



# AIRPROX *Insight*

DIRECTOR UKAB'S MONTHLY UPDATE

January 2022



Photo for illustration purposes only

## Radio ga-ga? — don't give up

**If the radio's busy and you don't think you'll get a service, try anyway and record it if you are refused**

**T**his month's **Airprox (2021128)** between two PA-28s is all about communication: one aircraft was conducting an instructional flight which required some manoeuvring.

The pilots explained that they believed that a Traffic Service was impracticable because experience had taught them that ATC wouldn't allow them to operate in a block, and that without a block the requirement to announce changes of heading and level would have been

detrimental to their sortie. As a result, they didn't ask for what they wanted and resorted to a Basic Service. The other pilots reported simply listening out on the frequency because it was too busy, in their opinion, for them to ask for one.

Both of these accounts are reasonable, experience-led deductions and completely understandable, but the thing is they were both on the same frequency, in the same busy airspace, with no chance of either gaining situational awareness of each other.

It's really easy to get jaded, to believe that the thing that happened yesterday will happen again today and tomorrow. So the decision is to 'take the path of least resistance', and not to waste time trying to talk on the radio because the result might be a refusal.

But here's something to consider: who is best qualified to decide if they are too busy to take on another aircraft and provide the requested service? Is it you or is it the controller? Perhaps give them a chance

to work you — even if the result of the interaction is a refusal. This is not a waste of time and effort; your initial contact might be heard and assimilated by other aircraft on your frequency and in your area, and that on its own may just be enough to avert an Airprox.

Should you be right and it's too busy, and you get refused or downgraded from what you ask for, then please do fill in the CAA Form FCS 1522 available on the CAA website [FCS 1522 - UK Airspace Access or Refusal of ATS Report \(caa.co.uk\)](https://www.caa.co.uk/Forms/FCS1522). This is the best method of registering the issue with the CAA and provides them with the evidence needed to support reviews and assessments of the UK's air traffic provision.

Finally, and as a general point only, it's worth considering reflecting on your own confidence and experience on the radio — could it be that is colouring your decision not to call up?

### 2021 LOOKBACK

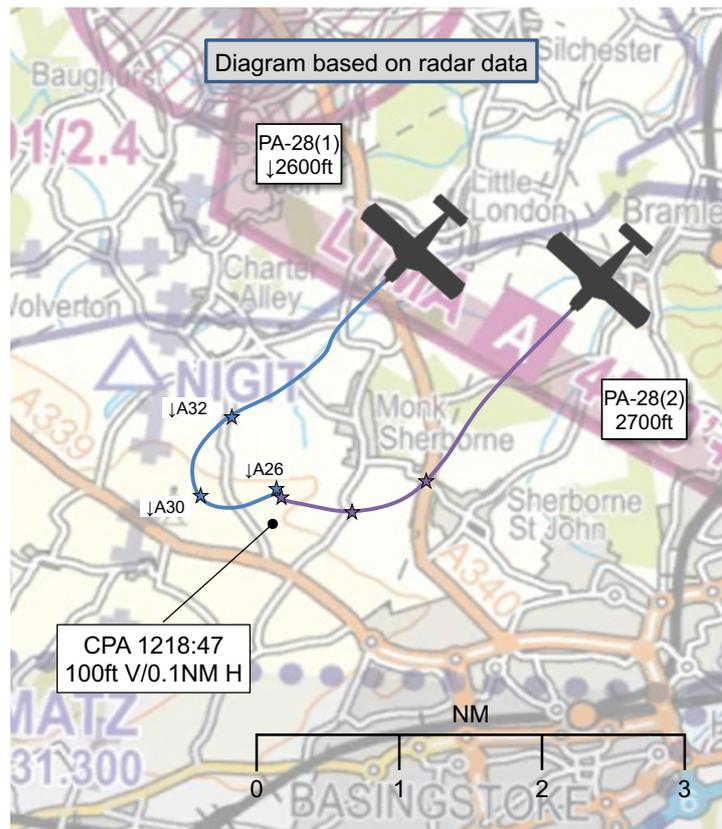
So let's have a look at the distributions for 2021. We haven't evaluated them all yet, but the numbers are back up to 2019 pre-pandemic levels.

The slow start in 2021 was due to lockdown, but note how rapidly the figures returned to 'normal' when the General Aviation community was able to fly again. Also, of those aircraft-to-aircraft risk-bearing events that have been evaluated to date, a whopping 98% involve a GA (sports/recreational) aircraft.

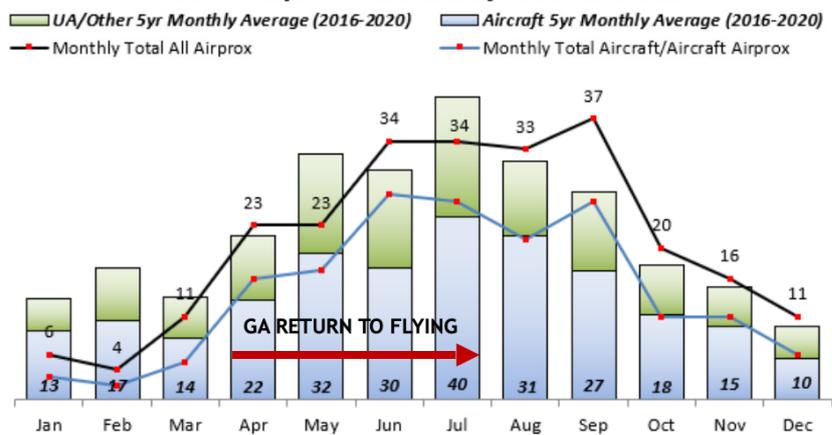
There are no new emerging trends identifiable at this stage but the key areas of concern remain: Compatibility between available and installed electronic conspicuity equipment combined with the large numbers of pilots who choose not to use a service, or select only a Basic Service from ATC. This is directly linked to the performance of both the Ground Elements and the Flight Elements Situational Awareness barriers.

In our Board sessions we often discuss the take-up and provision of air traffic services because, from the reports we receive, it's evident that the limitations of a Basic Service are not well understood; on many occasions pilots seem to expect to be routinely informed of conflicting traffic while in receipt of such a Service, or (and more worryingly) when they are just using a listening Squawk.

Finally, there is still a concern surrounding the availability of LARS in the UK, both in the geographical coverage of such a service and in the reluctance of some pilots to use it when they perceive that it's busy.



### 2021 Airprox - Monthly Distribution



I mention these areas of concern because it's only through communication and the use of electronic conspicuity equipment that situational awareness can be bolstered, and as the weakest performing barrier for both Ground and Flight Elements it offers the most scope for improvement.

It would be well worth spending time to dive into the books — or at least the [Skyway Code](#) and to revise Air Traffic Services in particular; the responsibilities of the pilot, the responsibilities of the controller and the limitations of the Services available.

For more information pop in to see us at [AeroExpo at Cotswold Airport](#) in June, or go to [GasCo](#) or [Astral Aviation](#) to find out more.

Finally, the weather's getting better at last and the days are getting longer, let's make sure we plan and prepare so that we can perform to our best and get the most out of every flight — enjoy the coming months.

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