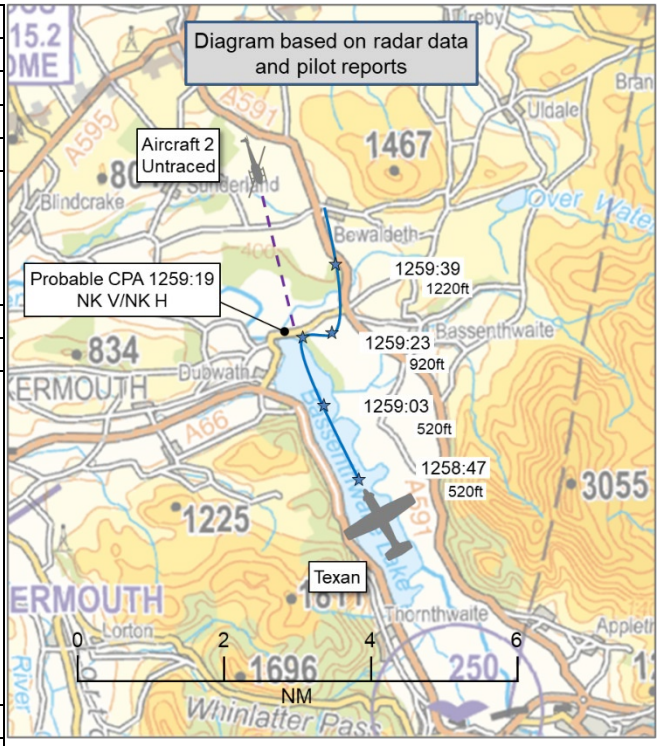
AIRPROX REPORT No 2025212

Date: 26 Sep 2025 Time: 1259Z Position: 5440N 00312W Location: IVO Bassenthwaite Lake

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	Texan	Unk helicopter
Operator	HQ Air (Trg)	Unknown
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	NK
Service	Listening Out	
Provider	LL Common	
Altitude/FL	820ft	
Transponder	A, C, S+	None
Reported		
Colours	Black, yellow	NK
Lighting	HISLs, nav	
Conditions	VMC	
Visibility	>10km	
Altitude/FL	700ft	
Altimeter	RPS (1009hPa)	
Heading	340°	
Speed	240kt	
ACAS/TAS	TCAS I	
Alert	None	
	Separation at CPA	
Reported	0ft V/500ft H	NK
Recorded	NK	



THE TEXAN PILOT reports that, while flying in Low Flying Area (LFA) 17 north of Bassenthwaite, west of Carlisle, initiating a climb-out of low-level to cross the estuary heading north to LFA 20, they had encountered a co-altitude helicopter within 500ft [approaching] head-on, slightly to their left. The front cockpit pilot initiated a break to the right for visual traffic, at which point the rear cockpit pilot was visual with the helicopter. Neither pilot had seen the traffic prior to the break. There was no TCAS contact or alert, and no Low-Level Common frequency calls prior to seeing the traffic. After the break, the rear cockpit pilot put out a call on the Low-Level Common frequency and there had been no response.

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

THE PILOT of the unknown helicopter could not be traced.

Factual Background

The weather at Newcastle and Prestwick Airports was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGNT 261250Z 14011KT 090V190 9999 FEW038 17/07 Q1023=
METAR EGPK 261250Z 14013KT 110V170 9999 FEW028 SCT046 16/08 Q1021=
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Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The Texan was tracked via radar and identified through Mode S data. The pilot was flying VFR low-level, squawking appropriately, monitoring the Low-Level Common frequency (130.490MHz) and had carried a TCAS unit which had unfortunately received no warning indication of the oncoming helicopter. Immediately following the event, the pilot of the Texan had made a call on the Low-Level

Common frequency but had received no response. The second aircraft could not be seen on radar or any of the other tracking sources available to the UKAB Secretariat.

The Texan and untraced 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] If the incident geometry is considered as head-on or nearly so then both pilots were required to turn to the right.[2]

Comments

HQ Air Command

The Texan crew had followed the flow arrow from Grasmere to the north end of Bassenthwaite Lake and had just initiated a climb-out of low-level when they encountered the helicopter travelling in the opposite direction. There was no NOTAMed helicopter activity in the area and, as it was a civilian operator, no route information was available on the Centralised Aviation Data Service (CADS). As a result, the Texan crew was unable to deconflict their sortie from that of the helicopter at the planning stage. The encounter occurred in Class G airspace and, due to the terrain and operating height, it was not practical for the Texan crew to be in receipt of an ATS. Consequentially, they were operating on the Low-Level Common frequency but heard no transmissions from the helicopter [pilot]. The Texan was operating with a serviceable TCAS but the crew received no warning of the helicopter. Fortunately, the front seat pilot's lookout was robust, and they became visual with the helicopter in sufficient time to avoid it by conducting a break to the right. This highlights the importance of maintaining a thorough lookout, as electronic conspicuity is only effective if conflicting aircraft are operating with compatible systems.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a Texan and an untraced helicopter flew into proximity at Bassenthwaite at 1259Z on Friday 26th September 2025. The Texan pilot was operating under VFR in VMC and had been Listening Out on the Low-Level Common radio frequency. Unfortunately, the pilot of the helicopter could not be traced.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of a report from the Texan pilot, radar photographs/video recordings 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.

Members discussed the event as a whole, accepting that the only report received had been from the Texan pilot. They noted that the Texan pilot had been emerging from low-level flying in the local area and had been following a military flow arrow towards the north. Members also noted that the Texan pilot had not been in receipt of a Flight Information Service and accepted that, when operating in this area, the options for such a service are extremely limited and very much altitude-dependent. As the Texan pilot had been at low-level (250ft AGL), no such services were appropriate and the pilot reports as having been utilising the Low-Level (LL) Common frequency (130.490MHz) at that time. They recalled that they had made their last call shortly before CPA and had heard nothing in response to that call. Immediately following the reported event, the Texan pilot had repeated their call and again heard nothing in return. Members discussed the utility of that frequency and recognised that its purpose can often be misunderstood by civilian operators. The Board wished to take the opportunity to remind all that the aim of the Low-Level VHF Common frequency is to mitigate against the risk of mid-air collisions in the UK Low Flying System (UKLFS). Members highlighted that its utility is not solely for use in hilly or mountainous terrain, or for use where military operators may be found, rather, as a robust method of declaring one's own presence and for gathering situational awareness of others in the same area. Given what appears to be a widespread misunderstanding of the utility and purposes of the Low-Level VHF

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

Common frequency amongst civilian pilots, the Board resolved to make a recommendation that '*The CAA considers promoting the existence and use of the Low Level VHF Common frequency to civilian pilots*.

Returning to the event itself, the Board noted that the Texan had carried electronic conspicuity equipment, which in this case had harvested nothing from the oncoming helicopter (**CF2**). The lack of EC input or Flight Information Service had led to the Texan pilot having had no situational awareness of the presence of the oncoming helicopter (**CF1**). The Board felt that it had been fortunate that the Texan pilot had employed a robust lookout discipline and had seen the oncoming helicopter, though at a late stage (**CF3**), which had at least allowed for a hard break right and reversal to avoid it. The Board noted that the Texan pilot had seen no avoiding action from the helicopter pilot.

Concluding their discussion, members turned their attention to the determination of the risk of collision. They noted that the Texan pilot had no advance situational awareness of the presence of the other aircraft and that, having visually acquired the helicopter at a late stage, the Texan pilot had initiated avoiding action thereby reducing the risk of collision. Members consequently agreed that safety margins had been reduced much below the norm and had been in agreement that there had been a risk of collision (**CF4**), assigning a Risk Category B to this event.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

Contributory Factors:

	2025212			
CF	**Factor**	**Description**	**ECCAIRS Amplification**	**UKAB Amplification**
	Flight Elements			
	• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action			
1	Contextual	• Situational Awareness and Sensory Events	Events involving a flight crew's awareness and perception of situations	Pilot had no, late, inaccurate or only generic, Situational Awareness
	• Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance			
2	Technical	• ACAS/TCAS System Failure	An event involving the system which provides information to determine aircraft position and is primarily independent of ground installations	Incompatible CWS equipment
	• See and Avoid			
3	Human Factors	• Identification/ Recognition	Events involving flight crew not fully identifying or recognising the reality of a situation	Late sighting by one or both pilots
	• Outcome Events			
4	Contextual	• Near Airborne Collision with Aircraft	An event involving a near collision by an aircraft with an aircraft, balloon, dirigible or other piloted air vehicles	

Degree of Risk: B.

Recommendation: The CAA considers promoting the existence and use of the Low Level VHF Common frequency to civilian pilots.

Safety Barrier Assessment[3]

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

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

Flight Elements:

Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action were assessed as **ineffective** because the Texan pilot had no situational awareness of the presence of the untraced helicopter.

Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance were assessed as **ineffective** because, although the Texan was equipped with an electronic conspicuity unit, it had not received any electronic emissions from the untraced helicopter.

See and Avoid were assessed as **partially effective** because the Texan pilot achieved only a late sighting of the oncoming helicopter.