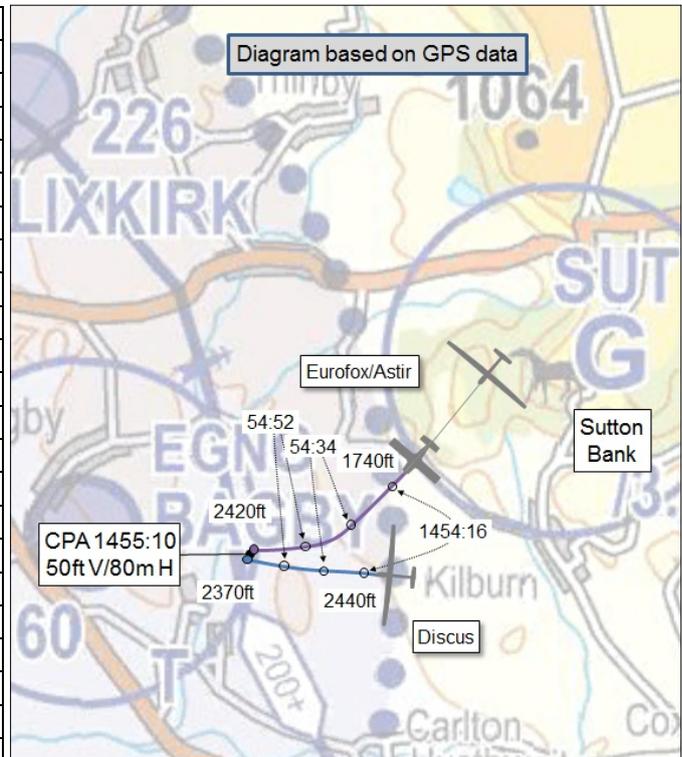


**AIRPROX REPORT No 2016034**

Date: 24 Feb 2016 Time: 1455Z Position: 5413N 00116W Location: 2.3nm ESE Sutton Bank

**PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB**

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	Discus	Eurofox/Astir
Operator	Civ Pte	Civ Club
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	None <sup>1</sup>	None <sup>1</sup>
Altitude/FL		
Transponder	Not fitted	A, C, S
Reported		
Colours	White	Red
Lighting	Not fitted	Strobe, nav
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	30km	30km
Altitude/FL	2557ft	NK
Altimeter	QNH (910hPa)	NK
Heading	290°	NK
Speed	45kt	70kt
ACAS/TAS	FLARM	FLARM
Alert	TA	None
Separation		
Reported	0ft V/150m H	50ft V/150ft H
Recorded	50ft V/80m H <sup>2</sup>	



**THE DISCUS PILOT** reports flying along a cloud-street when the FLARM alerted, indicating traffic behind him. The FLARM alerted again and, very shortly afterwards, he saw a tug and glider combination to his right at the same altitude. He turned left to increase separation. The other glider pilot subsequently stated that he had passed very close below the Discus.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'Very High'.

**THE EUROFOX PILOT** reports towing an Astir glider in good thermal conditions under a cloud street. He saw a Discus in the left 1030 position, at a range of about 200ft, slightly higher and on a shallow converging course so he turned right at a rate that the towed glider pilot could follow and which would take the glider/tug combination clear of the Discus.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'Medium'.

**THE ASTIR PILOT** reports on tow, tracking towards a line of cloud. He could see a glider also following the same line of cloud and the tug/glider combination executed a reasonably tight right turn to avoid any conflict with the other glider.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'Low'.

<sup>1</sup> Listening out on the Glider Ground Station Common Field Frequency.

<sup>2</sup> CPA has been derived from the two glider GPS log files. The separation from the Discus to the Eurofox will likely be less than this.

## Factual Background

The weather at Topcliffe was recorded as follows:

METAR EGXZ 241450Z 31003KT 9999 FEW032 07/M01 Q1016 BLU=

## Analysis and Investigation

### UKAB Secretariat

The Discus and Eurofox pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard<sup>3</sup>. If the incident geometry is considered as overtaking then the Discus pilot had right of way and the Eurofox pilot was required to keep out of the way of the other aircraft by altering course to the right<sup>4</sup>.

## Summary

An Airprox was reported when a Discus and Eurofox/Astir combination flew into proximity at 1455 on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2016. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, neither in receipt of an ATS.

### **PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS**

Information available consisted of reports from both pilots, radar photographs/video recordings and GPS log files.

The Board gliding member reported that this Airprox had been discussed at length between all 3 pilots. In light of the circumstances, they had decided that an Airprox would be submitted as a deliberate measure designed to increase Airprox awareness within the gliding community when an incident of this nature might not otherwise be treated as such. In this respect, members noted that the Astir pilot had seen the Discus at range but thought it normal to be dropped by the tug in close proximity to other gliders and had thus assumed that the Eurofox pilot also had the Discus in sight. Members debated the fact that glider pilots regularly operated in close proximity to each other, especially when thermaling, and there was a concern that the gliding community may have allowed themselves to become normalised to a significant mid-air collision risk without an explicit assessment.

In this case, members agreed that the Airprox had been caused by a mutual late sighting by the Discus and Eurofox pilots, although it was noted that the Eurofox was approaching the Discus from behind and thus perhaps less easily detected by him (until alerted by FLARM) than he might have been detected by the Eurofox pilot. Noting that the Astir pilot had seen the converging Discus at range, members wondered whether he could have used the radio to increase the SA of the Eurofox and Discus pilots before they flew into proximity; even if he had assumed that the Eurofox pilot was visual, members thought that a confirmatory check would have been prudent. Members were at a loss to explain the lack of FLARM alert in the Eurofox given that it was also fitted with the system. The gliding member commented that FLARM contained algorithms that attempt to suppress tug-to-towed glider alerts, but there was currently a lack of training in best use of FLARM and it might be that tug pilots were deselecting it whilst undertaking glider tows. He commented that this situation would be addressed by the BGA.

Turning to the risk of collision, members noted that the Eurofox pilot had not seen the Discus until 200ft away, and that the recorded separation taken from the gliders' data loggers appeared to show CPA between the Discus and the Eurofox to be in the region of only 40-50m or so once the length of the tow cable was taken into account. As a result, the Board agreed that, although gliders and tugs often operated in close proximity, in this case it was their opinion that safety margins had been much reduced below the norm.

<sup>3</sup> SERA.3205 Proximity.

<sup>4</sup> SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(3) Overtaking.

**PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK**

Cause: A late sighting by both pilots.

Degree of Risk: B.