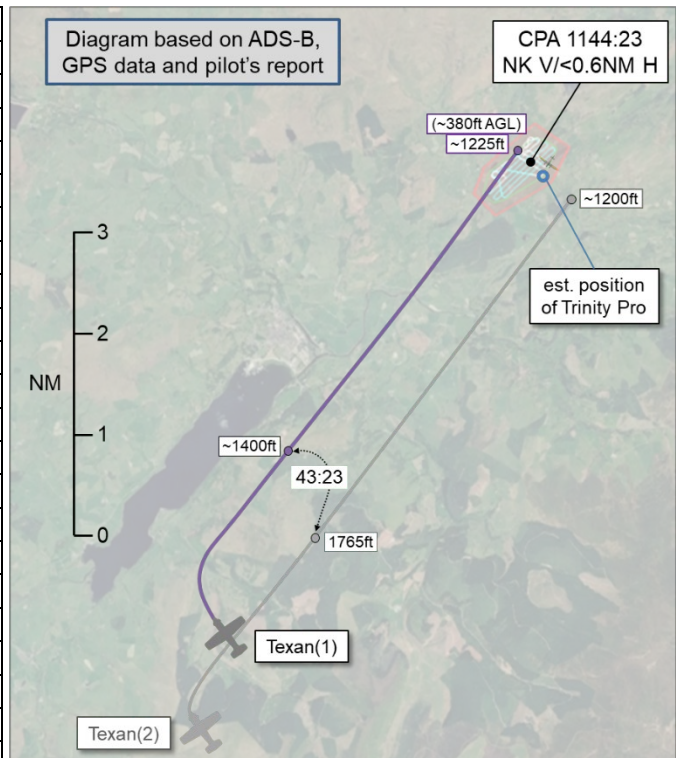


**AIRPROX REPORT No 2026015**

Date: 03 Mar 2026 Time: 1144Z Position: 5256N 00332W Location: 2.5NM NE of Bala

**PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB**

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	Trinity Pro	Texan(1)
Operator	Civ UAS (SPEC CAT)	HQ Air (Trg)
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VLOS	VFR
Service	None	Listening Out
Provider	N/A	LL Common
Altitude	NK	~1225ft
Transponder	Not fitted	A, C, S+
<b>Reported</b>		
Colours	Dark grey	Black and yellow
Lighting	Strobes and nav	Ldg, nav & strbs.
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	<5km	>10km
Height	328ft AGL	350ft AGL
Altimeter	NK	RPS (1024hPa)
Heading	045°	050°
Speed	35kt	240kt
ACAS/TAS	Not fitted	TCAS I
Alert	N/A	None
	<b>Separation at CPA</b>	
Reported	0ft V/NK H	Not seen
Recorded	NK V/<0.6NM H	



**THE TRINITY PRO PILOT** reports that two aircraft visually went either side of their UAS at a barometric altitude of approximately 1200ft. The elevation of the site is 846ft and the UAS was terrain following at a height of 328ft, thus their GPS altitude was 1174ft. Depending on the QNH at the time, this could have placed all three aircraft at a similar height.

They were operating under their Operating Safety Case (OSC) for visual line of sight (VLOS) flights to 1km which required two fully trained remote pilots. The pilot in command can take over manual flight of the UAS if required and maintain VLOS of the UAS. The second remote pilot monitors the UAS flight information (motor temperatures, signal strength, distance, heading, pitch and roll on an artificial horizon indicator, true and apparent windspeed and direction, and the location of the UAS in relation to its planned flight legs) in the flight control software. The second remote pilot also monitors any ADS-B In transmissions on [aircraft tracking software] and acts as the airspace observer. The aircraft is never flown by just one person.

Their Take-Off and Landing Point (TOLP) was chosen to afford the greatest 360° situational awareness of the survey area and airspace. Although the second remote pilot informed them that two aircraft were over Bala (and, at the time, at an altitude of 900ft) and heading towards them, their speed (250kt) was so fast that they had no time to consider any evading action.

The drone flight log indicated that the flight started at 1140:51 with a duration of 469sec. The two aircraft passed by towards the end of the flight. They [the drone pilot] activated Return-To-Home (RTH) on the UAS immediately after the incident and rang [a nearby military training airfield] and agreed that they would undertake the flight either after their flights finished (1745) or before they started the following day (0745), which is what they did.

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

**THE TEXAN(1) PILOT** reports that the formation [crew] unknowingly flew close to a drone operating at 3NM north of Bala. Neither aircraft [pilot] saw the drone, which was not visible on the HUD tape review. [They added that] they had a low workload with two pilots looking out. There was no NOTAM, CADS submission or [other information] published to notify them of this activity.

[They noted that] this is a timely reminder that drones can be operating up to 400ft without a NOTAM.

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

**Factual Background**

The weather at Hawarden Airport was recorded as follows:

METAR EGNR 031150Z 11004KT 050V170 9999 FEW025 10/05 Q1028

**Analysis and Investigation**

**Texan Operating Authority**

Summary: The Texan pilots were interviewed (see narrative above).

**Findings**

An Airprox was filed by the drone operator due to the proximity of the Texan formation. Having not sighted the drone, the crews were unaware of any drone activity. This is a reminder to crews to maintain effective lookout at all times, especially when operating at low level.

Drones are permitted to operate up to 400ft AGL in the UK without filing a NOTAM. Thus, the crews were unaware of the drone activity and flew through the operating area. If operating at 250ft, effective lookout is the only barrier.

**UKAB Secretariat**

An analysis of the NATS radar replay was undertaken and the Texan pair was detected using Mode S data. The Texan pair was seen to have turned towards the Trinity Pro drone's area of operation at 1143:32 (Figure 1), after which they were no longer visible on radar until after 1147, and to the north of the position of the reported Airprox.

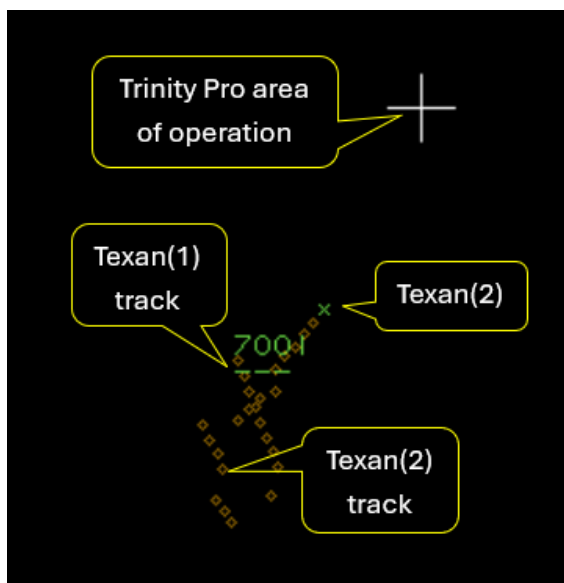


Figure 1 – Time 1143:32

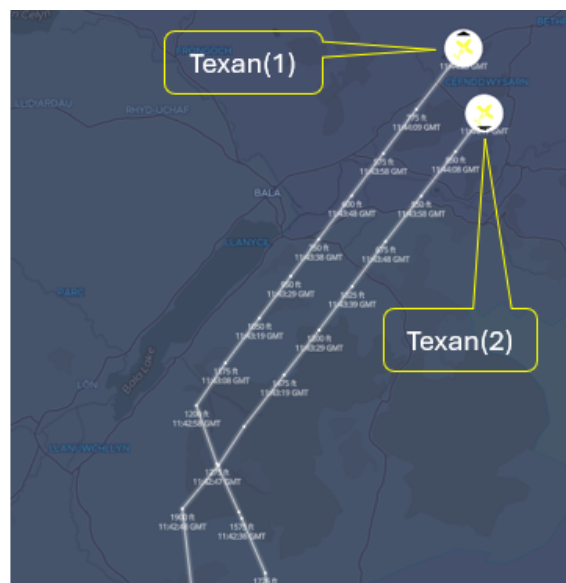


Figure 2 – Time 1144:23

Further analysis of third-party aircraft tracking software was undertaken and the Texan pair was detected using ADS-B data. The pair was seen to enter to the Trinity Pro's area of operation at 1144:23 (Figure 2).

CPA was assessed to have been at 1144:23 with a lateral separation of less than 0.6NM and vertical separation unknown.

The Trinity Pro and Texan pilots shared an equal responsibility for collision avoidance and not to operate in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard.<sup>1</sup> During the flight, the remote pilot shall avoid any risk of collision with any manned aircraft and discontinue a flight when continuing it may pose a risk to other aircraft, people, animals, environment or property.<sup>2</sup>

## Occurrence Investigation

### Trinity Pro Company Manager Review

[The review included the Trinity Pro pilot's initial report, drone data, FR24 and site survey area screenshots].

Findings of the Review and Modifications to Training and Flight Operations:

The UAS was being flown below 400ft and within 1km VLOS and did not require a NOTAM to be issued (flights above 400ft and BVLOS-VM<sup>3</sup> do require a NOTAM). No NOTAM affecting the survey area was shown during the flight planning for this flight during the day before as shown in [the company's Pre-Deployment Information Pack]. If this had been a rotor-craft UAS, the Pilot-in-Command could have rapidly descended as soon as the two Texan aircraft changed course towards the survey area. As this was a fixed-wing aircraft, this option was not available and the speed of the Texans meant the Pilot-in-Command had no time to decide an alternative course of action.

Following this [Company] review, it is recommended that all fixed-wing UAS flights shall be subject to a NOTAM as the aircraft cannot rapidly descend. Whilst a NOTAM does not guarantee deconfliction, the military and other government aircraft [pilots] are known to look at NOTAMs before deploying and it may have initiated communication between RAF Valley and the Pilot-in-Command (as it has in the past with RAF Valley).

It is also recommended that the CAA is contacted and a request made for a permanent licence to operate the Ping-20's ADS-B out/Mode-S transponder that [the Trinity Pro] carries (as opposed to the Test and Evaluation license currently held). The Mode-S transponder may have been visible on the Texan's TCAS.

This information is to be shared both verbally and in writing within the company (including the outcomes of any Airprox Board Meeting).

## Comments

### HQ Air Command

The crews of the two Texans had planned thoroughly and briefed their route in detail before launching from RAF Valley. They had checked all NOTAMs, CALFs and PINS notifications and had entered their route in CADS to ensure deconfliction with other Low Level airspace users. Despite this, they still came close to a small UAS during their sortie, and it is concerning, but not surprising, that none of the pilots in either Texan(1) or Texan(2) saw the Trinity Pro drone, given its small size. While HQ AIR is grateful that the Trinity Pro operator took steps to contact the MOD (RAF Valley)

<sup>1</sup> (UK) SERA.3205 Proximity. MAA RA 2307 paragraphs 1 and 2.

<sup>2</sup> Assimilated Regulation (EU) 2019/947- UAS.SPEC.060 Responsibilities of the remote pilot (3)(b)

<sup>3</sup> BVLOS - Beyond Visual Line of Sight. VM - Visual Mitigation.

to notify other airspace users of their activity after the encounter, it would have been favourable if they had taken the same steps prior to starting their survey operations, as that may have reduced the risk of a Loss of Safe Separation, given that this area is very frequently used by military training aircraft (based at Valley) for Low Flying practice; if the Texan crews had known of the Trinity Pro activity they could have planned to avoid the area where the event took place thus eliminating the risk of collision.

## Summary

An Airprox was reported when a Trinity Pro drone and a Texan pair flew into proximity 2.5NM northeast of Bala at 1144Z on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026. The Trinity Pro pilot was operating in the Specific Category under VLOS in VMC, not in receipt of a FIS. The Texan pilot was operating under VFR in VMC utilising the Low-Level Common frequency.

## **PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS**

Information available consisted of reports from both pilots, the GPS survey area from the Trinity Pro 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.

The Board first considered the actions of the Trinity Pro pilot and noted that they had been performing an aerial survey flight under VLOS in an area known to them as a military Low Flying Area (LFA). Members noted that the drone operation had also required an observer who had been using flight tracking software to assist with their lookout. The Board was satisfied that the pilot had had a visual back-up but no aural assistance in the form of an Airband radio and, although members acknowledged that the observer would not likely be in possession of a FRTOL, the observer could maybe also have benefitted from listening out on the Low-Level Common frequency. Members noted that the pilot had been informed by their observer about the Texans over Bala, but that this had been too late notice for the pilot to have descended the Trinity Pro prior to having seen the Texan pair passing either side of it, effectively a non-sighting (**CF4**, **CF6**). On discussing the handling characteristics of the Trinity Pro, members accepted that the Return To Home (RTH) function on this drone would not allow it to descend quickly in the same way that most rotary or VTOL drones would. One member considered the possibility that the pilot could have taken manual control of the drone and placed it into an emergency descent away from the Texans instead. However, it had already been acknowledged that there had been insufficient time to have allowed for any such action. The Board noted that, following the Airprox, the pilot had considered contacting the nearest military operators to let them know that they were operating in the area and ask about the low flying military activity. Members acknowledged that the Trinity Pro pilot had followed procedures correctly, and that the pilot had neither been required to have filed a NOTAM nor to have contacted any specific military operators on this occasion, although the Board agreed that it may have been helpful for the Trinity Pro pilot to have informed the Military Airspace Management Cell, Low Flying Coordinator (MAMC LFC)<sup>4</sup> (**CF2**), who would have, in turn, added the drone operation into the Centralised Aviation Data Service (CADS). The Board was pleased to learn that the operator's company policy was to be changed for the Trinity Pro to have its operations notified to both CADs and by NOTAM, although members stated that any drone operation notification at or below 400ft AGL may not be accepted in the NOTAM system. The Board further considered that it would have been useful for the Trinity Pro pilot to have made use of the drone's transponder during their operation, which would likely have been detected by the Texan's EC equipment, but that this had been turned off (**CF3**). While members acknowledged that company procedures and licensing had not allowed for the use of the transponder except for test and evaluation purposes, the Board felt that the procedures imposed upon the company had adversely affected mid-air collision mitigations in this instance (**CF1**).

Moving their attention to the Texan pilot, the Board noted that the crews had checked all available pre-flight notifications and that there had been no information or situational awareness on the position or presence of the Trinity Pro's survey area (**CF4**). Members agreed that, under the circumstances, the

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<sup>4</sup> The MAMC LFC accept 24hrs notice at [SWK-MAMCLFCOORD@mod.gov.uk](mailto:SWK-MAMCLFCOORD@mod.gov.uk) (preferred) or contact on:01489 443100

Texan’s EC equipment had been unable to detect the Trinity Pro and the pilot had not seen it during their sortie (**CF5, CF6**).

Bringing their discussion to a close, members agreed that neither the Texan pilot nor the Trinity Pro pilot had had situational awareness of the other aircraft, and that the Texan pilot had not seen the Trinity Pro nor had the Trinity Pro pilot seen the Texan pair until too late to react. While some members had felt that safety had been much reduced (risk B), overall, the Board agreed that, while safety had been degraded, there had been adequate lateral separation (~0.6NM) between Texan(1) and the drone. As such, the Board assigned Risk Category C to this event.

**PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK**

Contributory Factors:

2026015				
CF	Factor	Description	ECCAIRS Amplification	UKAB Amplification
<b>Flight Elements</b>				
<b>• Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance</b>				
1	Organisational	• Flight Operations Documentation and Publications	Flight Operations Documentation and Publications	Inadequate regulations or procedures
<b>• Tactical Planning and Execution</b>				
2	Human Factors	• Accuracy of Communication	Events involving flight crew using inaccurate communication - wrong or incomplete information provided	Ineffective communication of intentions
3	Human Factors	• Transponder Selection and Usage	An event involving the selection and usage of transponders	
<b>• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action</b>				
4	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
<b>• Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance</b>				
5	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
<b>• See and Avoid</b>				
6	Human Factors	• Monitoring of Other Aircraft	Events involving flight crew not fully monitoring another aircraft	Non-sighting or effectively a non-sighting by one or both pilots

Degree of Risk: C.

Safety Barrier Assessment<sup>5</sup>

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

**Flight Elements:**

**Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance** were assessed as **partially effective** because the Trinity Pro operator’s use of transponder equipment had been prevented by policy.

**Tactical Planning and Execution** was assessed as **partially effective** because the drone operator could have informed the MAMC LF of their activities and made use of their transponder, had they been permitted to do so.

<sup>5</sup> The UK Airprox Board scheme for assessing the Availability, Functionality and Effectiveness of safety barriers can be found on the [UKAB Website](#).

**Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action** were assessed as **ineffective** because neither the Trinity Pro operator nor the Texan pilots had situational awareness of the other aircraft.

**Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance** were assessed as **ineffective** because the Texan's electronic conspicuity equipment was unable to detect the Trinity Pro.

**See and Avoid** were assessed as **ineffective** because the Texan pilot had not seen the Trinity Pro and the Trinity Pro pilot had not seen the Texan formation until it was too late to take avoiding action.

<b>Airprox Barrier Assessment: 2026015</b>		Outside Controlled Airspace						
<b>Barrier</b>		<b>Provision</b>	<b>Application</b>	<b>Effectiveness</b>				
				<b>Barrier Weighting</b>				
				0%	5%	10%	15%	20%
<b>Ground Element</b>	Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance	●	●					
	Manning & Equipment	●	●					
	Situational Awareness of the Conflicting & Action	●	●					
	Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance	●	●					
<b>Flight Element</b>	Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance	●	●					
	Tactical Planning and Execution	●	●					
	Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft & Action	●	●					
	Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance	●	●					
	See & Avoid	●	●					
<b>Key:</b>		<b>Full</b>	<b>Partial</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Not Present/Not Assessable</b>	<b>Not Used</b>		
Provision	●	●	●	●				
Application	●	●	●	●	○			
Effectiveness	■	■	■	■	□			