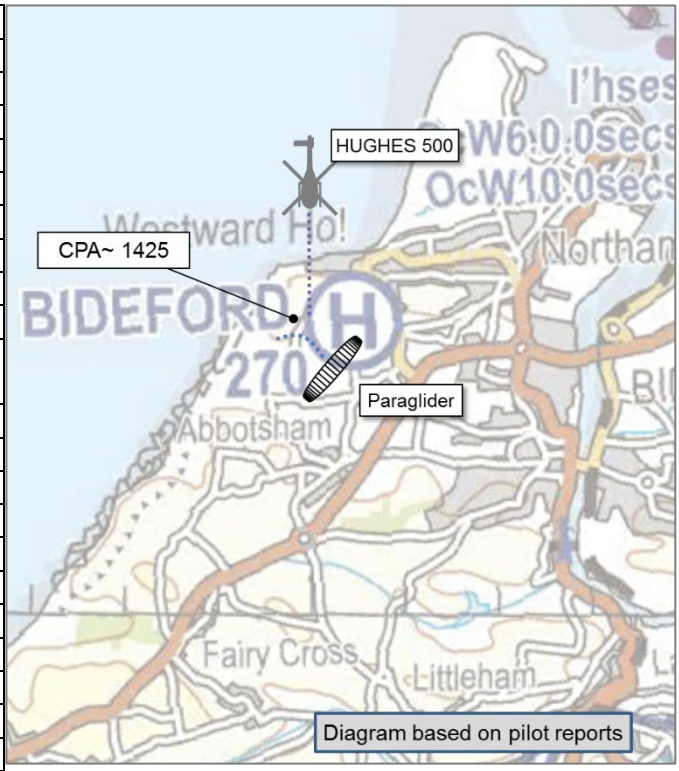
AIRPROX REPORT No 2019177

Date: 04 Jul 2019 Time: 1425Z Position: 5102N 00415W Location: Bideford

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	Paraglider	Hughes 500
Operator	Civ Gld	Civ Helo
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	None	None
Altitude/FL	NK	FL003
Transponder	Not fitted	A, C, S
Reported		
Colours	Green, White, Blue	Black
Lighting	Nil	Strobes, Anti-Cols
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility		>10km
Altitude/FL	200ft	500ft
Altimeter	NK	NK
Heading	NR	NK
Speed	NR	50kt
ACAS/TAS	Not fitted	Unknown
Alert	N/A	N/A
Separation		
Reported	200ft V	Not Seen
Recorded	NK	



THE PARAGLIDER PILOT reports that he was paragliding from Cornborough. Prior to launching, he had checked with the local helicopter company (whose helipad was within 200yds of his take-off point) and was told there were no planned aircraft movements. He was soaring along the cliff when a black Hughes 500 suddenly appeared flying low-and-fast, ½ nm away. It approached from up-wind (the north) heading towards Cornborough. The Hughes 500 performed a left-hand orbit which took it directly over the paragliding take-off field and the heli-pad, and it was close enough that he could read its registration. The paragliders at Cornborough have an agreement with the helicopter company to fly using airband radio and he urgently tried calling on their frequency but there was no reply. He flew out and landed quickly on the beach to avoid downwash from the helicopter, which would have caused a low-level canopy collapse. The helicopter carried on flying slightly inland of the cliff edge, then departed to the south-east. He made continued calls on the heli-pad frequency until the helicopter flew over the horizon, but did not receive a reply. He was surprised that the helicopter was not on the frequency as it had approached the helipad from upwind at low-level. He noted that not only was the risk of collision high, but the downwash to the paraglider could have been catastrophic.

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

THE HUGHES 500 PILOT reports that he was flying low and slow, and maintaining a constant look-out. He did not see a paraglider, but opined that a blue or green canopy is often difficult to spot against a green/brown cliff background. He had no knowledge that an Airprox had taken place until subsequently contacted by the Radar Analysis Cell; however, he judged the risk to be low because he was looking where he was going and only flew where he could see he was clear of other aircraft and birds.

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

Factual Background

The weather at Exeter was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGTE 041420Z 18009KT 150V210 CAVOK 23/12 Q1024=
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Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

Neither the Hughes 500, nor the paraglider could be seen on the NATS area radar, therefore the exact geometry of two aircraft during the Airprox is not known.

The paraglider and Hughes 500 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]. If the incident geometry is considered as converging then the Hughes 500 pilot was required to give way to the paraglider[3].

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a Paraglider and a Hughes 500 flew into proximity in the vicinity of Bideford at around 1425hrs on Thursday 4th July 2019. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC, neither were in receipt of an ATS.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from the pilots of both aircraft and radar photographs/video recordings. 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 looked at the actions of the paraglider pilot, he had taken-off from a site close to the edge of Bideford, having first checked with personnel there to see whether they were expecting any inbound traffic. Members commended him for his pro-active approach in ensuring that he remained clear of helicopters using the Bideford site, and for listening out on their frequency. Unfortunately the Hughes 500 was not on that frequency and so the paraglider pilot had no situational awareness that it would be in the vicinity (**CF2**). The Board noted that, once he saw the helicopter approaching, he took avoiding action by landing on the beach (**CF4**). The BHPA member commented that, in itself, such a manoeuvre wasn't dangerous, but illustrated the level of concern that the paraglider pilot would have had about the downwash from the helicopter causing a catastrophic collapse of the canopy.

The Hughes 500 pilot described flying close to the cliffs and keeping a good look-out for other aircraft but helicopter members wondered why he had not given Bideford a call on their frequency as he went past, given that Bideford was well-known as a quite busy helicopter landing site. Had he done so, the paraglider pilot would have heard the call and may have been able to give the Hughes 500 pilot situational awareness that he was operating there (**CF1**). Without any such information, the Hughes 500 pilot had no situational awareness that the paraglider was operating in the vicinity (**CF2**), did not see it, and was therefore not able to take any avoiding action (**CF3**).

The Board then considered the risk. Acknowledging the danger from downwash from the helicopter, this was not part of the Board's risk assessment which deals purely with risk of collision. In that respect, members noted that the paraglider pilot had managed to take timely avoiding action by descending onto the beach, and they quickly agreed that this action had averted the risk of collision. Accordingly, although they agreed that safety had been degraded, they assessed the risk as Category C.

[1] SERA.3205 Proximity. MAA RA 2307 paragraphs 1 and 2.
[2] SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(1) Approaching head-on. MAA RA 2307 paragraph 13.
[3] SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(2) Converging. MAA RA 2307 paragraph 12.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

Contributory Factors:

	2019177		
CF	**Factor**	**Description**	**Amplification**
	Flight Elements		
	• Tactical Planning and Execution		
1	Human Factors	• Accuracy of Communication	Ineffective communication of intentions
	• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action		
2	Contextual	• Situational Awareness and Sensory Events	Generic, late, no or incorrect Situational Awareness
	• See and Avoid		
3	Human Factors	• Monitoring of Other Aircraft	Non-sighting or effectively a non-sighting by one or both pilots
4	Human Factors	• Perception of Visual Information	Pilot was concerned by the proximity of the other aircraft

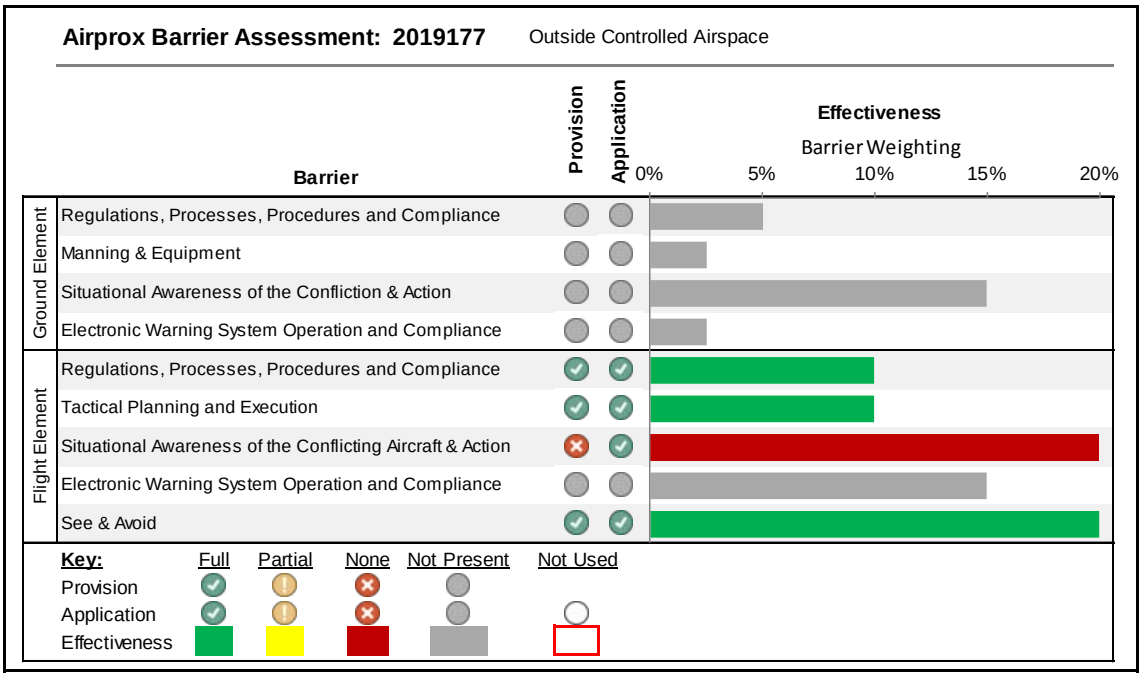
Degree of Risk: C

Safety Barrier Assessment[4]

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 situational awareness about the other prior to the Airprox.



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