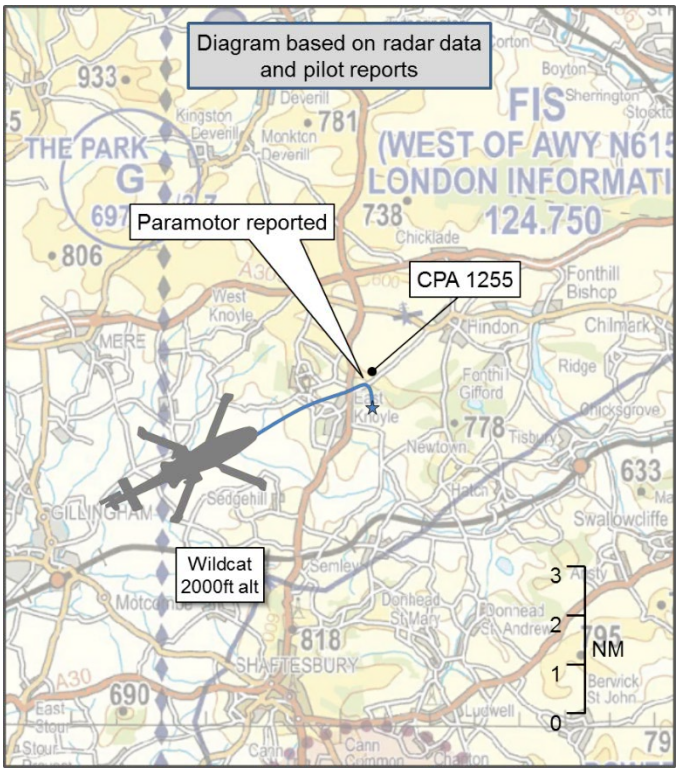
AIRPROX REPORT No 2017257

Date: 27 Oct 2017 Time: 1255Z Position: 5104N 00209W Location: East Knoyle, Wiltshire

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	Wildcat	Paramotor
Operator	Civ Comm	Unknown
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	
Service	Basic	
Provider	Westland	
Altitude/FL	FL013	
Transponder	A, C, S	
Reported		**Not Reported**
Colours		
Lighting	Strobes, Nav	
Conditions	VMC	
Visibility	30km	
Altitude/FL	2000ft	
Altimeter	RPS (1031hPa)	
Heading	65°	
Speed	130kt	
ACAS/TAS	TAS	
Alert	None	
Separation		
Reported	30m H	NK
Recorded	NK	



THE WILDCAT PILOT reports that he was flying on a north-easterly heading at 2000ft when he spotted a motorised paraglider in his 11 o'clock at less than 100m. A descending avoiding-action turn was made to the right, and he estimated that the paramotor passed within 30m of the aircraft. The paramotor continued on a southerly track after the incident.

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

THE PARAMOTOR PILOT could not be traced.

Factual Background

The weather at Yeovilton was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGDY 271250Z 03004KT 9999 FEW025 14/08 Q1035 BLU NOSIG=
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Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

Westland were providing a Basic Service without a surveillance radar. A Basic Service was agreed at 1242:30 and there were no further communications until 1259:20 when the Wildcat pilot made an 'Ops Normal' call. He called for re-join at 1303:40 and there was no mention of the Airprox on frequency.

The Wildcat and Paramotor 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 head-on or nearly so then both pilots were required to turn to the right[2]. A paramotor is defined as a glider under ANO 2016[3]; therefore, if the geometry is considered as converging then the Wildcat pilot was required to give way to the Paramotor[4].

Comments

BHPA

Thorough investigation was made amongst local BHPA Clubs, Schools and XC databases when trying to find the paramotor pilot, the BHPA were unable to provide the UKAB with any additional information. A small number of non-BHPA paramotorists who operate 1nm northwest of the Airprox site were contacted but were unable to assist us with our enquiries.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a Wildcat and a Paramotor flew into proximity at 1255hrs on Friday 27th October 2017. The Wildcat pilot was operating under VFR in VMC, and in receipt of a Basic Service from Westlands. Despite extensive searching from the BHPA, the Paramotor pilot could not be traced.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from the Wildcat pilot, radar photographs/video recordings, and a report from the appropriate operating authorities.

The Board first looked at the actions of the Wildcat pilot, he was flying a local sortie in Class G airspace when he saw the paramotor. Although he was only receiving a Basic Service from Westland, who do not have a surveillance radar, members agreed that it was highly unlikely the paramotor would have shown on radar anyway and so, even if he had been in contact with a LARS unit under a Traffic Service, it would have made little difference in these circumstances. Likewise the TAS on the Wildcat was not able to detect the non-transponding paramotor, which left look-out as the final mitigation against mid-air collision. Having seen the paramotor, the Wildcat pilot took avoiding action by turning and descending. The Board noted that this Airprox was a timely reminder to all aviators that paramotors can be encountered almost anywhere outside controlled airspace and are not bound by the more restrictive launch site requirements of paragliders and hang gliders.

Members were disappointed that the paramotor pilot could not be traced, without his report it was difficult to say whether he had seen the helicopter or not. Noting that paramotor pilots often wear noise-reducing helmets and ear-defenders because of the engine noise, and that other aircraft can easily be obscured by their canopy if above or if the paramotor was turning, members were told that it was unlikely that the paramotor pilot would have heard the Wildcat approaching, and that he may not have been aware of the encounter at all. Given the propinquity of the encounter, the Board thought that he was fortunate that the helicopter downwash had not caused the paramotor pilot any serious problems.

In determining the cause of the Airprox, the Board initially wondered whether it had been a late sighting by the Wildcat pilot. However, noting that paramotors can be difficult to see depending on their aspect and the prevailing weather conditions, they quickly agreed that this incident was probably best described as a conflict in Class G airspace that had been resolved by the Wildcat pilot. Noting that the Wildcat pilot did manage to take some avoiding action, albeit probably later than he would have liked, the risk was assessed as Category B, safety much reduced.

[1] SERA.3205 Proximity.
[2] SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(1) Approaching head-on.
[3] ANO2016 Schedule 1, Interpretation.
[4] SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(2) Converging.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE AND RISK

Cause: A conflict in Class G resolved by the Wildcat pilot.

Degree of Risk: B.

Safety Barrier Assessment[5]

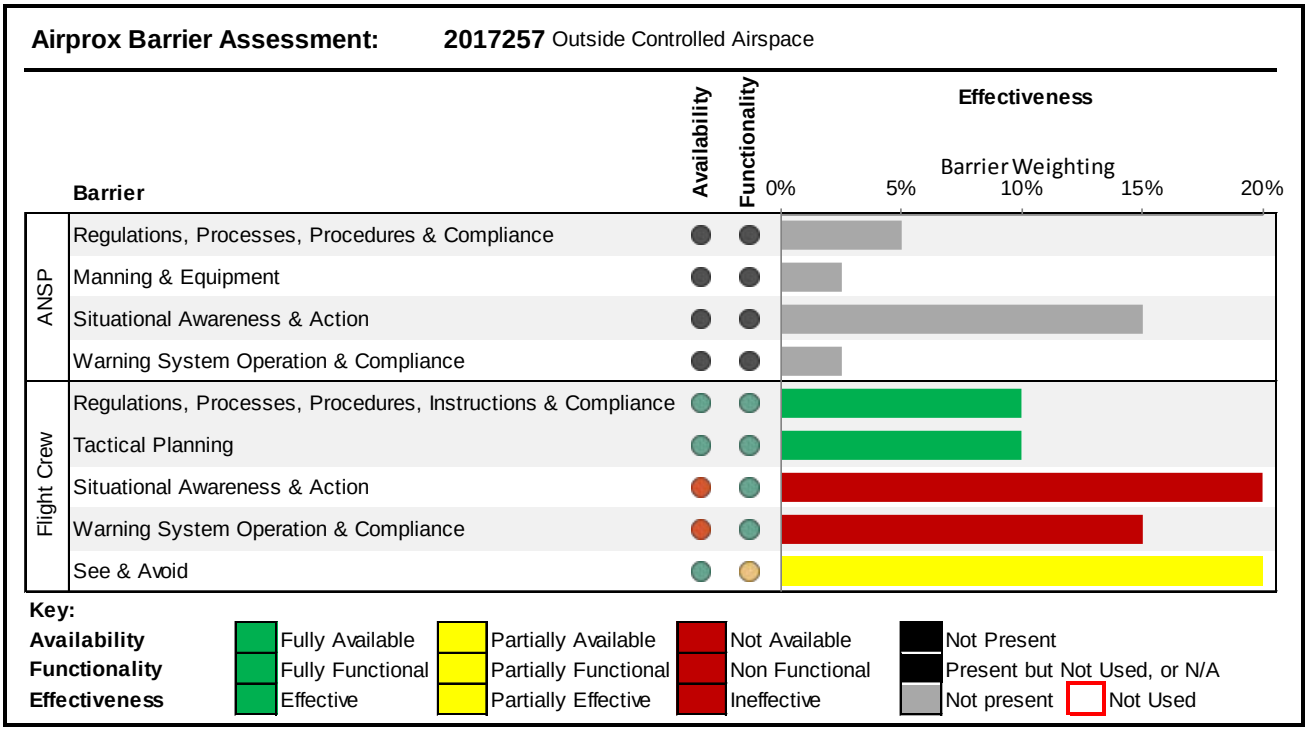
In assessing the effectiveness of the safety barriers associated with this incident, the Board concluded that the key factors had been that:

Flight Crew:

Situational Awareness and Action were assessed as **ineffective** because the Wildcat pilot did not have any means of getting situational awareness on the Paramotor.

Warning System Operation and Compliance were assessed as **ineffective** because the TAS on the Wildcat could not detect the Paramotor.

See and Avoid were assessed as **partially effective** because the Wildcat pilot only saw the paramotor at a late stage and had to take emergency avoiding action.



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