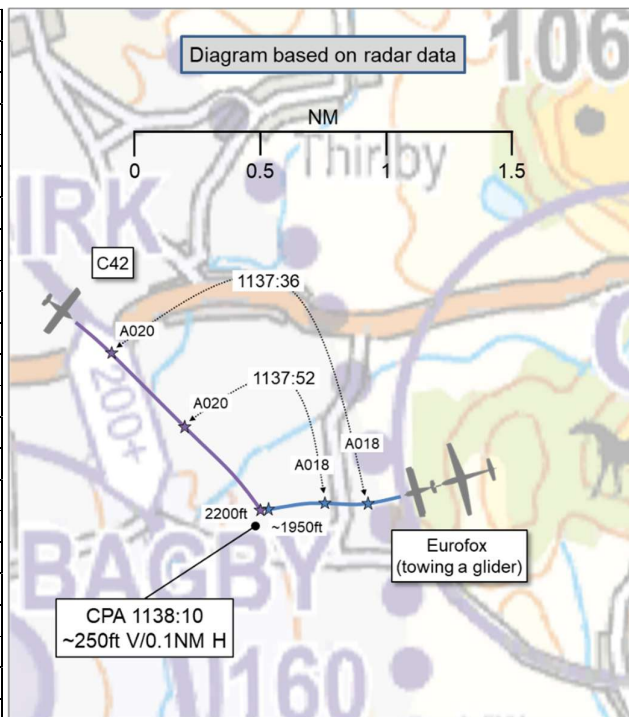


**AIRPROX REPORT No 2026020**

Date: 14 Mar 2026 Time: 1138Z Position: 5413N 00115W Location: 1.5NM W Sutton Bank

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

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	Eurofox	C42
Operator	Civ FW	Civ FW
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	VFR
Service	None	Listening Out
Provider	N/A	Leeming LARS
Altitude/FL	~1950ft	2200ft
Transponder	A, C, S	A, C, S+
<b>Reported</b>		
Colours	Yellow	White
Lighting	Landing, nav	Nav, strobe
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	>10km	5-10km
Altitude/FL	1100ft	NK
Altimeter	QFE	QFE (995hPa)
Heading	250°	150°
Speed	75kt	80kt
ACAS/TAS	FLARM	PilotAware
Alert	None	None
	<b>Separation at CPA</b>	
Reported	100ft V/100m H	500ft V/500ft H
Recorded	~250ft V/0.1NM H	



**THE EUROFOX PILOT** reports that, when towing an ASK21 glider from Sutton Bank, squawking 0034, a white high-wing aircraft, heading approximately south, was seen in their 10 o'clock [they recall, at a reported range of 0.5NM]. A slow turn (because they had a glider on-tow) was commenced to pass behind the other aircraft. The glider instructor also saw other aircraft and warned them by radio just after the turn commenced. The tow then continued normally. The other aircraft appeared to be avoiding the Topcliffe MATZ.

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

**THE C42 PILOT** reports that the airspace in use was Class G. They observed a gliding tug/tow operation near Sutton Bank, with the tow ascending from below and on their port side, in proximity to Sutton Bank (first sighted at approximately 200-300m). They were squawking 7000 and did not hear any radio calls from the tug pilot during the event.

On noticing the tow, they conducted an immediate scan of relative positions, altitudes, and potential closing speeds. They estimate the horizontal separation approached 200-300m at the closest point, with the tug/tow ascending from below and to their port side. The terrain on the Bank can reduce visual cues, increasing the challenge of maintaining situational awareness. They remained vigilant, continually monitoring for surrounding traffic and visual cues, cross-checking with their altimeter and VSI to maintain awareness of vertical relationships.

They initiated a substantial turn to starboard to increase both lateral and vertical separation, and to improve visibility of the tow. The manoeuvre was executed promptly and decisively to preclude any potential conflict, while maintaining a stable flightpath appropriate to the airspace and conditions. They continued to monitor the tow's position visually and, where possible, via available instruments, ensuring their trajectory did not destabilize the aircraft or impose unnecessary risk.

At no point did they perceive an imminent collision threat, or unsafe condition, requiring emergency action beyond the described starboard manoeuvre. They judged the achieved separation post-manoeuve to be sufficient given the altitudinal and positional relationships and the gliding/tow operation's likely flightpath. They actively considered environmental context (terrain shading and potential visual limitations) in their decision to turn and maintain separation.

No radio calls from the tug pilot were heard during the encounter. They were monitoring 133.380MHz (Leeming LARS). They understand that the tug pilot may have been using the Sutton A/G [frequency] (118.665MHz). In the absence of explicit radio coordination, they relied on visual scanning, standard right-of-way considerations, and defensive flying practices to avoid a conflict.

Although they do not have a GPS log for this local flight, their awareness of the environment, and their proactive manoeuvre, ensured that the encounter was managed safely. They remained clear of the tug and glider at all times and monitored them until the distance [from] them increased sufficiently.

They recognise the importance of prompt communication in shared airspace and would welcome a debrief from the tug operator to gain their perspective and to improve cross-traffic awareness. Going forward, they will review known traffic patterns around Felixkirk/Sutton Bank and consider explicit pre-takeoff checks of expected traffic activity, particularly during gliding operations in that area. They will ensure more robust radio monitoring in this area, where practical, to reduce reliance solely on visual cues.

In conclusion, they acted with appropriate situational awareness and applied standard collision-avoidance procedures by executing a prompt starboard turn to increase separation. They did not perceive any imminent danger or unsafe condition during the encounter. They are committed to ongoing adherence to best practices for traffic awareness in busy gliding/tow operations zones and to participate in any follow-up debrief to aid safety in this airspace.

The pilot assessed the risk of collision as 'None'.

## Factual Background

The entry for RAF Leeming in the UK AIP (ENR 1.6, paragraph 4.1.6)

4.1.6 ATS Units Participating in the Lower Airspace Radar

Unit	Position	Frequency (MHz)/Channel	Service Radius (NM)	Availability/ Remarks
Leeming	541733N 0013207W	133.380	30	Mon-Thu 0800-1800 (0700-1700), Fri 0800-1700 (0700-1600).

The weather at RAF Leeming was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGXE 141120Z AUTO 31015KT 9999 FEW039/// 09/01 Q1003
METAR EGXE 141150Z AUTO 31012KT 9999 NCD 09/M00 Q1003
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## Analysis and Investigation

### UKAB Secretariat

An analysis of the NATS radar replay was undertaken and both aircraft could be positively identified from Mode S data. The aircraft were depicted as having flown at Flight Levels and a suitable correction was applied to determine their altitudes. The C42, but not the Eurofox, could be observed by reference to ADS-B data sources.

The diagram was constructed and the separation at CPA determined from the radar data. The moment of CPA was assessed to have occurred between the radar sweeps at 1138:08 and 1138:12 (Figures 1 and 2). The altitude of the Eurofox has been shown as an estimate as it had been at 1900ft 2sec before CPA and at 2000ft 2sec after CPA.

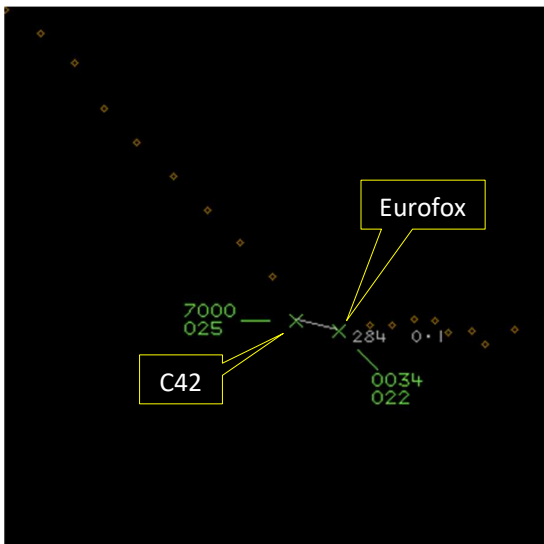


Figure 1 - 1138:08 (2sec before CPA)

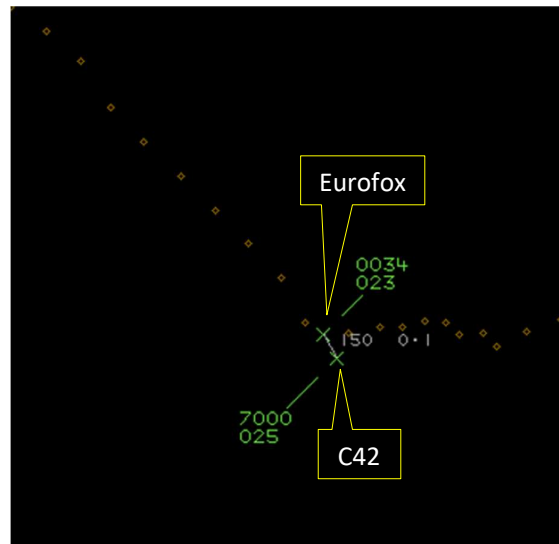


Figure 2 - 1138:12 (2sec after CPA)

The Eurofox and C42 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> If the incident geometry is considered as converging then the C42 pilot was required to give way to the Eurofox.<sup>2</sup>

## Comments

### AOPA

Yet again, the lack of compatibility of electronic conspicuity equipment has removed a safety barrier for the avoidance of mid-air collision in Class G airspace. It is hoped that the DfT and CAA take note of the data available to ensure compatibility of electronic devices when they announce their recommendations in a few years' time, hopefully before a mid-air collision occurs.

### BGA

The C42 pilot is to be commended for their comprehensive report and stated commitment to maintaining flight safety. They did make responsible efforts to avoid flying immediately adjacent to neighbouring airfields, but the operations using the Eurofox as a tow plane were sufficiently far away from its base airfield that the Airprox nevertheless occurred.

The airspace is, as noted, Class G and it is not clear why it is not annotated 'Area of Intense Gliding Activity'. The club operating the Eurofox is one of the larger and more active establishments within the BGA. We recommend, along with the club, that such a legend is added to the 1:500,000 chart at the earliest opportunity.

The C42 and aerotow combination approached each other in wings-level flight at a closing speed of 100-120kt for at least 90sec prior to CPA. During this period, each would have been on a near-constant bearing relative to the other's heading. The difficulties of sighting an approaching aircraft that appears stationary in a pilot's field of view under these circumstances are well-known.

The C42 pilot might have taken steps to coordinate with the gliding operations by calling on the published gliding airfield frequency – perhaps more appropriate than just listening on the Leeming LARS frequency outside its hours of operation (14<sup>th</sup> March was a Saturday).

<sup>1</sup> (UK) SERA.3205 Proximity.

<sup>2</sup> (UK) SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(2) Converging.

The EC devices fitted to the Eurofox and to the glider-on-tow use SRD860<sup>3</sup> frequencies for detection of what is, statistically, the primary threat to their operations: other gliders and towplanes. They do not detect the incompatible SRD860 emissions from the C42's EC equipment or the ADS-B transmissions from its transponder. Recent versions of the Eurofox's EC equipment can optionally include a 1090MHz receiver and thereby warn of conflicts with transponder and ADS-B-out equipped aircraft. Updating glider and towplane EC hardware to include a 1090MHz receiver provides a useful additional safety barrier in airspace with a high density of transponder or ADS-B-out equipped aircraft. Such capability might be considered when the EC fit in the operating club's gliders and towplanes is reviewed. Similarly, the C42's EC device will not detect the SRD860 transmissions from the Eurofox directly, but it should (if the licence fee has been paid) receive relayed transmissions via ground stations. There appear to be such ground stations in range of the incident location.

## Summary

An Airprox was reported when a Eurofox and a C42 flew into proximity 1.5NM west of Sutton Bank at 1138Z on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2026. The Eurofox pilot was operating under VFR in VMC, not in receipt of a FIS. The C42 pilot was operating under VFR in VMC, listening out on the Leeming LARS frequency.

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

Information available consisted of reports from both pilots 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 pilot of the Eurofox, and a member with particular experience of gliding operations explained that towing a glider requires careful judgement, gentle action on the flight controls and an avoidance of any abrupt manoeuvres.

Members agreed that the EC device fitted to the Eurofox would not have been expected to have detected the presence of the C42 (**CF3**). Nevertheless, it was noted that the Eurofox pilot had visually acquired the C42 at a reported range of 0.5NM. Having appreciated the reduced manoeuvrability of the Eurofox-ASK21 combination, members agreed that that constituted a late sighting (**CF5**) although noted that they had taken positive action to have increased the separation.

Turning their attention to the actions of the pilot of the C42, it was noted that they had tuned their radio to the Leeming LARS frequency. Members reviewed the entry for RAF Leeming in the UK AIP (ENR 1.6, paragraph 4.1.6 ATS units participating in the Lower Airspace Radar Service) and noted that the service had not been available. It was therefore agreed that to have maintained a listening watch on that frequency would not have provided the best picture of the traffic situation.

Members noted that there had not been a common frequency in use by the pilots. However, it was agreed that they had each had generic awareness of the likelihood to have encountered traffic in their vicinity (as several small airfields are located within a small geographic area), but they had not had specific situational awareness of the other aircraft (**CF2**). Given that the pilot of the C42 had planned to navigate within a mile or so of Sutton Bank, members agreed that it may have been prudent to have telephoned Sutton Bank before their flight to have announced their intentions, or to have made a call on the Sutton Bank frequency for the same purpose (**CF1**). It was suggested that, had they done so, they may have gleaned specific awareness of the gliding operation which, in turn, may have informed their choice of routing.

One member pointed out that VFR navigation charts are marked with 'Intense Glider Activity' in the vicinity of major gliding areas (such as Lasham, for example). Another member suggested that airspace marked on VFR charts as an 'Area of Intense Aerial Activity' (as described in UK AIP ENR 5.2) would suffice to provide a caution for intense activity of all aircraft types. In response, the Yeovilton AIAA was

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<sup>3</sup> 'SRD860' refers to a frequency band designated for low-power radio communication and is used by proprietary EC devices.

highlighted as it contains an area of 'Intense Glider Activity' within its bounds (near The Park gliding site). Therefore, members wondered why the Vale of York AIAA (which includes Sutton Bank within its bounds) does not include a specific caution for an area of 'Intense Glider Activity' in the vicinity of Sutton Bank. [Post-meeting note: The UKAB Secretariat has engaged with the CAA to understand the mechanisms for the inclusion of labels such as 'AIAA' and 'Intense Gliding Activity' on VFR charts. At the time of publication of this report, this engagement remains ongoing. Once concluded, the information gleaned will be shared with the appropriate Board members.]

Members agreed that the EC device fitted to the C42 would have been expected to have provided an alert to the presence of the Eurofox, but no alert was reported (**CF4**). Nevertheless, it was noted that the C42 pilot had sighted the Eurofox and had turned approximately 10° to the right in response. Whilst it was appreciated that the pilot of the C42 had taken action to have increased the separation, members agreed that they had, perhaps, not fully appreciated the risk of navigating close to Sutton Bank. Members agreed that they had flown close enough to the Eurofox to have caused its pilot concern (**CF6**).

Concluding their discussion, members agreed that safety margins had been reduced but, ultimately, both pilots had taken action to have resolved the situation. The Board was satisfied that there had not been a risk of collision and assigned Risk Category C to this event.

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

### Contributory Factors:

	2026020			
CF	Factor	Description	ECCAIRS Amplification	UKAB Amplification
<b>Flight Elements</b>				
<b>• Tactical Planning and Execution</b>				
1	Human Factors	• Accuracy of Communication	Events involving flight crew using inaccurate communication - wrong or incomplete information provided	Ineffective communication of intentions
<b>• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action</b>				
2	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>				
3	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
4	Human Factors	• Response to Warning System	<del>An event involving the incorrect response of flight crew following the operation of an aircraft warning system</del>	CWS misinterpreted, not optimally actioned or CWS alert expected but none reported
<b>• See and Avoid</b>				
5	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
6	Human Factors	• Lack of Individual Risk Perception	Events involving flight crew not fully appreciating the risk of a particular course of action	Pilot flew close enough to cause concern

Degree of Risk: C.

### Safety Barrier Assessment<sup>4</sup>

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

<sup>4</sup> The UK Airprox Board scheme for assessing the Availability, Functionality and Effectiveness of safety barriers can be found on the [UKAB Website](#).

**Flight Elements:**

**Tactical Planning and Execution** was assessed as **partially effective** because it may have been prudent for the pilot of the C42 to have announced on the Sutton Bank frequency their intention to navigate close to Sutton Bank.

**Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action** were assessed as **ineffective** because both pilots had generic situational awareness of the proximity of nearby airfields, but had not had specific situational awareness of the presence of the other aircraft.

**Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance** were assessed as **ineffective** because the EC device fitted to the Eurofox would not have been expected to have detected the presence of the C42. The EC device fitted to the C42 would have been expected to have detected the emissions from the Eurofox, but no alert was reported.

<b>Airprox Barrier Assessment: 2026020</b>		Outside Controlled Airspace						
Barrier	Provision	Application	Effectiveness					
			Barrier Weighting					
			0%	5%	10%	15%	20%	
Ground Element	Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance	●	●					
	Manning & Equipment	●	●					
	Situational Awareness of the Conflicting & Action	●	●					
	Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance	●	●					
Flight Element	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>								
	Full	Partial	None	Not Present/Not Assessable	Not Used			
Provision	●	●	●	●				
Application	●	●	●	●	○			
Effectiveness	■	■	■	■	□			