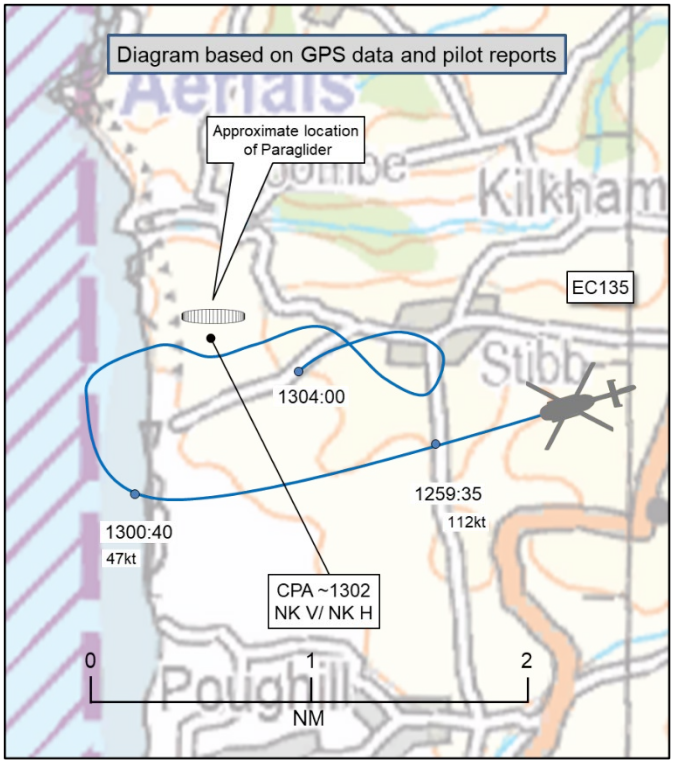
AIRPROX REPORT No 2024225

Date: 29 Aug 2024 Time: ~1302Z Position: 5051N 00432W Location: Sandymouth Bay, Cornwall

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	EC135	Paraglider
Operator	HEMS	Civ Hang
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	None	None
Altitude/FL	NK	NR
Transponder	A, C, S+	None
Reported		
Colours	Red and blue	NR
Lighting	"*standard*"	NR
Conditions	VMC	NR
Visibility	>10km	NR
Altitude/FL	600ft	NR
Altimeter	QNH (1020hPa)	NR
Heading	"*turning*"	NR
Speed	60kt	NR
ACAS/TAS	SkyEcho	Other
Alert	None	Information
Separation at CPA		
Reported	0ft V/200m H	NR
Recorded	NK	



THE EC135 PILOT reports that they had been called to an incident at Sandymouth Bay on the coast just north of Bude. The pilot had briefed that morning that, due to the good weather conditions and paragliders NOTAM'd at Woolacombe, there could be other aircraft out there. En route, the pilot checked [their EC device] and only one light-aircraft (which the crew identified) was noted. The pilot had been talking to London Info, but cleared with them just before arriving on scene. After arriving on scene and turning downwind during the initial recce of a potential landing site (LS), the LHS HTC called "Paraglider". The pilot looked left and spotted the Paraglider approximately 300m to the left of the aircraft. Avoiding action was taken. The Paraglider appeared to then orbit over the scene. Therefore, the pilot had picked an alternative LS further east and inland of the scene, landing without incident.

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

THE HEMS OPERATING AUTHORITY reports that this Airprox highlights the importance of maintaining good lookout for other aircraft, especially when approaching an incident scene when the temptation will be to focus on identifying a suitable ad-hoc HEMS landing site and any associated hazards on the ground. Once the Paraglider had been visually acquired, the pilot's actions, in manoeuvring away from the Paraglider, had ensured that safe separation was achieved and maintained. The selection of an alternate landing site, away from the orbiting Paraglider, had been prudent and reduced the risk of separation distances being eroded further, albeit this put the helicopter further away from the patient. It is difficult to assess the risk of collision prior to the paramedic visually acquiring the Paraglider as exact distances and flight paths are not known but, once the crew had become aware of its presence, they had acted promptly and decisively to keep clear of the Paraglider, keeping the risk low. The pilot submitted an Airprox proforma and the Airprox Board will formally assess the risk of collision in due course.

THE PARAGLIDER PILOT reports that on this particular day they had been flying from [departure point] and had taken-off from the designated take-off point just south of the main carpark. They had been

gliding up and down the cliff going north for approximately 2 miles and then back to Sandymouth bay. At approximately 3pm [they recall] they had registered a warning on their vario equipment that there had been an aircraft in their area and had heard it soon after. The helicopter was overland at that point but then headed out over the sea; at this point it was a long way-away (probably 1/2 a mile). It had then [performed] a big turn and headed inland. At that point the Paraglider pilot had realised that the helicopter had been heading towards them [although they recall that they hadn't been too] worried as it was still a long way away but they had turned to keep out of its way (they had then been heading north). The helicopter had [become] closer and closer and had eventually [performed] quite a hard turn to their right. The paraglider pilot recalls that they had no doubt that the helicopter pilot would see them but [had been] hoping it would have been a bit sooner. The Paraglider pilot stated that they did not feel anyone had done anything wrong and that they had not felt in any danger stating that "these pilots do an incredible job and their skill is second to none while saving lives, they've helped me a couple of times in the past and I can't thank them enough."

Factual Background

The weather at Newquay airport was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGHQ 291220Z 29012KT 9999 FEW020 18/12 Q1021=
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Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

Figure 1: EC135 flightpath to their landing site. Image provided by the EC135 pilot.

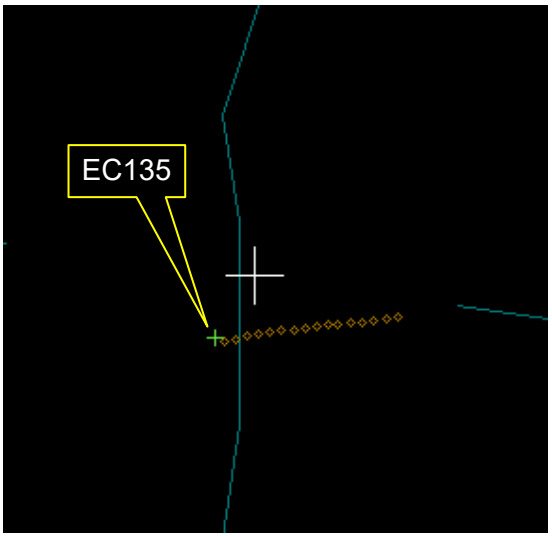


Figure 2: ~1300:40: The point at which the EC135 ceased to offer returns on radar. No other traffic shown. White cross is the point of the reported Airprox.

At no point did the Paraglider appear either on radar or other aircraft tracking systems. The EC135 appeared intermittently on other branded tracking systems and not at all beyond 1300:40 (CPA minus ~1min 20sec). The diagram on page one has been constructed utilising those intermittent contacts, pilot reports and the equipment extract at Figure 1.

The EC135 and Paraglider 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] If the incident geometry is considered as converging then the EC135 pilot was required to give way to the Paraglider.[2]

Comments

BHPA

The BHPA commends the vigilant lookout and prompt evasive actions by the EC135 pilot who did well to spot the paraglider whilst their primary attention was probably focussing on the approach and landing phase of their sortie. We also commend the paraglider pilot for the fact that they were carrying some kind of EC device which gave them warning of the helicopter's proximity - even though there was little they could have done about an impending collision due to a paraglider's low speed and limited manoeuvrability. Nevertheless, the pilot had made efforts to keep clear of the helicopter once they had visually acquired it.

It is unfortunate that the helicopter's EC device did not pick up the paraglider pilot which, once again, highlights the non-interoperability between various EC devices. This Airprox highlights the stark reality that a good lookout must be maintained by all pilots when operating in Class G uncontrolled airspace, at any level and at any phase of flight.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when an EC135 and a Paraglider flew into proximity at Sandymouth Bay at around 1302Z on Thursday 29th August 2024. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, and neither had been in receipt of a Flight Information Service.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from both pilots, GPS track data and reports from the appropriate operating authorities. 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 firstly considered the actions of the EC135 pilot, recognising the nature of their flight and the need to identify and clear a landing site with some urgency. Members thanked them for the provision of additional material regarding their flight which had allowed for the generation of the diagram at the top of this report. The EC135 pilot had utilised the London FIS until they had neared their planned destination and had then converted to a good lookout from all crew members with support from their onboard EC equipment. Unfortunately, in this case, their EC equipment had not registered any emissions from the Paraglider (**CF2**) and they had therefore gained no situational awareness (**CF1**) of its presence. Members felt that it had been fortunate that they had visually acquired the Paraglider, albeit at a late stage (**CF3**), and had initiated an avoidance manoeuvre before then circling further in search of a suitable landing site. Due to the nature of their flight, members felt that there had been nothing more they could have done to avoid this Airprox.

When discussing the actions of the Paraglider pilot, members noted that they had been operating in the local area under good VMC and had carried equipment capable of detecting other nearby aircraft. They had seen the EC135 as it had tracked towards and then along the coast before having turned back

[1] (UK) SERA.3205 Proximity.
[2] (UK) SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(2) Converging.

towards the land and, at this point, the Paraglider pilot had recognised the potential for it to come closer than comfortable and had initiated a manoeuvre to increase separation. The Board opined that, although a positive action, the ability to generate a safer distance quickly was limited and that it had been the avoidance manoeuvre carried out by the EC135 pilot that had been instrumental in achieving safe separation. The passive electronic equipment carried by the Paraglider pilot had registered a nearby aircraft and the Board felt that the timing recalled by the pilot for that warning may have meant that this had been associated with another uninvolved aircraft. Members felt that this, together with the absence of a radio-based service, had meant that the Paraglider pilot had not had any situational awareness of the presence of the EC135 (**CF1**) before they had visually acquired it.

Concluding their discussion, members agreed that although the Paraglider pilot had visually acquired the EC135 well ahead of CPA, the limited manoeuvrability of their airframe, combined with a lack of radio and active EC, had meant that it had been the late sighting and positive manoeuvre by the EC135 pilot that had ensured sufficient separation between themselves and the Paraglider to avert a risk of collision. Although the exact separation at CPA could not be determined, members agreed that safety margins had been degraded and assigned Risk Category C to this event.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

Contributory Factors:

	2024225			
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, inaccurate or only generic, Situational Awareness
	• Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance			
2	Technical	• ACAS/TCAS System Failure	An event involving the system which provides information to determine aircraft position and is primarily independent of ground installations	Incompatible CWS equipment
	• See and Avoid			
3	Human Factors	• Identification/ Recognition	Events involving flight crew not fully identifying or recognising the reality of a situation	Late sighting by one or both pilots

Degree of Risk: C.

Safety Barrier Assessment[3]

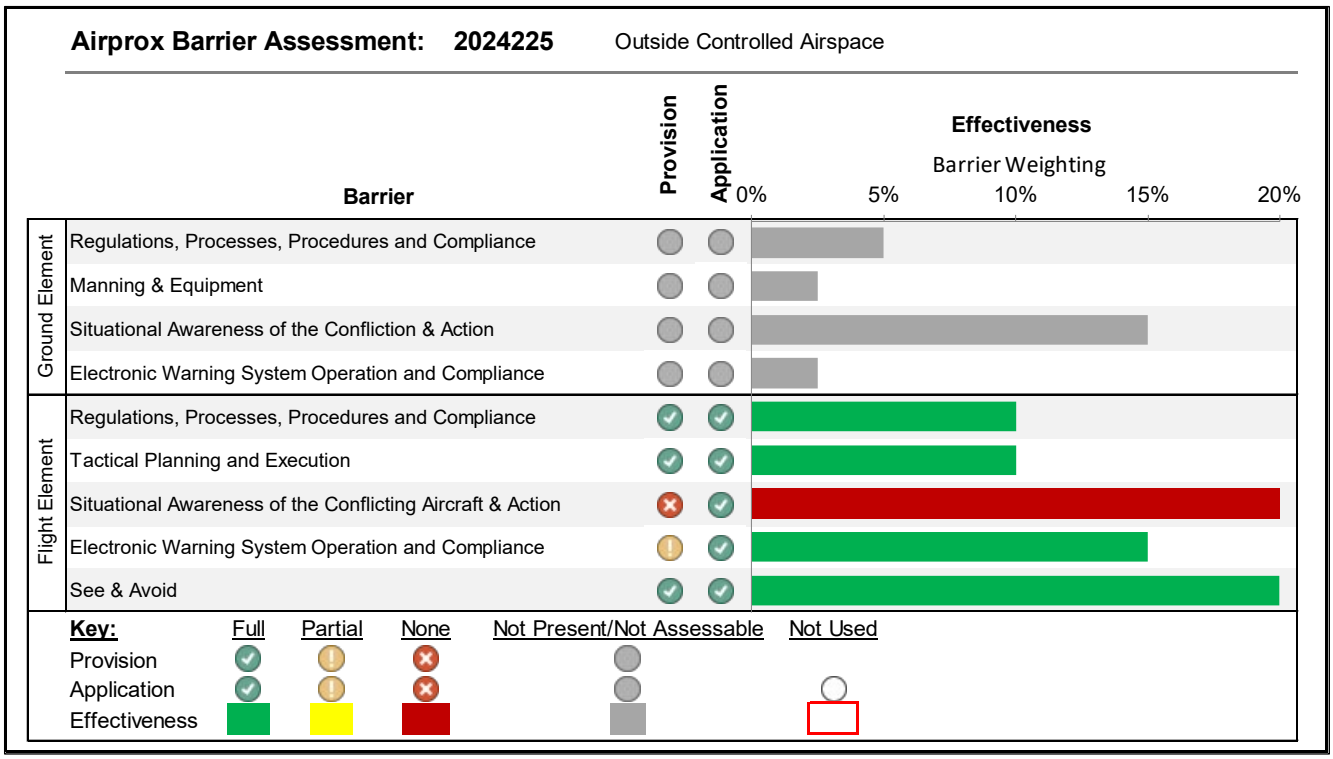
In assessing the effectiveness of the safety barriers associated with this incident, the Board concluded that the key factors had been that:

Flight Elements:

Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action were assessed as **ineffective** because neither pilot had any awareness of the presence of the other aircraft.

Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance were assessed as **ineffective** because the electronic conspicuity equipment carried by the EC135 could not detect any electronic emissions from the Paraglider.

[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: 2024225
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:
Full
Partial
None
Not Present/Not Assessable
Not Used
Provision
Application
Effectiveness