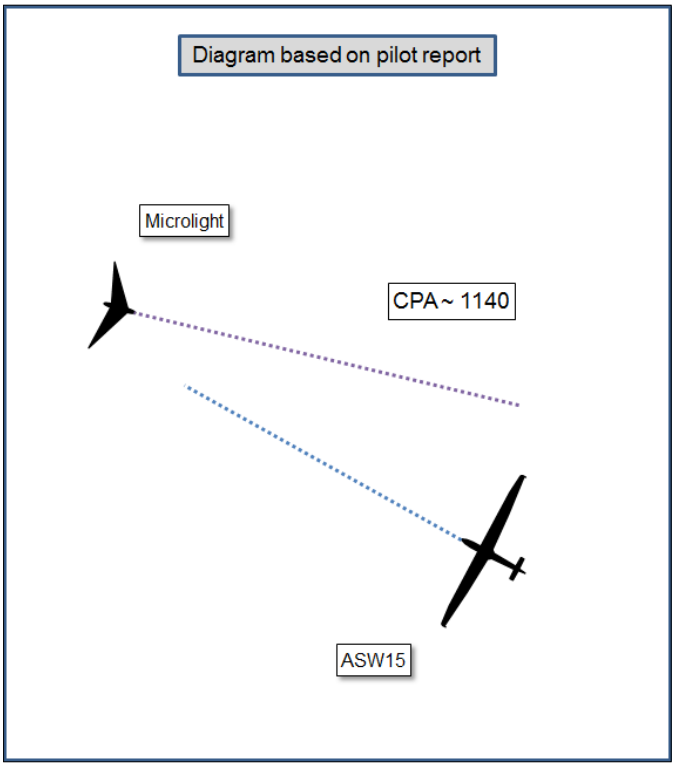
AIRPROX REPORT No 2017091

Date: 14 May 2017 Time: 1140Z Position: 5315N 00051W Location: Darlton Glider Site

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	ASW15	Microlight
Operator	Civ Club	Unknown
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	NK
Service	None	
Provider	N/A	
Altitude/FL	NK	
Transponder	Not Fitted	
Reported		
Colours	White	Purple or Dark Green
Lighting	None	NK
Conditions	Choose an item.	
Visibility	>10km	
Altitude/FL	2000ft	
Altimeter	QFE	
Heading	315°	
Speed	50kt	
ACAS/TAS	FLARM	
Alert	None	
Separation		
Reported	0ft V/30m H	NK
Recorded	NK	



THE ASW15 PILOT reports that he had taken a winch launch from Darlton Gliding Club. He had released at 1050ft agl and had found a thermal which took him up to 2250ft when he lost the lift. At the time of the Airprox he was attempting to fly back up-wind searching for additional lift to carry him up to cloud base. He believes that at the time he was in sinking air. He had been taking care with his lookout and was aware of the general locations of two other club gliders soaring locally. He saw the microlight very late directly ahead and instinctively applied left aileron but then immediately realised that they were not on a collision course so levelled his wings and continued flying ahead. The microlight appeared to be on a broadly opposing track with a small element of left to right progress from his point of view. The microlight had passed behind his right wing within 2 - 3 seconds of his first seeing it. He saw no evidence to indicate that the other pilot had seen him. He is normally used to seeing white gliders, in this instance the dark and seemingly mottled appearance of the microlight blended in to the similarly mottled countryside below, particularly so since he was on a broadly opposing course so it would have been moving slowly against the background, i.e. it had very low conspicuity. Also its silhouette was broadly equally dimensioned vertically and horizontally in contrast to gliders which are very much wider than high.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'Medium'.

THE MICROLIGHT PILOT could not be traced.

Factual Background

The weather at Waddington was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGXW 140950Z 24012KT 9999 FEW030 15/07 Q1015 BLU NOSIG
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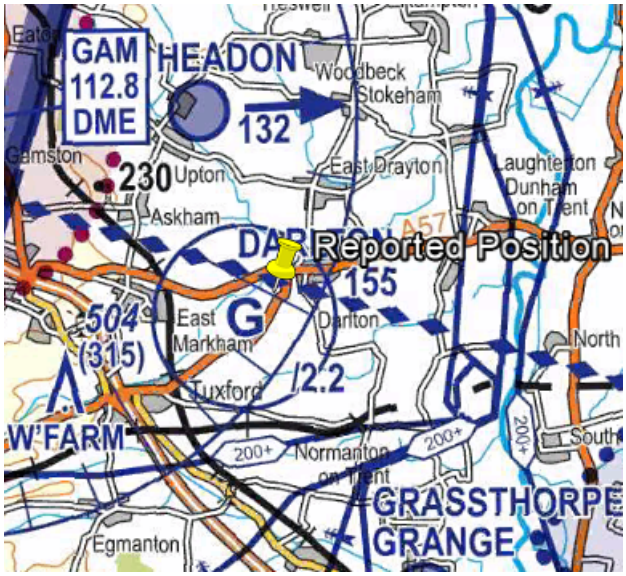
Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The ASW15 and Microlight pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard[1]. An aircraft operated on or in the vicinity of an aerodrome shall conform with or avoid the pattern of traffic formed by other aircraft in operation[2].

Figures 1 and 2 show the reported position of the Airprox, almost overhead the Darlton glider site.



Figures 1 and 2: Reported Airprox Position

Summary

An Airprox was reported when an ASW15 and a Microlight flew into proximity at about 1140 on Sunday 14th May 2017. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, the ASW15 pilot was not in receipt of a service and the Microlight pilot could not be traced.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of a report from the pilot of the ASW15 only. The incident did not show on radar and there were no air traffic agencies involved.

The Board began by discussing the routing of the Microlight pilot. They noted that Darlton Glider Site had a published winch-launch altitude of 2200ft amsl and that, given the glider pilots report, the microlight pilot was probably flying at or around that altitude (the glider pilot reported descending from 2250ft to 2000ft QFE which equates to about 2400ft to 2155ft amsl over the site). Members opined that although the microlight pilot was entitled to operate where he was, he would have been better served by giving the site a wider berth than he did in order to avoid gliders in the vicinity of their operating site. Members also noted that, without the microlight pilot's report, it was not possible to determine whether the aircraft was fitted with FLARM or PilotAware (both of which may have afforded the microlight pilot situational awareness about the glider). Members urged those who might regularly fly over or in the vicinity of glider sites (or indeed airspace in which gliders regularly operate) to consider the fitment of such equipments.

[1] SERA.3205 Proximity.
[2] SERA.3225 Operation on and in the Vicinity of an Aerodrome.

In looking at the causes and risk of the incident, the Board noted that the ASW15 pilot had seen the microlight late and had started to carry out avoiding action until he then realised the aircraft would not collide and had stopped his avoiding turn; the Board did not believe that the Microlight pilot saw the ASW15. The Board therefore agreed that the cause of the incident was a late sighting by the ASW15 pilot and a probable non-sighting by the microlight pilot. Turning to the risk, and in the absence of any radar recording of the incident, members agreed that the although the ASW15 pilot had seen the microlight late and had carried out initial emergency avoiding action, this action had probably been a startle response which he then reassessed to determine that they would not collide. Notwithstanding, the fact that the microlight appeared to have passed him within 1-2 secs meant that it had probably been reasonably close at the time. Accordingly, the Board determined that safety had been reduced much below the norm, and they assessed the risk as Category B.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A late sighting by the ASW15 pilot and a probable non-sighting by the microlight pilot.

Degree of Risk: B.

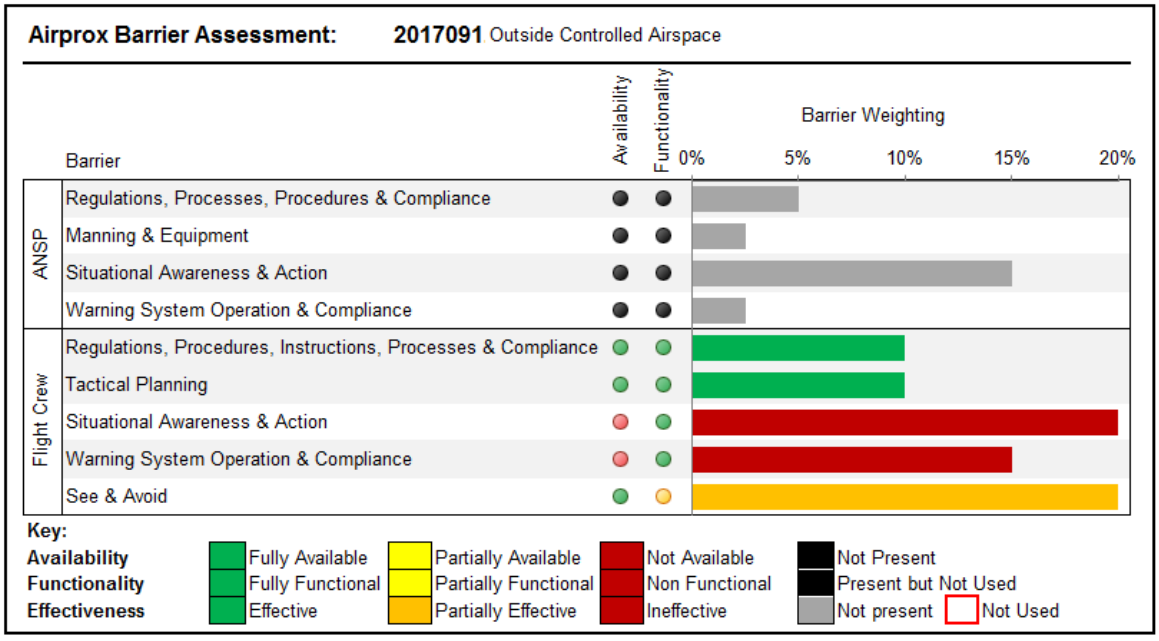
Safety Barrier Assessment[3]

In assessing the effectiveness of the safety barriers associated with this incident, the Board concluded that the key factors had been that:

Flight Crew Situational Awareness and Action was considered to be **ineffective** because neither aircraft was aware of the other until just before CPA.

Flight Crew Warning System Operation and Compliance was also considered to be **ineffective** because the ASW15 had FLARM but the microlight appeared not to be transponder or FLARM equipped, which negated the FLARM capability.

See and Avoid was considered to be **partially effective** because the ASW15 pilot saw the microlight late but with time to initially carry out an avoiding action manoeuvre and then reassess and determine this was not required. The microlight pilot probably did not see the ASW15.



[3] The UK Airprox Board scheme for assessing the Availability, Functionality and Effectiveness of safety barriers can be found on the UKAB Website.