our aircraft were deployed 18,566 times.

Deployments include all attended taskings, plus those that are abandoned, diverted or cancelled by a police force.

An aircraft is deemed available when all its mission systems and crew are ready to be tasked (subject to weather limitations).

In 2022/23, average aircraft availability was 70.4%.

It is important to note that due to essential, annual maintenance requirements, it is impossible to achieve 100% availability. There are up to 10 weeks of planned maintenance per aircraft, per year.

Engineering (14.6%) and pilot issues, such as flight time limitations (6.4%), accounted for the main reasons for unavailability.

Just over 36% of calls for service were cancelled and, of these, over 77% were before an aircraft lifted.

When an NPAS crew is cancelled, it is normally because a person or vehicle has been found, prior to our arrival.

43.7% of cancellations were for this reason. We also responded to a small number of calls which either had to be abandoned, due to a change in weather (0.9%) or had to be diverted to a higher priority task (0.8%).

Our 2022/23 performance dashboard

Our dynamic tasks can be varied, but most involve searching for a suspect, target vehicle or vulnerable person.

In fact, 81% of all our calls for service in 2022/23 were in response to 'incidents or crimes in action'.

Type of tasking 2022/23	
Suspect search	3,781
Vehicle search	4,317
Missing person search	3,067
Injured person/concern for welfare	1,922
Containment of scene	544
Public order incident	206
Thermal imagery request	436
Vehicle follow	255
Other	734
Total	15,262

A further 9.9% of our taskings were to support strategic policing requirements, such as incident management, specialist operations and pre-planned events, and 9% were to meet local force priorities, with things like proactive patrols in crime hotspot areas, community or sporting events and the transportation of prisoners.

Declined calls for service

There will always be times when, unavoidably, we have to decline a call for our assistance.

The main reasons are unsafe weather conditions for flying, engineering requirements, crew abstractions for training or pilot flight time limitations.

But sometimes, a request simply isn't viable for air support.

In 2022/23, our Operations Centre staff declined 16.5% of calls.

A case study: keeping the public safe

2022 saw some of the largest public events in recent history.

The death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022 brought the country together in mourning and mobilised one of the largest policing operations in the city of London, as world dignitaries and members of the public gathered for her state funeral.

Whilst well-rehearsed and immaculately planned, delivering vital air support still came with its challenges with one aircraft deployed and a second on standby to cover refuelling requirements.

Our NPAS crews were available round-the-clock to offer discreet support to the Metropolitan Police Service, providing safe monitoring of the movement of Heads of State and an aerial view of events, with real-time downlinks to the ground operations control room.

Over a ten-day period, we made 32 flights, totalling 34 hours, which included flying for over 11 hours on the day of the funeral.



In July and August 2022, Birmingham hosted the Commonwealth Games, welcoming thousands of world class athletes to the West Midlands and attracting an audience of 1.5 million ticketed spectators.

For events on public roads, such as the cycle race, our fixed wing and rotary aircraft gave combined aerial support for over 13 hours.

Throughout the year, our air support extended across a range of national events, from the Grand National race meeting at Aintree to championship football tournaments in the UK's largest cities.

There is little doubt, NPAS provides a reliable, high-quality service as part of our national efforts to keep the public safe during large-scale events.

Our people

NPAS is the only holder of a Police Air Operator's Certificate (PAOC) in England and Wales.

To retain our PAOC we are required to employ nine European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and Civil Aviation Authority-approved Form 4 holders, also known as nominated persons.

They must demonstrate they fully understand their accountabilities and are capable in the delivery of safe and compliant flight operations.

Our Accountable Manager has overall responsibility for our effective management system; making sure our operations can be financed and meet regulatory requirements. She is directly accountable for the safety of our service.

Every UK aviation organisation must have Form 4 holders – NPAS is no different.

Such accreditation and CAA-approval must be maintained by these critical postholders, who are experts in police aviation – including flight operations, compliance, training, safety, ground infrastructure, technical services and continuing airworthiness.

Without them, we couldn't operate.



Chief Superintendent Vicki White was appointed NPAS Accountable Manager and Chief Operating Officer in July 2022

Our people

On 31 March 2023, there were 252 people working for NPAS, which included 98 police officers who are seconded from various police forces across England and Wales.

There were 28 vacancies.

Recruitment and training are ongoing processes as people leave and join, so actual full-time equivalent (FTE) numbers versus established posts will always fluctuate.

Employee numbers on 31 March 2023

Role or department	Established posts	Actual FTEs
Pilots	74	69
Base managers	16	14
Tactical Flight Officers	129	111.20
Headquarters	36	31.81
Operations Centre	25	24.52

Managing absence

At NPAS, our sickness absence rates are much lower than those of police forces in England and Wales.

	Absence: officers	Absence: Staff
All police forces (31/03/2022)	3.95%	4.01%
NPAS (31/03/2023)	1.52%	1.50%

Diversity monitoring

Our Diversity, Equality and Inclusion group has been established to look at ways of increasing diversity within our workforce.

It is recognised that currently 82% of our workforce is male and people from minority ethnic groups are significantly under-represented, at just over 2%.

We are driven to maintain a fully inclusive and accessible organisation which attracts the very best employees and are focused on improving the balance of our workforce, fully in the knowledge that a diverse staff brings a wealth of experience and perspective, creating a healthy working environment for everyone.

This data was collected during 2022/23. Due to movements in staff, the total staff numbers will not necessarily equate with the total workforce numbers as recorded on 31 March 2023.

Employment type	Male employees			Female employees		
	White	Minority ethnic	Prefer not to say	White	Minority ethnic	Prefer not to say
Police officer	107	2	3	26	0	0
Police staff	113	2	5	21	2	0
Volunteer	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total	221	4	8	47	2	0

An Approved Training Organisation

Each year, our internal training department keeps our pilots and Tactical Flight Officers current, competent and qualified in their skills to deliver safe and effective police operations.

As an Approved Training Organisation (ATO) we deliver training specific to the operations we conduct, in both rotary and fixed wing aircraft. Our courses are set against strict standards that our training providers are examined against.

In 2022/23, we significantly upgraded our training management software by adopting Centrik as our preferred platform to record, monitor and report on each individual's competency and training schedule.

We also redesigned our training programme for Tactical Flight Officers, streamlining the steps officers must take and reducing the cost and time of training by further enhancing our inhouse simulator equipment.



Training for excellence

In 2022/23, 225 police officers or staff applied to join NPAS as a Tactical Flight Officer.

Of those, 146 were shortlisted for assessment.

All shortlisted candidates are required to pass an interview, group exercise and aptitude test before qualifying for a place on an initial four-week course.

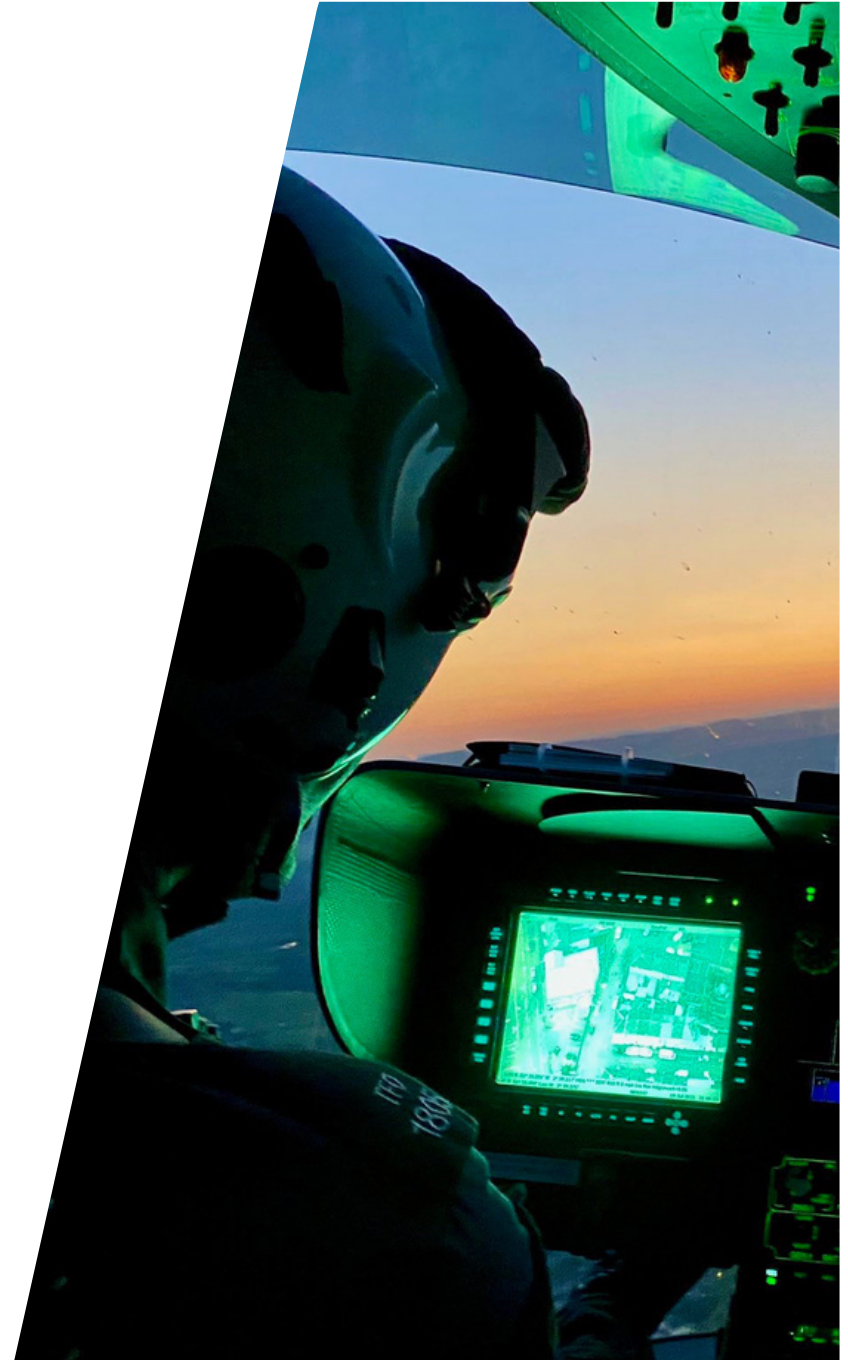
In total, 15 new Tactical Flight Officers or Base Managers successfully completed the course in 2022/23 and are now flying with NPAS. A further 15 new pilots were trained.

We ran five Tactical Flight Officer courses in 2022/23. Due to the timeframes for testing and training, several officers selected for training in 2022/23 will complete a course in 2023/24.

As of April 2023, 12 candidates were on a succession list, awaiting training, and a further 41 were still going through the assessment process.

Training courses 2022/23

Number of new pilots successfully completing training	15
Number of new TFOs successfully completing training	15
Percentage of pilots passing initial training course	100%
Percentage of TFOs passing initial training course	91%



A case study: teamwork

One word sums up our approach at NPAS – teamwork.

In August, one of our NPAS London crews was flying back to our Lippett's Hill base after a deployment when they noticed smoke near Ilford, so went to check it out.

Firefighters were at the scene dealing with the blaze which was spreading westwards towards a railway line. But the aircrew noticed flames starting to move southwards across a field towards houses.

The crew advised London Fire Brigade and identified a rendezvous point for police, fire and ambulance officers to coordinate the evacuation of nearby houses. These houses included homes for disabled people who were unable to leave without assistance.

The helicopter's downlink equipment provided vital, real-time footage to scene commanders, showing them the blaze as it spread to within metres of people's homes.

Given the speed of the spread of fire, and the fact that some people were unable to self-evacuate, the event could have very quickly escalated into a major incident, without the timely sighting of the NPAS crew and excellent teamwork between air and ground crews.



Governing the National Police Air Service

Governing the National Police Air Service and setting its strategic direction is the National Strategic Board.

Operations are delivered via a lead force model, which was established as part of a National Police Collaboration Agreement.

The Mayor of West Yorkshire is currently the lead policing body and legal entity of NPAS, with West Yorkshire Police the lead force and operator.

In June 2021, the Mayor gave notice to cease the arrangement, in accordance with the terms of a National Police Collaboration Agreement.

In 2022, the National Strategic Board instructed trusted partner BlueLight Commercial to establish an independent programme to identify potential options for the future hosting arrangements of NPAS from June 2024.

This work continues.

In April 2022, West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion stepped down as chair of the board and Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner Lisa Townsend took the position.

PCC Campion is thanked for his contribution to police air support during his time as chair.

North East region

PCC Jonathan Evison;
Chief Con Jo Farrell

South East region

PCC Lisa Townsend (chair);
Chief Con Jason Hogg

North West region

PCC John Dwyer;
Chief Con Mark Roberts

South West region

PCC Philip Wilkinson;
Chief Con Catherine Roper

West Midlands region

PCC Ben Adams;
Chief Con Debbie Tedds

Wales region

PCC Dafydd Llywelyn;
Chief Con Pam Kelly

East Midlands region

PCC Marc Jones;
Chief Con Rachel Swann

London region

Head of Operational
Oversight for Mayor's
Office for Policing and
Crime Robin Merrett;
Dep Asst Commissioner
Laurence Taylor

Eastern region

PCC Festus Akinbusoye;
Chief Con Ben Julian-
Harrington

NPAS and the Civil Aviation Authority

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is responsible for the regulation of all aviation safety in the UK.

As such, NPAS is required to comply with CAA regulations in addition to its own procedures, just like any air operator.

Assuring we comply with regulations is managed by our Compliance Monitoring Team, through a programme of internal and external audits.

These primarily focus on two key areas - flight operations (including training) and the continuing airworthiness of our aircraft.

The CAA also carries out an annual audit of our HQ management functions, as well having oversight of our base activities on a less frequent basis.

In addition, our internal team conducts audits with third-party suppliers, including engineering contractors, fuel providers and even small, independent airfields that we might sometimes use for re-fuelling.

Even our Compliance Monitoring Team is independently audited.

Audit schedule for 2022/23

Number of internal audits

These are conducted by our NPAS Compliance Monitoring Team and include planned and no-notice audits

53

(inc. 4 no-notice)

Number of external audits

These are conducted by the Civil Aviation Authority

8

Following the Civil Aviation Authority's annual audit in 2022, no findings were raised and there were no recommendations for improvements made.

Compliance trends 2022/23

Instances of non-compliance are recorded, and trends are analysed and monitored as part of a monthly Senior Leadership Team meeting.

In 2022/23, the main trend for non-compliance centred on non-conformance in following some procedures. In all cases, this is being addressed through greater scrutiny on procedural documents held by NPAS and contractors to identify and implement continual improvements.

Focus on safety

With an uncompromising focus on safety, NPAS is proud of its record in managing the many risks that inevitably come with delivering a 24/7 aviation service.

We have a strong safety culture, embedded throughout our organisation, which is reflected in the outcome of our annual internal and external safety audits.

Incidents, near misses and safety issues are reported, tracked and analysed through Centrik – an all-in-one management system, which helps ensure compliance in the highly-regulated and safety-critical aviation industry.

Along with a six-monthly internal Safety Review Board, chaired by the NPAS Accountable Manager, we also subscribe to the following national safety groups:

- UK Laser Safety Working Group
- UK Flight Safety Committee
- Civil Aviation Authority Skywise
- British Helicopter Association Technical Committee
- Civil Aviation Authority Onshore Safety Leadership Group
- Police & Helicopter Emergency Medical Services Safety Group

The main risks facing NPAS have remained unchanged for five years.

These are declared annually to the Civil Aviation Authority, which seeks assurances that they are suitably monitored and managed.

They are:

1. Reduction in performance resulting from human error
2. Organisational change affecting the wellbeing of staff
3. Over reliance on single points of failure, such as limited personnel able to carry out critical roles
4. Maintenance errors on the aircraft or equipment
5. Drones strike

The increasing presence of drones in shared airspace creates an ever-growing risk and highlights the importance of ongoing tactical deconfliction work which forms part of our Futures and Innovation work.

Serious incidents 2022/23

We experienced no serious incidents in 2022/23.

Our overall record of reportable incidents remains in line with European industry expectations, as measured by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency.

It is estimated 85% of all reported laser attacks against helicopters in England and Wales are made against police aircraft.

Between January and December 2022, there were 58 such attacks. Between January and April 2023 there were 15.

NPAS will always gather evidence of a laser attack, report incidents to the local police force and robustly pursue prosecution through the courts.

Jail sentence for laser offender

A Wrexham man was jailed in November 2022 for shining a laser at a NPAS Hawarden crew.

The 58-year-old man was told by a judge: "Your actions could have had devastating and tragic consequences."

He was jailed for six months after he admitted to Mold Crown Court that he had pointed a red and green laser beam towards the helicopter in December 2021 as the crew searched for suspects.

Judge Nicola Saffman said: "The matter is so serious a deterrent message needs to be sent that people who use lasers towards and in the vicinity of helicopters should expect to receive custodial sentences."

It was reported that the offender had been drinking heavily. The NPAS crew identified his home and directed local police patrols to the address to make an arrest.

Projects

Operating a police aviation service involves much more than just putting aircraft in the sky.

Our teams need the best equipment to gather evidence, communicate and stay safe, which is why our Project Management Office is an integral part of our service.

Its work ranges from arranging replacement and upgrades of aircraft equipment to managing major improvements to base infrastructure. Much of the work involves dealing with complex systems, especially around communications.

Keeping a large fleet of specialist aircraft up to date and fit for purpose involves spinning many plates. Here are just some of the key projects delivered in 2022/23.

Radio replacement: The EC145 fleet is being refitted with SC21 radio handsets. Design work has been completed. Installation will take place in 2023. Total cost: £325k.

Support of ADL ground infrastructure: We promoted the Airborne Down Link (ADL) system to other emergency service users, resulting in the purchase of ground receivers by fire and ambulance services.

Mapping upgrades: An order was placed for updates to maps and addresses, upgrades to data cartridges, and improvement of the onboard mapping system, allowing for more accurate searches. Total cost: £63k.

Camera purchases: We purchased two spare FLIR Star Safire HD systems to support the EC135 P2 fleet.

St Athan base: The NPAS St Athan base was completely refurbished in 2022, and a significant extension built by Wernick Buildings. Total cost: £185k.

Base improvement programme: A £200k budget was made available to carry out essential base improvements.

Metropolitan Police Service communications project: We have been working on the integration of an upgraded Command and Control and communications system through Multi Agency Incident Transfer (MAIT).

West Yorkshire control room project: With West Yorkshire Police project team, we have delivered a new Control Room Solution to the NPAS Operations Centre.

Airwave capability through to ESN: The ESN Air Network, across the UK, continues to develop with a completion date of Autumn 2024. Part of this network, in North Wales and North West England, now forms the Air Test network and is being used to test the air devices.

Helmets: A structured maintenance and fitting regime is now in place, and a rolling refresh/refit programme has been implemented.

Procurement and contracts

We work in partnership with many valued suppliers who are procured, with the support of BlueLight Commercial, to deliver a wide range of contracts, totalling £19.29m each year.

Unsurprisingly, our greatest contract spend is for the maintenance of our fleet. Suppliers delivering contracts with an annual value of £100k or more are listed in the table.

Lower value, but significant, contracts included the supply of:

- Aviation command and aircraft navigation system (ACANS)
- In-service support for fixed wing and ground station mission system software
- Fixed wing MX10 camera support and maintenance
- Service, maintenance and purchase of aircrew helmets

NPAS contracts with an annual value of over £100k

Contract detail	Supplier	Start date	End date
Rotary aircraft maintenance, continuing airworthiness management, spare parts, engine support aircraft modifications	AHUK	01/05/2019	30/09/2024 (option to extend until 30/09/2026)
Aviation fuel supply	Various	11/05/2018	27/05/2023 ¹
Provision of fixed wing maintenance, continuing airworthiness management and spare parts	GAMA Aviation (Engineering) Ltd	01/07/2022	31/03/2024
Provision of Tetra air-to ground radio device maintenance and repair goods and services	Chelton Ltd (T/A Cobham Aerospace Connectivity)	01/01/2020	31/12/2023
Fixed wing mission equipment extended warranty	Airborne Technologies	01/10/2022	30/09/2024
Freelance pilotage	Various	01/08/2015	
Flight simulator training devices	Babcock	01/12/2022	31/08/2023 ²
Inspection, preventative and remedial maintenance service for fuel farm installations and bowsers	Flofuel	01/09/2022	31/08/2025

1 At year end the tender evaluation and award report was awaiting approval from WYCA to enable new, replacement fuel contracts to commence, with an initial core term of three years plus a two year extension option

2 The timeline of the fleet replacement project means that negotiations are about to commence with Babcock International over a further 12 month access to the EC135 and EC145 simulators.

The future of police aviation

With opportunities offered by the advancement of technology, the future of police aviation is exciting.

Drones are becoming an increasingly deployed tool for police forces. In fact, nationally, in 2022/23, drones were deployed 18,794 times by police forces.

We are currently exploring how Beyond the Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) un-crewed aircraft can be used to enhance the value we bring and increase the capabilities of NPAS and forces to police from the skies.

Over the last 12 months, our Futures and Innovation Team has been on a path of discovery, to understand the wider requirements of un-crewed aircraft.

Safely unlocking BVLOS relies on technology to detect and avoid other air traffic and navigate ground hazards. We have been supporting several projects, such as the Norwich Drone First Responder solution, which utilises a 'drone in a box' to provide quick deployment, short duration, surveillance capabilities.

Thames Valley Police has chosen to adopt an eVTOL (electrical vertical take-off and landing) fixed wing capability using ground-based 'detect and avoid' technology.



Our role has been to look at the supportive technologies and see how they align to aviation regulation.

These projects also help inform us on the capabilities we require for our own trial of large un-crewed aircraft platforms.

Payload comparisons against existing sensor capabilities on our crewed aircraft are currently underway, with interesting results.

And we have been using our logged call data to identify mission types and locations and determine where an un-crewed capability, operated by NPAS pilots, could provide the biggest impact for policing.

There is still a considerable amount of work to do but we have the expertise and skills to shape an exciting future for police air support.

A case study: disrupting crime

For some, the crime of hare coursing may not seem a big deal.

But the reality is that it often masks more serious, organised, and dangerous, offending.

NPAS crews are perfectly suited to support forces with rural crime - and have seen significant results.

In October 2022, a crew from NPAS North Weald was tasked to spot hare coursers on land in Essex.

On locating a suspicious vehicle, the crew pursued it through Essex, Hertfordshire and into London boroughs, where it was brought to a tactical stop by traffic units.

It was revealed the driver had been wanted by police for serious crimes for five years.

In a separate incident, a check on five suspected hare coursers in November 2022 revealed they had a string of convictions, including kidnap, aggravated burglary, firearms offences robbery and serious assaults.



Hare coursers have been known to threaten landowners, assaulting them and burning property.

They may think they can evade justice but, together, we can make sure they don't.

There has been a 70% reduction in crime perpetrated by organised crime groups in Essex, and NPAS is proud to have been able to support the drive to keep our communities safer.

How we are funded

Most of our income comes from contributions made by police forces in England and Wales. In 2022/23, this amounted to £43,872,438.

Under the current funding model, forces determine the number of annual hours they require air support for and contribute according to those hours.

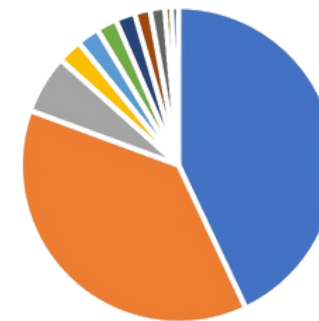
In 2022/23, we recorded a £5.467m underspend on our revenue budget.

The bulk of our annual budget is spent on staffing costs (£18.6million) and keeping our aircraft in the air (£15.6million).

Fuel costs increased significantly earlier in the year and the fixed wing contract also saw significant increased costs due to the unavoidable move from our Doncaster Sheffield Airport base to Leeds Bradford Airport. Both were out of NPAS's control but resulted in a £267k overspend.

We have agreed a financial settlement by way of compensation for the enforced relocation.

How our budget is spent



- Pay and overtime
- Fixed wing and rotary
- Parts and labour
- Professional fees
- Lead force costs
- Computers and communication
- Rent and rates
- Travel and training
- Buildings maintenance and energy
- Ground fleet
- Tools and domestic equipment

Financial statements

Subjective Area	Annual Budget	Cumulative payments	As at 31/03/23
Pay and Overtime	18,609,857	18,149,851	460,007
Computers and Communications	854,027	897,304	-43,277
Buildings Maintenance and Energy	624,877	640,551	-15,674
Parts and Labour	2,354,526	2,511,731	-157,205
Ground Fleet	225,252	279,781	-54,529
Lead Forces Costs	1,023,224	970,286	52,938
Tools & Domestic Equipment	124,111	284,899	-160,788
Fixed Wing and Rotary (Maintenance Contract, Fuel, PBH, Landing Fees, insurance and CAA fees)	15,580,005	15,848,531	-268,526
Fleet Replacement Reserve	2,300,000	0	2,300,000
Travel & Training	753,059	670,674	82,385
Rent & Rates	822,314	831,703	-9,389
Professional Fees/Legal Fees and Other	601,186	1,047,422	-446,236
Total Expenditure including Fleet Replacement Reserve	43,872,438	42,132,733	1,739,705
Income	-43,872,438	-43,980,932	108,494
Home Office Grant Funding		-3,618,437	3,618,437
Total Income	-43,872,438	-47,599,369	3,726,931
Grand Total Including Fleet Replacement Reserve	0	-5,466,636	5,466,636

A final word from our Accountable Manager



We hope this Annual Report 2022/23 provides a flavour of the role of the National Police Air Service in the policing of England and Wales.

The performance outcomes included in this report demonstrate how our crews help save lives and disrupt crime on a daily basis.

Our ability to track and search from the air is a valuable resource.

But the benefits of air support don't end there.

We provide real-time downlink footage to assist emergency service incident commanders in the command and control of major incidents and events.

We carry stretchers, defibrillators and medical kits and will land to administer first aid in critical situations.

We will transport dog or firearms officers to where they need to be, when time is of the essence.

We capture essential evidence that helps secure convictions in court.

Our officers are highly skilled in developing and advising on search strategies.

And we help safeguard police officers on the ground, providing an all-seeing containment on dynamic pursuits and static scenes, allowing them to stand off and plan a safe strategy for the detention of criminals.

Policing from the air seems simple, but the organisation that sits behind it is complex and delivered by some of the most skilled and experienced aviation experts in the UK.

We welcome our colleagues in policing to visit us to find out more about how we can support you and your communities today and in the future.

Vicki White
Chief Superintendent
NPAS Accountable Manager and Chief Operating Officer



NATIONAL POLICE AIR SERVICE

We thank everyone at NPAS for their dedication in the delivery of our service.

Your achievements are measured in the lives saved and criminality disrupted.

We also thank our police, emergency service and search and rescue colleagues who work alongside us, with courage and commitment, to help build safer and stronger communities.

It is a true team effort.