A PA system for all occasions

"The Mega-Voice PA system is ultimately useful in flood situations because it has the clearest and loudest speech function in the industry," explains Suzanne Coop fellow owner of Sound-to-Go. Mega-Voice filters out ambient noise, it picks up the right speech frequencies exactly and only amplifies the right speech tones. This substantially simplifies communication during flood rescue operations, because the sound reaches 500-800 metres and offers excellent intelligibility."

Coop adds that the system has a very good frequency band, meaning that it will penetrate barriers such as walls. The high frequency boost function can adjusts the frequency, should the sound be disturbed by very wet or dusty weather, so it can reach further. Because Mega-Voice has been developed for the German military, it is rain and dust proof and therefore very handy to use on-board a boat, or in a damp environment.

"In addition, we have designed a waterproof hood for when it gets really wet,"she continues. "The Mega-Voice is battery operated and portable and therefore the rescuer will be able to use this PA system away from mains or a vehicle. The battery is changeable, and lasts for four hours when speaking continuously and much longer when speaking intermittently. The battery has got a stand-by time of up to 50 hours, and the spare battery can be charged in a vehicle with the adaptors provided by the company.

Coop explains that research has proven that people respond better to live communication in evacuation or rescue situations than to pre-recorded messages. "Unfortunately, people tend to go back to things they knew or thought they knew, such as emergency exits for example. So, they try and use the wrong exit instead of listening to the advice on the PA. A real voice on the system lowers acute stress and can give up-to-date advice," she concludes.

Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales. Perhaps for many UK SAR players this is not a major matter because they currently have a UK wide footprint. And once the project has concluded these procedural arrangements, they could be applied UK-wide by the partner agencies and voluntary NGOs.

Therefore, for FRSs this provides additional challenges to that of project completion alone – Scotland especially – having differing statutory positions from the rest of the UK. Whilst the UK CFOA's Inland Water Strategic and Tactical Groups include representatives from all devolved nation administrations, it has to first satisfactorily conclude the "English" National Flood Rescue Capability project.

However, it would not be lost on them that it can ensure through its wide stakeholder involvement that the final flood rescue framework, procedures and SOPs are fit for purpose for wider adoption, should devolved nations choose to do so.

The future for water rescue?

There are many challenges ahead for the UK, including the creation of robust standards, asset registers, standard operating procedures and frameworks for inland flood/water rescue through this national project. Thus providing all stakeholders, FRS and voluntary NGOs with the systems and guidance manuals necessary for them to undertake major flood event response, localised flood/water rescue safely and effectively should they choose to do so, reducing risks to the public and responders alike.

There is no rest, there are many other matters to address of which the list is many; eg we have to decide on the "toolboxes" to use for floods and water rescue (be they the day-to-day work or extreme weather related events) and the financing of them and the procedural matters for all UK citizens.

Climate change is a factor clearly acknowledged in Pitt's report, all local and national risk assessments recognise that major flooding has the potential to cause mass fatalities; one national flood impact assessment is for the rescue of up to 45,000 people in the event of another 1953 North Sea-type disaster.

What then of how a developed nation like the UK can give or receive assistance, in a pre-planned way? To pre-plan for the receipt and giving of assistance is sensible in this day of finite resources, as it prevents duplication of very expensive rescue resources and is much more flexible, so how does the UK integrate with its fellow European Union partners and the wider domain?

This Project is a start, much more needs to follow!

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THE AUTHOR

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University accreditation

Higher Education credits can be collected while training with Rescue 3 (UK).

Rescue 3 (UK), daughter-company of Rescue 3 International in California, US – has taken its partnership with the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), a step further. Both parties have agreed on the implementation of a new Foundation Degree in Technical Rescue Instruction. The initial partnership between the two organisations was established 18 months ago, with several of the swiftwater and rope rescue courses provided by the North Wales-based Rescue 3 (UK) gaining University accreditation, allowing students from all over the world to complete an Advanced Certificate in Swiftwater and Rope Rescue Instruction. This award not only carries the Rescue 3 (UK) certification but University accreditation as well.