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Award

Solent Transport Future Transport Zone - Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) Drone Operation Pilot

Portsmouth City Council

UK5: Transparency notice - Procurement Act 2023 - [view information about notice types](#)

Notice identifier: 2025/S 000-010314

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-04ef7c

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Scope

Description

Solent Transport - via it's accountable body Portsmouth City Council - intend on entering into a contract with Skylift UAV to provide Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) drone operation to support the Solent Transport Future Transport Zone (FTZ) in partnership with the University of Southampton and funded by the Department for Transport (DfT).

Skylift UAV will provide airspace management, drones and drone operation in accordance with their Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) approved Operating Safety Case and within the CAA approved Temporary Danger Area. This is to support trials that inform how drones could be integrated into airspace in the future and support research into how drones can facilitate medical logistics in the Solent area.

Solent Transport require Skylift UAV to act as Airspace Managers for the Temporary Danger Area for the duration of the trials and provide and operate drone platforms to facilitate Drones for Medical Logistics trials in accordance with the Operating Authorisation, Operating Safety Case and Temporary Danger Area constraints as set out in the Airspace Change Proposal ACP-2022-106.

The commencement of the contract will be 2nd April 2025. The contract will expire on 1st November 2025 at the completion of all BVLOS trials and reporting.

The value of the contract will be £312,990 excluding VAT.

Prior to entering into contract a 8 working day standstill period will be observed in line with the Procurement Act 23 requirements. The standstill period will at end at 23:59 on 31st March 2025.

Contract 1. Solent Transport Future Transport Zone - Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) Drone Operation Pilot

Supplier

- [SKYLIFT UAV LTD](#)

Contract value

- £312,990 excluding VAT
- £375,588 including VAT

Above the relevant threshold

Earliest date the contract will be signed

1 April 2025

Contract dates (estimated)

- 2 April 2025 to 1 November 2025
- 7 months

Main procurement category

Services

CPV classifications

- 60444000 - Aircraft-operation services
- 60445000 - Aircraft operating services

Contract locations

- UKJ31 - Portsmouth
 - UKJ32 - Southampton
 - UKJ34 - Isle of Wight
 - UKJ35 - South Hampshire
-

Participation

Particular suitability

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)

Other information

Conflicts assessment prepared/revised

Yes

Procedure

Procedure type

Direct award

Direct award justification

- Prototypes and development
- Single supplier - intellectual property or exclusive rights

- Extreme and unavoidable urgency

1. Prototypes & Development

Solent Transport has been awarded £28.8m by the DfT to deliver projects under the Solent FTZ. This funding is to run tests and trials of innovative approaches to transport across the Solent area. As these tests and trials take place, Solent Transport are conducting research, capturing data and inviting feedback to understand whether these innovations are improving transport options.

The award of the contract to Skylift UAV will directly enable trials for the Drones for Medical Logistics project, which is within the Solent FTZ. The trials will be conducted in collaboration with the University of Southampton and include, but are not limited to, the testing of novel ways to integrate and manage drones in shared airspace, the testing a network of airspace sensors and the carriage of medical cargo using drones. The medical cargo carriage scientific experiments within the trial plan are based on the use of Skylift UAV drone platforms specifically, and the Skylift UAV sponsored Temporary Danger Area allows for the trials related to airspace integration and management.

The findings of the trials will be reported to the DfT and CAA to inform future airspace policy and determine how the use of drones could be scaled to support health and public sector logistics.

2. Single Supplier - Exclusive Rights

Skylift UAV acted as the sole Airspace Change Sponsor for Solent Transport's Airspace Change Proposal (ACP-2022-106) which was approved on 11 March 2025. This was approved subject to conditions by the CAA on 11 March 2025.

To achieve this approval, Skylift UAV are also required to hold an Operational Authorisation which has been granted by the CAA. The Operational Authorisation, which ensures safe operation of Skylift UAV's drones and that third party risks are reduced to an acceptable level, is unique to Skylift UAV in the context of the proposed Temporary Danger Area for ACP-2022-106 and is based on the detail of Skylift UAV's Operating Safety Case. There are therefore no other operators with the Operating Authorisation that are able to operate within the Solent Transport FTZ Temporary Danger Area.

3. Extreme & Unavoidable Urgency

ACP-2022-106 has been approved on the basis that the Temporary Danger Area will be activated for up to 6 months at the earliest 1 May 2025 and close at the latest 31 October 2025. The trials are scheduled to take place within that 6-month period between 1 June 2025 and 31 September 2025 for at least seven weeks of this period. It is not possible to

undertake a competitive tender process and complete the Solent FTZ project objectives as it would require any other operators to seek a new Airspace Change Proposal and evidence that they hold their own Operational Authorisation from the CAA that would allow them to complete the BVLOS flying required by our project by the end of the FTZ funded period which is 31 December 2025.

Supplier

SKYLIFT UAV LTD

- Companies House: 11676707
- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PDQH-8533-NHWD

26 Brookfield Street

Leicester

LE7 2AD

United Kingdom

Email: info@skyliftuav.co.uk

Website: <http://www.skyliftuav.co.uk>

Region: UKF22 - Leicestershire CC and Rutland

Small or medium-sized enterprise (SME): Yes

Voluntary, community or social enterprise (VCSE): No

Contract 1. Solent Transport Future Transport Zone - Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS)
Drone Operation Pilot

Contracting authority

Portsmouth City Council

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PCNL-5714-PRZV

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Portsmouth

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Website: <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/>

Region: UKJ31 - Portsmouth

Organisation type: Public authority - sub-central government