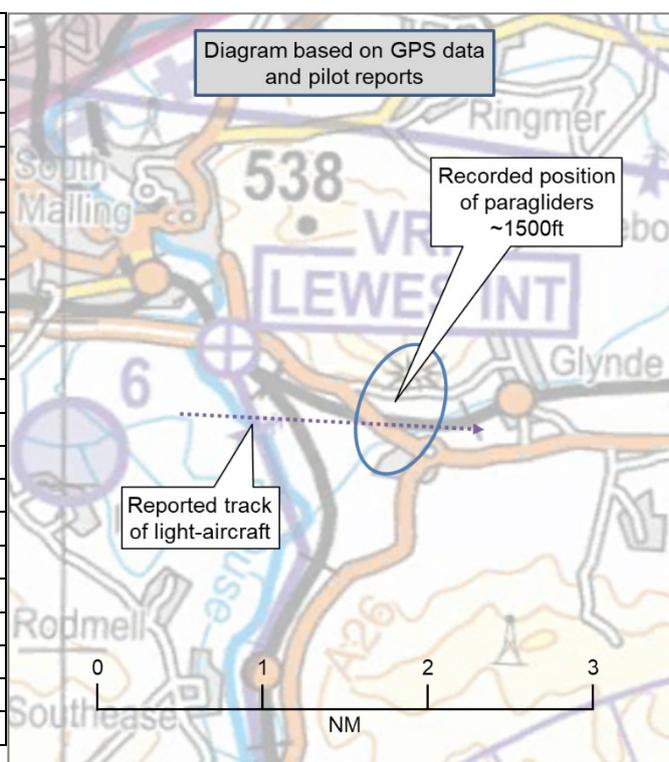


AIRPROX REPORT No 2021082

Date: 14 Jun 2021 Time: ~1048Z Position: 5051N 00003E Location: 2NM SE of Lewes

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	Paraglider	Unk light-aircraft
Operator	Civ Hang	Unknown
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	Unknown
Service	None	Unknown
Altitude/FL	~1500ft	Unknown
Transponder	Not fitted	Unknown
Reported		
Colours	Orange, black, red	NK
Lighting	None	NK
Conditions	VMC	NK
Visibility	>10km	NK
Altitude/FL	1500ft	NK
Altimeter	QNH	NK
Heading	Thermalling (turn)	NK
Speed	18kt	NK
ACAS/TAS	Not fitted	Unknown
Separation		
Reported	30ft V/<30m H	NK
Recorded	NK V/NK H	



THE PARAGLIDER PILOT reports that they and another paraglider pilot, both on very distinctly coloured wings, were thermalling at about 1500ft approximately 1km south of Mount Caburn, on which were some twenty other soaring paragliders. A white light-aircraft approached them from the west at the same altitude and passed about 300ft from them – close enough to cause concern. They were at the south side of the thermal at the time, the other paraglider was about 300ft to their north and they were both circling clockwise. They feared that the light-aircraft would hit the other pilot, but they missed by a very close margin (in the order of 20m – it looked closer). No clear perturbation in the path of the light-aircraft was observed throughout the incident. By the time they had gathered their senses it was too distant to tell if it was a single or a twin. The other paraglider pilot does not wish to engage with the reporting process.

The pilot assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

THE LIGHT-AIRCRAFT PILOT could not be traced.

Factual Background

The weather at Shoreham Airport was recorded as follows:

METAR EGKA 141050Z 18006KT 9999 FEW024 21/16 Q1021=

Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

An analysis of the NATS radar replay and GPS log files from the paragliders was undertaken. There were no radar contacts in the vicinity of the paragliders at the time the paragliders were recorded on GPS as thermalling in proximity to each other.

The paraglider and untraced light-aircraft 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

Comments

BHPA

The BHPA is relieved to hear that all the pilots flying that day in the Mount Caburn area remained safe and that the reporting pilot was being vigilant and keeping a good lookout. Unfortunately, without feedback from the light aircraft pilot, we can only speculate why they approached on a steady course, a group of 20+ brightly coloured canopies flying in an area which is a popular and well-known paraglider flying site. We think it is only through good-luck and fortune that this incident didn't have a more serious outcome. The BHPA will be inserting a reminder in SkyWings magazine on the continuing need for paraglider and hang-glider pilots to keep a good look-out for all other aircraft at all times, especially given that the limited speed and manoeuvrability of our aircraft precludes any substantial evasive action.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a paraglider and an untraced light-aircraft flew into proximity 2NM SE of Lewes at around 1048Z on Monday 14th June 2021. The paraglider pilot was operating under VFR in VMC and not in receipt of an ATS; the light-aircraft pilot could not be traced.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of a report from one of the paraglider pilots, radar photographs/video recordings and GPS log files from the 2 paraglider pilots involved. Relevant contributory factors mentioned during the Board's discussions are highlighted within the text in bold, with the numbers referring to the Contributory Factors table displayed in Part C.

The Board first heard from the BHPA pilot member that, on the day of the Airprox, there were light winds which had been ideal conditions for local soaring. They went on to say that Mount Caburn is a very well-used site for low hours pilots and is also used by a local paragliding school. The Board was disappointed that one of the paraglider pilots involved in the Airprox had chosen not to participate in the reporting process and so, since the vast majority of paraglider pilots in the UK are members of the BHPA, the BHPA pilot member offered to publicise through BHPA publications the importance of reporting so that others may learn from incidents such as this. Furthermore, they would re-iterate to the BHPA membership that the sole intention of the UK Airprox Board is to enhance Flight Safety and not to find fault with any individual's actions.

A controller member noted that this Airprox had taken place in close proximity to the Lewes VRP and that this perhaps had increased the likelihood of a conflict occurring. There then followed a discussion on the use of VRPs and a GA pilot member noted that, when VRPs were introduced, pilots had been encouraged to overfly these points. Whilst not germane to this incident, the Board noted that the advice to overfly VRPs had since changed to flying around them, and the Board wished to highlight to pilots the entry on page 37 of the Skyway Code, which states:

Traffic tends to congregate around prominent visual landmarks, Visual Reference Points (VRPs) or navigation beacons creating a collision hazard. Planning to fly around them can reduce the risk, although watch out for nearby airspace.²

Turning to the Airprox itself, the Board's understanding of the circumstances surrounding the incident was hampered by the inability to trace the light aircraft. Some members wondered if, from the description provided by the paraglider pilot, it could have been a glider that had been involved, but the BHPA member informed the Board that it would have been likely that the paraglider pilot would have

¹ (UK) SERA.3205 Proximity.

² <https://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP1535S%20Skyway%20Code%20Version%203.pdf>

heard the aircraft approaching and therefore it was extremely unlikely that the paraglider pilot would have mistaken whether or not the aircraft in question had been powered or not. The Board therefore could only assess the Safety Barrier performance from the perspective of the paraglider pilot and concluded that the paraglider pilot had not had any situational awareness of the approaching aircraft until they had seen it (**CF1**) and that their sighting of it had been at such a point as it had been too late for the paraglider pilot to take any action to increase separation between themselves and the light aircraft (**CF2**).

Turning to the risk involved in this Airprox, the lack of recorded information from radar or GPS sources meant that the Board could not independently verify the paraglider pilot's estimation of separation. Some members felt that this lack of data that could support the paraglider pilot's estimate was such that the Board had no choice but to assign a Risk Category D (insufficient information to determine the risk involved) to this Airprox, whilst others argued that this may suggest that the Board did not consider the paragliders pilot's report to be sufficiently accurate. Members noted that it was unusual to base the risk purely on a single pilot's account and again lamented the lack of report from the other paraglider pilot. However, after further discussion, the Board agreed that the paraglider pilot's report was sufficient for members to reach a categorisation of risk and, by a majority, assigned a Risk Category A (serious risk of collision, providence played a major part in events) (**CF3**) to this Airprox.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

Contributory Factors:

2021082				
CF	Factor	Description	ECCAIRS Amplification	UKAB Amplification
Flight Elements				
• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action				
1	Contextual	• Situational Awareness and Sensory Events	Events involving a flight crew's awareness and perception of situations	Pilot had no, late or only generic, Situational Awareness
• See and Avoid				
2	Human Factors	• Monitoring of Other Aircraft	Events involving flight crew not fully monitoring another aircraft	Non-sighting or effectively a non-sighting by one or both pilots
• Outcome Events				
3	Contextual	• Near Airborne Collision with Aircraft	An event involving a near collision by an aircraft with an aircraft, balloon, dirigible or other piloted air vehicles	

Degree of Risk: A

Safety Barrier Assessment³

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

Flight Elements:

Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action were assessed as **ineffective** because the paraglider pilot had no prior warning of the approaching untraced light-aircraft.

See and Avoid were assessed as **ineffective** because the paraglider pilot did not see the approaching light-aircraft in sufficient time to materially affect the separation.

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

Airprox Barrier Assessment: 2021082		Outside Controlled Airspace						
Barrier		Provision	Application	Effectiveness				
				Barrier Weighting				
				0%	5%	10%	15%	20%
Ground Element	Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance	●	●					
	Manning & Equipment	●	●					
	Situational Awareness of the Confliction & Action	●	●					
	Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance	●	●					
Flight Element	Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance	●	●					
	Tactical Planning and Execution	●	●					
	Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft & Action	●	●					
	Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance	●	●					
	See & Avoid	●	●					
Key:		<u>Full</u>	<u>Partial</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Not Present/Not Assessable</u>	<u>Not Used</u>		
Provision	●	●	●	●				
Application	●	●	●	●	○			
Effectiveness	■	■	■	■	□			