

Drone deliveries become a reality in the capital

For the first time NHS laboratory specimens have been delivered by drone earlier on Wednesday from Edinburgh Bioquarter to the Borders General Hospital in Melrose.

While this is still part of a trial it would mean saving hours on deliveries as NHS Lothian say that sending lab samples by road can take up to five hours. Project CAELUS led by AGS Airports in collaboration with NHS Scotland say the delivery from Edinburgh to the Borders took 35 minutes. This is hoped to be the first of a national drone network transporting medicines, bloods and supplies all over Scotland.

Fiona Smith, Project Director for Project CAELUS said: "Our consortium has been working extremely hard to get to this stage and we are delighted we have been able to test this important use case for the NHS.

"Transporting laboratory specimens by drone could speed up the clinical decision making allowing for same day diagnosis and treatment.

"It is also one of the first times in the UK that there has been a demonstration of beyond the visual line of sight medical drone operations transiting between controlled and uncontrolled airspace.

"This is an important milestone for our project and we now look forward to testing more potential use cases by drone

across Scotland in the coming months.”

Dr Tracey Gillies, Medical Director and Executive Lead for Innovation, NHS Lothian said: “Across NHS Lothian, we are continually exploring ways to innovate and enhance our patient experience.

“Lothian and the surrounding areas are very diverse, from city to country and coastal living. Drones could play an important role in helping to transport samples for testing or speed up the delivery of critical medical supplies.

“These exciting trial flights have been a collaborative effort between our clinical leads, South East Innovation Hub and partner organisations and I look forward to seeing further developments with this project.”

The project team has designed drone landing stations at NHS sites in Scotland and developed a virtual model. The Scottish Ambulance Service is also working on a plan to deliver defibrillators with drones.

The CAELUS consortium comprises:

- AGS Airports
- ANRA Technologies UK
- Arup
- AtkinsRéalis
- Boldyn Networks UK
- Commonplace Digital
- Connected
Catapult

Places

- DGP Intelsius
- Dronamics
- NATS
- NHS Scotland
- Plane Finder

- Skyports Drone Services
- The Office

Drone

- Trax International
- University of Strathclyde

