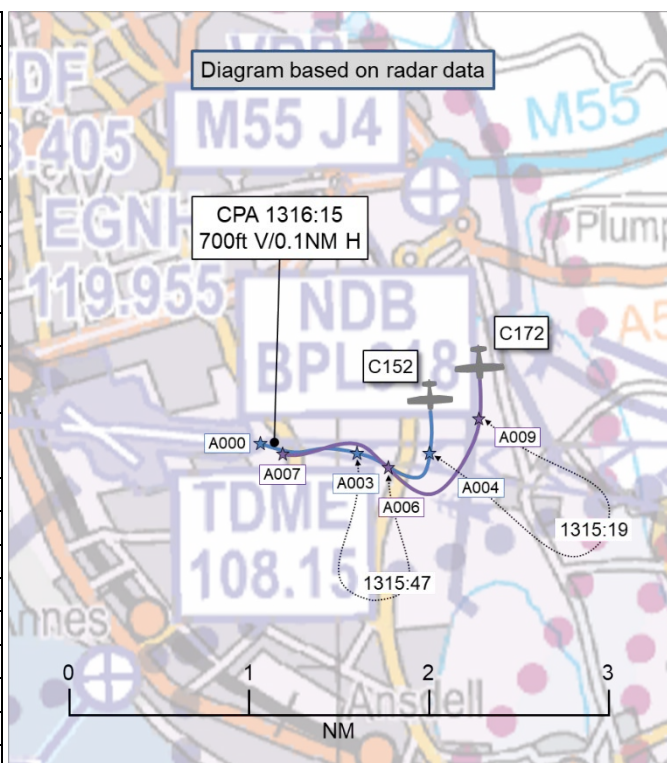


AIRPROX REPORT No 2025050

Date: 11 Apr 2025 Time: 1316Z Position: 5346N 00301W Location: Blackpool Airport.

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	C152	C172
Operator	Civ FW	Civ FW
Airspace	Blackpool ATZ	Blackpool ATZ
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	ACS	ACS
Provider	Blackpool	Blackpool
Altitude/FL	0ft	700ft
Transponder	A, C, S	A, C, S
Reported		
Colours	White with stripes	White
Lighting	Strobes, land, nav, anti-coll	Beacon
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	>10km	>10km
Altitude/FL	500-600ft	1300ft
Altimeter	QFE (1020hPa)	QFE
Heading	275°	185ft°
Speed	70kt	95kt
ACAS/TAS	Not fitted	Not fitted
Separation at CPA		
Reported	'50ft-100ft' (estimated)	50ft V/1NM H
Recorded	700ft V/0.1NM H	



THE C152 PILOT reports that they received instructions from ATC to report east abeam Blackpool's Tall Tower VRP. They reported there when they arrived at said point, at which point [the C172] also reported east abeam the Tall Tower VRP stating they *"had this microlight to my left"* (referring to their C152). The [C172 pilot] was given instructions to position behind them and that they were number 3 for arrival. At this point [the C172 pilot] said *"roger, I'm actually overtaking the aircraft"*. At this point [the C152 pilot] actually wasn't that concerned of any collision happening as [the C172 pilot] had contact with them and they could see [the C172]. At this point they assumed the [C172 pilot] would slow their aircraft down to position behind [the C152] as requested. The C152 [pilot] was given number 2 behind [another aircraft] on final and to report final. When they reported final, [the C172 pilot] reported final straight after them stating *"I'm going to have to go around, I'm on top of this aircraft in front of me"*. ATC then reiterated to them that they were told to position behind [the C152]. [The C172 pilot] was given a left-hand circuit to land on RW28.

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

THE C172 PILOT reports that they had previously reported to Blackpool ATC that they were overhead Poulton VRP at 2000ft and requested a rejoin. They were given the QFE and told to report east of the Tall Tower VRP and to expect a right base for RW28. They commenced a slow descent on a heading of 185° and, upon reaching the point east of the Tall Tower, were just about to report their position when a small aircraft rose from below them, approximately 1NM ahead and 30° to their left. (They commented to their student *'where has he come from'* since they had heard no call from another aircraft nor had ATC advised them that there was another aircraft in a similar position). They called ATC, advising east of the Tall Tower and that there was a small aircraft that had risen from below just ahead of them. ATC asked if that was a Cessna which they confirmed. They were instructed to position number 3 behind the Cessna which was number 2. By this time they were already almost abeam the [C152]. They replied that they would [position behind the C152] but that the [C152] was travelling much slower than them.

ATC instructed them to report right base. They immediately powered down with the intention of getting behind the [C152] and undertaking a left-hand orbit to give additional separation. The [C152], however, started to veer left so they maintained their heading to keep it in sight and assess [the pilot's] intentions. The [C152] then started to descend and turn right on a course to pass under them. They climbed, to further increase vertical separation, and turned eastward with the intention of adopting a wide right-base position. By this time they had crossed the M55 and they reported wide right-base. ATC asked if they had the [C152] in sight which they confirmed. ATC instructed them to report 'final'. They maintained eye contact with the [C152] but at no time heard any calls from it for either right-base or final, and at this point they were wondering if the [C152] had a transmit problem. They heard ATC give a clearance to an aircraft [unknown c/s] for a 'touch and go' which they assumed to be the [C152] and they could see [the C152] was turning on a short final. They reported that they were turning final but maintained an altitude of 700ft and then called that they were going around and began climbing. They watched the [C152] land and heard them say "[C/S] was too close" which confirmed they did not have a transmit problem. They completed a left-hand circuit as instructed by ATC and landed. At no time did they lose visual contact with the [C152] from when they rose into view ahead of them, other than briefly when they passed below them left-to-right. Also, at no time did they hear [the C152 pilot] make any calls other than the comment upon landing that "[C/S] was too close".

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

THE BLACKPOOL APPROACH CONTROLLER reports that they had aircraft inbound to the airfield. One was already established on right-base for RW28. The second aircraft, [the C152 pilot] called at the edge of the ATZ and was told to report on right base, number 2. The third aircraft, [the C172 pilot] called immediately after. [The C172 pilot] reported visual with [the C152] so was told to report on right base, number 3. When [the C152] landed, [the C172 pilot] elected to go-around as they were too close to the aircraft in front. Once [the C152] had landed, [its pilot] reported on the frequency "*that aircraft was flying far too close*".

Factual Background

The weather at Blackpool Airport was recorded as follows:

METAR EGNH 111320Z 30006KT CAVOK 14/08 Q1022

Analysis and Investigation

Blackpool Airport

The report consisted of reports from the Blackpool ATCO, reports from both the C152 and C172 pilots, ATC flight progress strips, log entries, movement record and transcript.

The ATCO had been controlling for approximately 55min at the time of the incident. This was their second operational period of the shift. The ATCO was within currency requirements and had successfully completed their annual Unit Endorsement Assessment 2 weeks prior to the event. There were no competency concerns. An initial review of the incident was conducted by a Unit Competency Assessor and it was concluded that no licensing action was required. During the debrief with the ATCO, the importance of reporting was reinforced.

Report summary.

[The pilot of the C152] reported at Fleetwood at 1308:47 and was told to report "*east abeam the Tall Tower*." (Tall tower is Blackpool tower in the centre of the town).

[The C172 pilot] reported 2 miles north of Poulton at 1310:18 and was also told to report "*east abeam the Tall Tower*." The ATCO did not respond to the [pilot's] call immediately due to other R/T calls.

[The C152 pilot] reported east of the Tall Tower at 1312:32 and was instructed to report right base number 2 following a Robin ahead.

[The C172 pilot] reported east of the Tall Tower at 1312:45 and reported a microlight to their left. The ATCO queried if this was a Cessna and, when [the C172 pilot] confirmed it was, the ATCO instructed them to position number 3. [The C172 pilot] confirmed this instruction and stated that they were in danger of overtaking [the C152] but that they would position behind.

[The C172 pilot] reported right-base at 1314:15 at which point the ATCO checked the position of [the C152, the pilot of which had] reported they were approaching right-base.

In discussion after the event, the ATCO described using binoculars but being unable to see both aircraft from the VCR, so at 1314:50 asked [the C172 pilot] to confirm that they were still visual with the Cessna, [C152], to which [the C172 pilot] reported '*affirm*'. The ATCO did not remember whether they used the VDF to corroborate the stated positions. The pilot of [the C172] stated in their report that they positioned on a wide right-base in order to position behind [the C152].

At 1315:23 [the C172 pilot] reported turning final with the Cessna in sight. The [pilot of the] aircraft elected to go around at 1315:56.

Report analysis.

The ATCO was competent and current, the frequency was busy with multiple aircraft and vehicles.

[The C172 pilot] reported 2 miles north of Poulton approximately 1min after [the C152 pilot] reported at Fleetwood, the proximity of the VRPs meant it was likely that, due to the time elapsed, [the C152] had also been in the Poulton vicinity.

Both [pilots] were under a Basic Service outside the ATZ. Blackpool is situated in Class G airspace and, in the absence of surveillance, a Basic Service is the only service available to VFR aircraft. Traffic Information may have benefitted the situational awareness of the pilots routeing inbound, however, in the incident debrief the ATCO stated that they did not feel it was a priority in this situation due to other workload demands. It is routine at the unit not to make sequencing decisions until the aircraft report at the Tall Tower.

Blackpool ATC utilises one frequency for Tower and Approach and both [pilots] had remained on that frequency for the duration of their flights, therefore, they should have heard each other's radio transmissions for situational awareness. However, [the C172 pilot] reported that they did not hear [the C152 pilot] until they reported on final. ATC reported no difficulties communicating with [the C152 pilot] and [the C172 pilot] was able to hear the Robin on final.

When [the C172 pilot] reported on right base prior to [the C152] the ATCO acted correctly by attempting to ascertain the position of [the C152], both through visual means and then by pilot report. Although the report "*approaching right-base*" would perhaps indicate that the aircraft was now behind [the C172]. The fact that [the C172 pilot] reported [the C152] in sight and read back the instruction to position number 3 gave the ATCO the impression that [the C172 pilot] was able to position behind easily.

[The C172] was number 3, and was advised to follow the Cessna ahead. It is unlikely that the pilot mistook the number 1 aircraft to be the Cessna as it was a low-wing Robin. [The C172 pilot] took action to widen the spacing and then initiated a go-around when they felt that the spacing was no longer appropriate.

Observations.

The ATCO did not take the correct reporting action when advised of the incident by the pilot.

The frequency was busy with multiple aircraft and vehicles, the delayed response to [the C172 pilot] indicated that the ATCO had other priorities at the time of the initial calls.

Generic Traffic Information was not passed prior to the aircraft entering the ATZ. This could have aided the situational awareness of both pilots.

[The C172 pilot] reported radio issues, which may have decreased situational awareness.

The ATCO had to rely on pilot reports due to there being no surveillance equipment at Blackpool and being unable to visually acquire the aircraft through binoculars.

[The C172 pilot] confirmed visual with [the C152] and positioning number 3 on multiple occasions and did not advise ATC that they were not able to comply with this instruction.

The pilot of [the C172] took action to widen out the base leg join to position number 3 as requested.

The pilot of [the C172] initiated a go-around when they felt that they did not have sufficient separation with the aircraft ahead and in accordance with locally agreed procedures in the MATS Part 2.

Conclusion.

Both [pilots] followed instructions given by the ATCO and positioned accordingly. [The C152 pilot] felt that [the C172] had positioned too close behind and the initiation of a go-around by [the C172 pilot] indicated that, despite taking action to widen the right-base join, they felt they had not achieved the appropriate separation on final.

Generic Traffic Information prior to the event may have been beneficial prior to the aircraft joining the circuit, however, the ATCO was repeatedly assured by [by the C172 pilot] that they were visual with [the C152] and, being unable to verify this through surveillance or visual acquisition, the ATCO had to rely on these reports.

Remedial Actions.

The following remedial actions were put into place:

- a. A discussion with the ATCO of reporting obligations,
- b. The issuing of a standards bulletin to all staff of reporting obligations and requirement to put incidents in the log book,
- c. The issuing of a standards bulletin advising ATCOs of their responsibilities within the vicinity of the ATZ.

Blackpool ATC will investigate surveillance options.

UKAB Secretariat

An analysis of the NATS radar replay was undertaken and both aircraft were positively identified using Mode S data. The C172 was seen following a similar track to the C152, at a distance of approximately 0.4NM, from their initial reported position east of the Tall Tower towards the base-leg of the approach to Blackpool Airport. The C172 was seen to gradually converge with the C152 on the final approach. CPA was assessed to have occurred at 1316:15 with 0.1NM lateral and 700ft vertical separation (Figure 1).

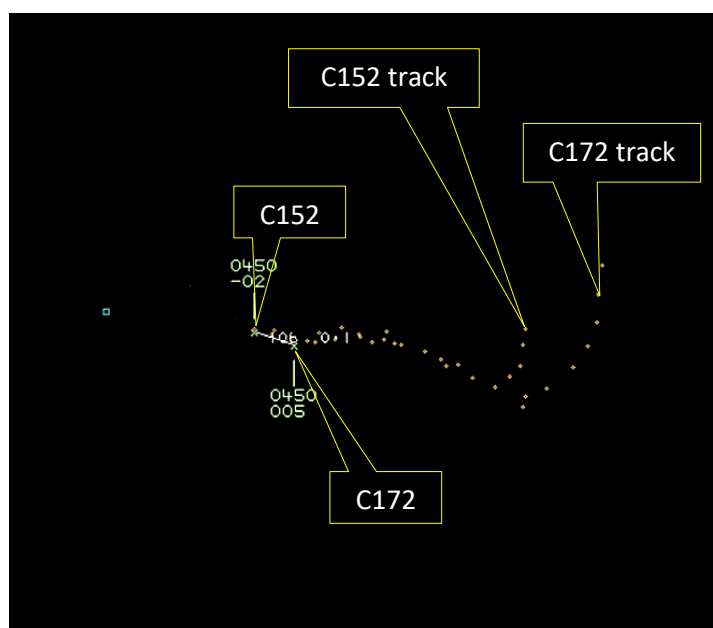


Figure 1 – CPA at 1316:15

The C152 and C172 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 An aircraft operated on or in the vicinity of an aerodrome shall conform with or avoid the pattern of traffic formed by other aircraft in operation.²

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a C152 and a C172 flew into proximity on the approach to Blackpool Airport at 1316Z on Friday 11th April 2025. Both pilots were operating under VFR in VMC within the Blackpool ATZ and in receipt of an ACS from Blackpool Tower.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from both pilots, radar photographs/video recordings, a report from the air traffic controller involved and a report from the appropriate operating authority. 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 considered the actions of the C152 pilot and noted that the pilot had been returning to Blackpool, had reported east of the Tall Tower VRP as requested and had flown the approach in accordance with procedures and instructions. The Board noted that the C152 pilot had been aware of the C172 from when the C172 pilot had also called east of the Tall Tower but had not been concerned on having heard that the C172 pilot had seen their C152 and had been positioned behind them on the approach. However, members agreed that the C152 pilot had subsequently become concerned about the proximity of the C172 (**CF5**) after having seen the C172 go-around from above their position just prior to landing their C152.

The Board then turned their attention to the actions of the C172 pilot and noted that they had seen the C152 ahead of them at the Tall Tower VRP and, on having been told by ATC that they were to position as number 3 after the C152, had stated that they had been in danger of overtaking it. The Board felt that this had been an opportunity for the C172 pilot to have asked the Blackpool Approach controller for the option to have passed ahead of the C152 instead of being held behind it, and members wondered why the pilot had not specifically asked for this. Members agreed that the C172 pilot had not positioned themselves effectively after being told they were number 3 and should have positioned as such (**CF3**).

¹ (UK) SERA.3205 Proximity.

² (UK) SERA.3225 Operation on and in the Vicinity of an Aerodrome.

The Board noted that the C172 pilot had stated that *'they climbed, to further increase vertical separation, and turned eastward with the intention of adopting a wide right-base position'* after having seen the C152 manoeuvre and pass beneath them, and members discussed the options of orbiting and placing the C172 in a slow safe cruise with one stage of flaps down to create greater lateral separation from the C152, rather than having been in a position that placed them *'on top of'* the C152. Members agreed that, in the event, the C172 pilot had not provided adequate separation between them and the C152 (**CF1**) and that the C172 pilot had not integrated into the circuit pattern already formed by the C152 (**CF2**) having positioned too close to the C152. Members further agreed that the pilot had flown close enough to the C152 as to have caused its pilot concern (**CF4**).

Turning their attention to the actions of the Blackpool Approach controller, the Board noted that the controller had assumed that the C172 pilot had been able to comply with the positioning requested of them because the pilot had said they had been visual with the C152 and would position behind it. Some members wondered if the controller could have asked the pilot to orbit, but agreed that they had been unable to provide such assistance because they had been unable to see the relative positions of the two aircraft from the VCR. The Board also noted that the controller had not passed Traffic Information to either pilot on having asked each of them to report east of the Tall Tower, but agreed that this had not impacted upon the Airprox event.

In concluding their conversation, the Board discussed their disappointment that neither aircraft had been fitted with secondary electronic conspicuity devices and members agreed that this may have improved each of the pilot's situational awareness further, particularly prior to having reached the Tall Tower VRP, rather than having relied upon R/T communications and lookout. Regarding the proximity of the 2 aircraft involved, members agreed that safety had been degraded and that, although the C172 pilot had remained visual with the C152, they had flown too close to the C152 to have achieved a successful completion of their own approach, but had been able to take effective avoiding action by having initiated a go-around. As such, the Board assigned a Risk category C to this event.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

Contributory Factors:

	2025050			
CF	Factor	Description	ECCAIRS Amplification	UKAB Amplification
	Flight Elements			
	• Tactical Planning and Execution			
1	Human Factors	• Insufficient Decision/Plan	Events involving flight crew not making a sufficiently detailed decision or plan to meet the needs of the situation	Inadequate plan adaption
2	Human Factors	• Monitoring of Environment	Events involving flight crew not to appropriately monitoring the environment	Did not avoid/conform with the pattern of traffic already formed
	• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action			
3	Human Factors	• Flight crew response to communications	An event related to the flight crew taking the incorrect action following communication	
	• See and Avoid			
4	Human Factors	• Incorrect Action Selection	Events involving flight crew performing or choosing the wrong course of action	Pilot flew close enough to cause concern
5	Human Factors	• Perception of Visual Information	Events involving flight crew incorrectly perceiving a situation visually and then taking the wrong course of action or path of movement	Pilot was concerned by the proximity of the other aircraft

Degree of Risk: C.

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:

Tactical Planning and Execution was assessed as **ineffective** because the C172 pilot had not allowed sufficient separation from the C152 ahead of them.

Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action were assessed as **partially effective** because the C172 pilot did not position themselves effectively within the landing sequence despite having had situational awareness.

See and Avoid were assessed as **partially effective** because the C172 pilot had flown too close to the C152 (with which they were visual).

Airprox Barrier Assessment: 2025050		Outside Controlled Airspace				
		Provision	Application	Effectiveness		
Barrier				Barrier Weighting		
				0%	5%	10% 15% 20%
Ground Element	Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance	✓	✓	<div><div></div></div>		
	Manning & Equipment	✓	✓	<div><div></div></div>		
	Situational Awareness of the Confliction & Action	✓	✓	<div><div></div></div>		
	Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance	○	○	<div><div></div></div>		
Flight Element	Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance	✓	✓	<div><div></div></div>		
	Tactical Planning and Execution	✓	✗	<div><div></div></div>		
	Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft & Action	✓	⚠	<div><div></div></div>		
	Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance	○	○	<div><div></div></div>		
	See & Avoid	✓	⚠	<div><div></div></div>		
Key:		Full	Partial	None	Not Present/Not Assessable	Not Used
Provision		✓	⚠	✗	○	
Application		✓	⚠	✗	○	□
Effectiveness		■	■	■	■	■

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