

A Summary of current drone warfare development programmes

Brief details of twenty known UK programmes to develop drone warfare capabilities.

Name		Service	About	Current state	SDR
1.	Autonomous Collaborative Platforms (ACP)	RAF	Also known as ‘Loyal Wingman’, ACP are new a type of drone developed to accompany crewed aircraft.	RAF published ACP development strategy in June 2024.	<i>Further developments likely dependent on SDR decision.</i>
2.	Project Aether	SF?	To develop “ultra persistent wide area communications with ISR, using stratospheric uncrewed air systems.”	Order place for three ISR drones in Jan 2025. Details classified but likely to be PHASA-35 and/or Zephyr.	
3.	Project ASGARD	Army	To enhance the UK’s recon and strike capabilities through “a software-defined, network-enabled system.” Three elements of the project are ‘effectors’, digital innovation and ISTAR/ Command and Control.	Initial purchase of Dart 250 for urgent operational reasons. Reported that Helsing and Palantir likely bidders for command and control network elements	<i>Further developments likely dependent on SDR decision.</i>
4.	Project Brakestop	Army	To develop a jet-powered, long-range, one-way attack drone with a range of around 500km. System designed to strike targets while navigating through a GPS-denied environment.	Commentators have suggested this project is based on Ukraine’s Palianytsia drone. Could be being developed for Ukraine, UK or both.	
5.	Project Cabot	RN	To develop and field “a portfolio of crewed, remote operated and uncrewed/ autonomous airborne, surface and sub-surface vehicles” to provide a persistent anti-submarine warfare search capability.	Cabot would initially see contractor-owned, contractor-operated systems provide data, triaged by AI/ML algorithms, supplied to a secure RN Centre.	<i>Further developments likely dependent on SDR decision.</i>
6.	Project Charybdis	RN	To leverage advances in autonomy, robotics, and Artificial Intelligence/ Machine Learning (AI/ML) to field a persistent and deployable unmanned ASW surveillance capability.	Phase One completed. Not know if ongoing.	
7.	Project Corvus	Army	To procure an uncrewed 24hr persistent ‘Deep Recce Strike Platform’ capable of operating at ranges greater than 80km. Project Corvus seeks to replace the Watchkeeper drones.	Programme is valued at £150m and is expected to be deployed in 2025/26.	
8.	DragonFire	RN	DragonFire is a laser direct energy weapon being developed by MoD in conjunction with MBDA and others. Currently focused on operating as a counter-drone weapon.	Plans for first operational deployment in 2027 were expanded following further government funding in Spring 2025.	
9.	Project Ealing	Army	Project Ealing (part of Project Hersa) focused on producing a demonstrator to use Radio Frequency Directed Energy Weapons (RFDEW) to detect, track and engage drones.	Live firing of a demonstrator took place at end of 2024.Project Ealing will continue to enable further development and experimentation.	<i>Further developments likely dependent on SDR decision.</i>
10.	Heavy lift Challenge Programme/ Heavy Lift Framework	RN	On-going programmes to develop a range of heavy lift cargo drones mainly in the maritime domain but likely to be used by other services.	A number of Malloy T-150s have been deployed on RN Carrier Strike Group deployment in April 2025.	<i>Further developments likely dependent on SDR decision.</i>
11.	Project Hersa	Cross service	HERSA works with industry to develop laser direct energy (LDE) and radio frequency direct energy (RFDE) weapons, doctrine and technology with three key focus areas.	A number of projects have been trialled and tested.	<i>Further developments likely dependent on SDR decision.</i>
12.	Human Machine Teaming Framework	Cross service	The £300 million Human Machine Teaming (HMT) framework aims to use autonomy, data and robotics to make faster decisions.	Current programme ongoing until mid-2025.	<i>Further developments likely dependent on SDR decision.</i>
13.	Project Lewes	Army	Project Lewes is a British army programme to incorporate new technologies and capabilities into existing forces. As part of this the MoD has been training soldiers to use FPV drones.	Operators of current British army nano drones have been screened to find pilots to fly FPV UAS.	
14.	Medium Range Precision Strike (MRPS) system	Army/RN	UK MoD is procuring a one way attack UAS/ loitering munition for use in land and maritime domain with minimum 60km range.	Programme aims at procuring 200 munitions with delivery expected in 2027 at cost of £120m.	
15.	Project Proteus	RN	Project Proteus is the Royal Navy’s programme to develop an uncrewed helicopter that could serve as an alternative to the Merlin, particularly in anti-submarine warfare.	Leonardo unveiled a new design for the Proteus in January 2025 with a first flight planned for 2025.	<i>Further developments likely dependent on SDR decision.</i>
16.	ASW Spearhead	RN	ASW Spearhead is 7-year, £400 million programme to deliver near-term upgrades and invest in emerging technologies for uncrewed anti-sub warfare.	Spearhead is funding the Proteus uncrewed air system; and the CETUS and XLUAV.	<i>Further developments likely dependent on SDR decision.</i>
17.	Project Tiquila	Army	Project Tiquila aims to deliver cutting-edge small Uncrewed Air Systems (sUAS) to UK Forces.	The Stalker and Indago drones were procured under this project.	
18.	Project Vampire	RN	Project Vampire seeks to acquire a new fixed-wing aerial drone for the Royal Navy.	Banshee Jet 80+ has recently completed tests.	<i>Further developments likely dependent on SDR decision.</i>
19.	Project Vanaheim	Army	Project Vanaheim is a joint US/UK programme focused on tracking, identifying and defeating Class 1 uncrewed aerial systems.	Field test events are due to take place from June to August 2025.	<i>Further developments likely dependent on SDR decision.</i>
20.	Project Vixen	RN	Project Vixen aims to investigate the potential of flying large fixed wing drones for surveillance and attack from the UK’s aircraft carriers.	In November 2023, the UK flew the General Atomics Mojave UAV from HMS Prince of Wales.	<i>Further developments likely dependent on SDR decision.</i>