

AIRPROX REPORT No 2020101

Date: 29 Jul 2020 Time: Unknown Position: Unknown Location: Unknown

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	ASW27	Unknown Helicopter
Operator	Civ Gld	Civ Helo
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	
Service	None	
Provider	N/A	
Altitude/FL	~3660ft	
Transponder	Standby	
Reported		
Colours	White	
Lighting	None	
Conditions	VMC	
Visibility		
Altitude/FL	3666ft	
Altimeter	QNH (1021hPa)	
Heading	Circling	
Speed	50kt	
ACAS/TAS	FLARM	
Alert	None	
Separation		
Reported	100-200ft V/0m H	NK
Recorded	NK	

Insufficient Details to Provide a Diagram

THE ASW27 PILOT reports that they were in a climb, circling about every 20 seconds which reduced their lookout capability. They had completed at least one climbing circle when the helicopter passed 100-200ft overhead.

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

THE UNKNOWN HELICOPTER PILOT could not be traced

Factual Background

The weather at Wittering was recorded as follows:

METAR EGXT 291450Z 24011KT 9999 BKN040 BKN120 21/10 Q1018

Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The ASW27 and unknown helicopter 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

When the Airprox report was first submitted, the reported time of the Airprox, location and description did not match the ASW27 pilot's GPS data. On further investigation a helicopter was identified in the location however the helicopter was showing approximately 1600ft below the ASW27; when the ASW27 pilot was contacted to confirm the geography and altitudes, they said that the Airprox was

¹ SERA.3205 Proximity.

not in that area and provided a screen shot of the area in which they believed the Airprox may have occurred. This area was again different to, not only the matched area, but also to the original area. On taking the last submitted time and location, there was no evidence of any other aircraft in the vicinity at that time. Because of this it was not possible to accurately determine either the position or the time that the Airprox occurred.

BGA

This report serves as a reminder of the importance of timely, accurate reporting in Airprox events.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when an ASW27 and an unknown helicopter flew into proximity on Wednesday 29th July 2020, the time and position of the Airprox could not be established. The ASW27 pilot was operating under VFR in VMC and not in receipt of a service. The unknown helicopter pilot could not be traced.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of a report from the ASW27 pilot 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.

Due to the exceptional circumstances presented by the coronavirus pandemic, this incident was assessed as part of a 'virtual' UK Airprox Board meeting where members provided a combination of written contributions and dial-in/VTC comments.

The Board began by expressing their disappointment at both the dearth of information and the erroneous recollection of the location of the Airprox by the reporting pilot. They emphasised that this highlighted the importance of an accurate and comprehensive report. The Airprox Board treat all Airprox reports equally but, the additional work required to glean suitable levels of pertinent information and, as in this case, this can prove to be an impossible task. Accurate reporting also enables the early tracing of the other pilot and Air Traffic agencies involved. Together this ensures that the benefits of an Airprox report can be fully realised for all airspace users.

The Board was able to evaluate several factors which had contributed to the Airprox: The ASW27 pilot was not in communication with any Air Traffic agency. As such, even if the helicopter pilot had been receiving an air traffic service it is unlikely that the glider would have been visible on radar which would have resulted in the controller being unable to pass any Traffic Information to the helicopter pilot. The conclusion being that neither pilot would have had any information regarding the presence of the other aircraft (**CF1**).

The ASW27 was equipped with FLARM but this equipment cannot receive external information from an aircraft that is not also fitted with FLARM; the ASW27 pilot reports that they received no information about the helicopter (**CF2**) suggesting that the helicopter did not have FLARM fitted². It is likely that the helicopter was fitted with an alternative electronic warning system that relied on other aircraft transponding. Regardless of specific aircraft fitment, it is likely that the equipment was incompatible, (**CF2**).

The ASW27 pilot did not see the helicopter until it was passing overhead. It is not known if the helicopter pilot saw the ASW27, therefore the Board could not adequately assess the see-and-avoid barrier. Regardless, based on the ASW27 pilot's description, it is unlikely that the barrier functioned fully.

The Board agreed that the limited information available precluded them from making an adequate assessment of the risk, a Risk Category D.

² This assertion is supported by the fact that FLARM is almost exclusively used by the gliding community.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

Contributory Factors:

2020101			
CF	Factor	Description	Amplification
Flight Elements			
• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action			
1	Contextual	• Situational Awareness and Sensory Events	Pilot had no, late or only generic, Situational Awareness
• Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance			
2	Technical	• ACAS/TCAS System Failure	Incompatible CWS equipment

Degree of Risk: D.

Safety Barrier Assessment³

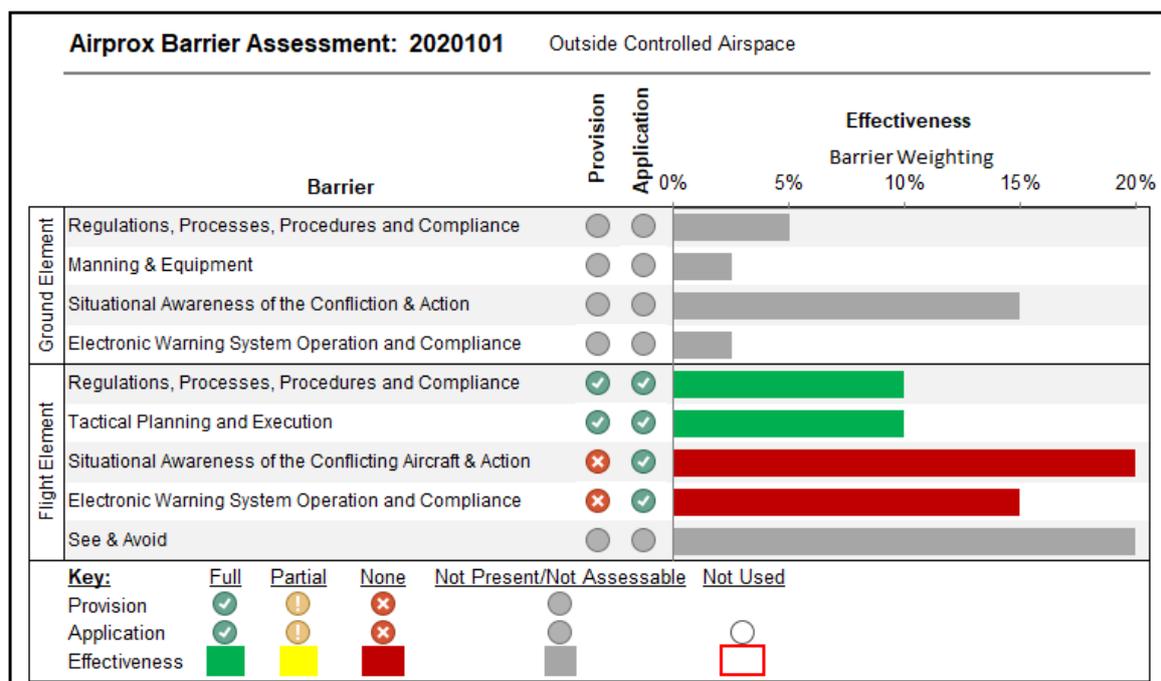
In assessing the effectiveness of the safety barriers associated with this incident, the Board concluded that the key factors had been that:

Flight Elements:

Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action were assessed as **ineffective** because the ASW27 pilot did not have any information regarding the helicopter. It is not known if the helicopter pilot had any information about the ASW27.

Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance were assessed as **ineffective** because the ASW27 had FLARM which is only compatible with another FLARM. It is not known if the helicopter was fitted with an electronic warning system.

See and Avoid were assessed as **not assessable** because it is not known if the unknown helicopter pilot saw the ASW27. The ASW27 pilot only saw the helicopter as it passed overhead.



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