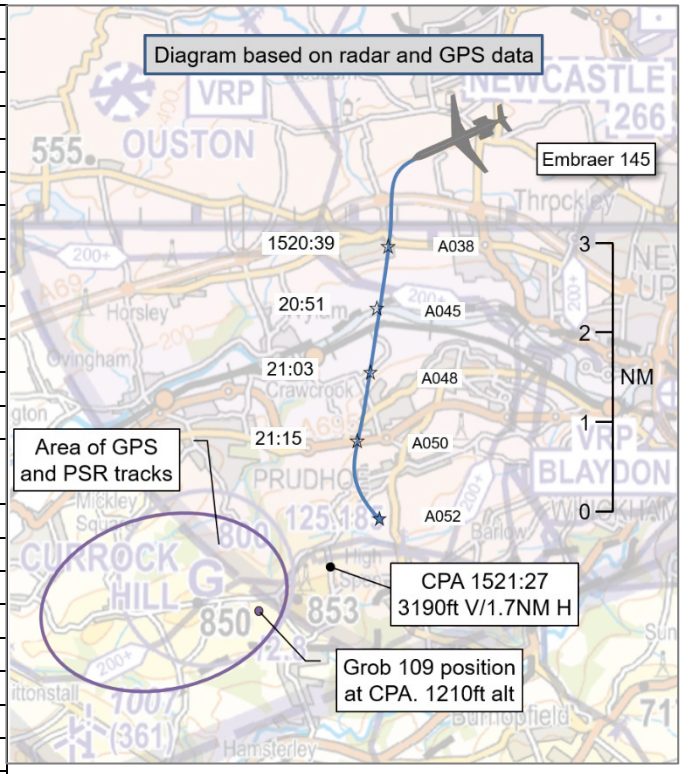
AIRPROX REPORT No 2026111

Date: 08 Jun 2026 Time: 1521Z Position: 5456N 00138W Location: 1NM E Currock Hill

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	Embraer 145	Grob109
Operator	CAT	Civ Gld
Airspace	Newcastle CTR	London FIR
Class	D	G
Rules	IFR	VFR
Service	ACS	Listening Out
Provider	Newcastle	Currock Hill
Altitude/FL	FL053 (5200ft)	1210ft
Transponder	A, C, S	Off
ADS-B Out	Observed	Not observed
Reported		
Colours	White/black/pattern	White
Lighting	Land/taxi, nav, anti-col, HISL	Nav, strobe, land
Conditions	VMC	VMC
Visibility	>10km	>10km
Altitude/FL	4000ft	~600ft
Altimeter	QNH (1009hPa)	QFE (NK hPa)
Heading	200°	~270°
Speed	210kt	60kt
ACAS/TAS	TCAS II	Not fitted
Alert	None	N/A
	Separation at CPA	
Reported	Not seen	Not seen
Recorded	3190ft V/1.7NM H	



THE NEWCASTLE CONTROLLER reports that [the Embraer pilot] requested departure clearance shortly after the ATCO had taken the handover and assumed responsibility for the Aerodrome Control position. Due to sickness absence, no ATSO was available to provide normal operational support. The gliding site [Currock Hill] was active and aircraft were required to depart via the non-standard GIRLI1Y departure. This information was contained within the Electronic Flight Progress Strip (EFPS) clearance field; however, the ATCO issued the routine GIRLI3X departure. The flight crew read back the clearance and subsequently departed in accordance with it. Following departure, the ATCO recognised the confliction with the gliding area and issued avoiding action. Consequently, [the Embraer] entered the 0.5NM buffer zone established for the protection of outbound traffic and reached the edge of the [Currock Hill] area whilst a primary contact was operating within the gliding area. The minimum observed distance between the two contacts reduced to approximately 2NM, resulting in a potential loss of separation. During subsequent communication with [the Radar controller], the flight crew advised that they had recorded GIRLI3X as their clearance and noted that the usual ATIS advisory regarding the active gliding site had not been broadcast. The occurrence was caused by the ATCO failing to read and apply the departure SID displayed within the EFPS clearance field, resulting in the issue of an incorrect SID. Consequently, [the Embraer] penetrated the protected buffer zone and reached the edge of the [Currock Hill] segregated gliding area, resulting in a potential loss of separation with a primary contact operating within the gliding area. The minimum observed distance between the two contacts reduced to 2NM. Contributory factors included expectation bias towards the routinely issued SID (GIRLI3X), elevated workload associated with a congested frequency, the recent position handover, combined GMC and Aerodrome Control, the absence of ATSO support due to sickness, and insufficient organisational mitigations. The LOA clearly establishes the buffer zone as a protective measure, but it does not necessarily establish a formal separation standard between IFR traffic and gliders.

THE EMBRAER 145 PILOT reports that, having previously been based at Newcastle, they were familiar with the different SIDs in use, depending upon gliding activity at Currock Hill. Such activity was normally promulgated on the ATIS but on the day in question (a Monday), this was not present. As a semi-active glider pilot (although not at Currock Hill) but having friends and former colleagues who do fly there, they were also aware that its operation is 'normally' confined to weekends and Wednesdays. For this reason the most-commonly assigned SID is the GIRLI3X and, on a Monday without anything on the ATIS to challenge the assumption, that is what they were expecting. The First Officer was relatively new to the company and less familiar with operations at Newcastle, so perhaps less susceptible to expectation bias. Both pilots were 'in the loop' and wearing headsets when the clearance was issued. RP recorded it on the PLOG, while LP set the SSR code in the transponder and the cleared level in the Flight Guidance System. Upon lining up, the preceding aircraft was seen to depart ahead and they recalled thinking that it turned further left than they expected it to for the GIRLI3X [SID]; it crossed their mind that they may have been on the GIRLI1Y. For whatever reason, they didn't say anything, perhaps because they hadn't heard their clearance and it was possible they may have been on a non-SID departure which can happen at Newcastle. This was further confirmed by the absence of gliding activity reported on the ATIS and the normal operating days in the back of their mind. A last failed opportunity to prevent the final hole in the Swiss Cheese lining up. Shortly after the initial turn on the SID, [an] avoiding action instruction [was] issued by ATC "due entering gliding area". LP took control to expedite the action, disconnected the autopilot and increased angle of bank to approximately 40°. Although daytime VMC […]prevailed, the instruction was issued at the point of passing through a layer of scattered cumulus. No other traffic was observed visually nor on TCAS. They were advised shortly afterwards that they should have flown the GIRLI1Y SID due to the gliding site being active. At this point it was not known whether an incorrect clearance had been issued or whether expectation bias may have led them to assume the more usual GIRLI3X SID. The event was reported initially via the company Air Safety Reporting System, which initiated a correspondence between the company and ATC at Newcastle, the feedback from which [was as follows]: 'It appears the incorrect SID was included in the clearance issued by the controller. The discrepancy was identified by the Tower controller when the aircraft did not track the SID as expected. There was a primary-only contact within the gliding site, and the avoiding action issued gained separation by routeing the aircraft away from that contact. The aircraft did not enter the gliding site itself, only the surrounding buffer area at approximately 5000ft. Given the rate of climb, it's likely the aircraft would have cleared the site vertically (5500ft), however, the altitude of the primary only contact could not be verified.'. As to possible ways of reducing the likelihood of a further occurrence, perhaps a positive gliding site active or inactive statement on the ATIS may be helpful, although they were not aware of the frequency of such events and whether this may or may not be a proportionate measure. Whatever the outcome, the possibility of flying an incorrect SID will inform their TEM briefings in the future.

THE GROB 109 PILOT reports undertaking Part 1 of the Flight Instructor (Sailplanes) Training Programme and, at the time of this incident, was accompanied by a Flight Instructor (Coach) from the Yorkshire Gliding Club. They were working on Exercise 12a of the course, which is circuit planning, so the entire flight was spent within the circuit at Currock Hill gliding site. At the time of the incident they were flying 'zig zag circuits' to demonstrate the different views of the airfield and also to teach the 'running out of height' scenario in a glider. The workload was high and their lookout focus was within the circuit. The aircraft was under power, although for the exercise circuits they were operating at minimum [power] to simulate glider flight. At 1521, the reported time of the Airprox, their [GPS track] trace showed they were climbing upwind of the airfield, following a go around, so the Embraer 145 would have been about 2-3km behind them. They did not see it. They did not hear any calls from ATC or the aircraft since they were correctly on the Currock Hill frequency. They were unaware of the Airprox until they saw the [notifying] email. Currock Hill lies partly within the Newcastle CTR and CTA-1 is 700ft above the airfield. Northumbria Gliding Club operates under a Letter of Agreement with Newcastle ATC and for this sortie the club was 'signed on', i.e. Newcastle ATC had given them permission to fly and allocated 'all Areas 25'. This [allowed] a generous geographical area up to 5000ft QNH. Obviously, the airfield circuit lies entirely within this allocated area. The agreed procedure is that if the area is active, Currock Hill aircraft use their allocated frequency of 125.185MHz and they do not squawk, so theirs was switched off.

Factual Background

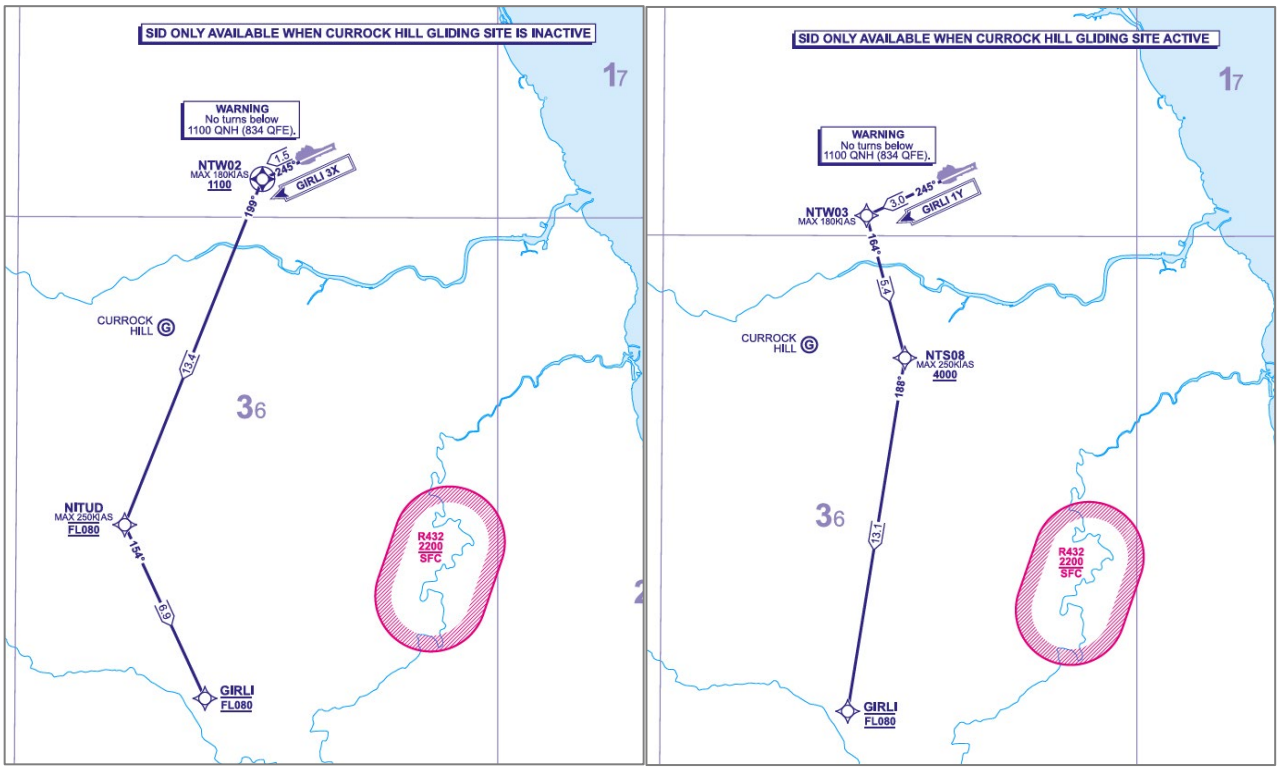
The weather at Newcastle was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGNT 081520Z AUTO 27012KT 220V300 9999 NCD 16/04 Q1009=
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Analysis and Investigation

UKAB Secretariat

The NATS radar replay and CAA Airspace Analyser Tool were reviewed. The Embraer 145 was identified through Mode S data and the Grob 109 was identified by Northumberland Gliding Club.



GIRLI3X SID GIRLI1Y SID

The requirement to turn off the SSR transponder when operating within the designated Currock Gliding Site operating area has been established as a 'local procedure' that is not defined within the LoA with Newcastle Airport.

Newcastle Occurrence Investigation

[Embraer 145 C/S] requested departure clearance shortly after the ATCO had taken the handover and assumed responsibility for the Aerodrome Control position. Due to sickness absence, no ATSO was available to provide normal operational support. The gliding site was active and the aircraft was required to depart via the non-standard GIRLI1Y departure. This information was contained within the EFPS clearance field; however, the ATCO issued the routine GIRLI3X departure. The flight crew read back the clearance and subsequently departed in accordance with it.

Following departure, the ATCO recognised the confliction with the gliding area and issued avoiding action.

Consequently, [Embraer 145 C/S] entered the 0.5NM buffer zone established for the protection of outbound traffic and reached the edge of the [Currock Hill] area whilst a primary contact was

operating within the gliding area. The minimum observed distance between the two contacts reduced to approximately 2NM, resulting in a potential loss of separation.

During subsequent communication with [the Radar controller], the flight crew advised that they had recorded GIRLI3X as their clearance and noted that the usual ATIS advisory regarding the active gliding site had not been broadcast.

MATS Part 2 LOA-E (ATS and NGC)

> 1.5.3 Buffer Zone: There is a buffer zone associated with Area 1 (including circuits only). Should runway 07 be in use, the 0.5NM buffer is along the western and northern edge of the segregated area for the protection of inbound traffic. Should runway 25 be in use, the 0.5NM buffer is along the eastern and northern edge of the segregated area for the protection of outbound traffic.
>
> NCL shall ensure that IFR traffic inside CAS does not penetrate the buffer zone. NGC shall ensure that all gliders/aircraft operating within the gliding area remain inside of the area and outside of the buffer zone.
>
> Should any radar contact be observed within the buffer zone, NCL should take necessary avoiding action.

Conclusion

The occurrence was caused by the ATCO [not reding and applying] the departure SID displayed within the EFPS clearance field, resulting in the issue of an incorrect SID. Consequently, [Embraer 145 C/S] penetrated the protected buffer zone and reached the edge of the [Currock Hill] segregated gliding area, resulting in a potential loss of separation with a primary contact operating within the gliding area. The minimum observed distance between the two contacts reduced to 2NM.

Contributory factors included expectation bias towards the routinely issued SID (GIRLI3X), elevated workload associated with a congested frequency, the recent position handover, combined Ground Movement Control (GMC) and Aerodrome Control, the absence of ATSO support due to sickness, and insufficient organisational mitigations.

The LOA clearly establishes the buffer zone as a protective measure, but it does not necessarily establish a formal separation standard between IFR traffic and gliders.

Recommendations

1) Conduct a formal debrief with the ATCO to review the circumstances surrounding the occurrence, including the role of expectation bias, workload, and adherence to the requirement to obtain departure information from the EFPS clearance field.

2) ANSP should urgently review staffing resilience within ATC. Previous occurrences have also identified recurring safety risks associated with staffing shortfalls and reduced operational resilience; however, no strategic plan has been implemented to safely manage these risks.

3) Safety Bulletin: Reminding ATCOs of the requirement to obtain/read departure clearances from the EFPS clearance field and highlighting the risk of expectation bias when non-standard departures are in force.

4) Period of additional monitoring, once per cycle across four cycles.

5) Review and clarify the separation standard associated with the [Currock Hill] gliding area buffer zone, including the classification and reporting requirements for occurrences involving penetration of the buffer zone.

6) Recommend submission through the Airprox reporting process, to enable an independent assessment of the risk of collision and to determine whether the separation minima has been infringed.

7) Reissue of the safety bulletin for best practice when [Currock Hill] is active, that the Tower retain outbound aircraft departing runway 25, ensuring that the turn is consistent with the GIRLI1Y, enabling the ATCO to confirm that the initial track of a departing aircraft conforms with the clearance issued.

8) Consider whether unit best practice, for the Tower to retain outbound aircraft departing runway 25, ensuring that the turn is consistent with the GIRLI1Y, should be documented as standard practice within the MATS Part 2.

An Airprox is a situation in which, in the opinion of a pilot or air traffic services personnel, the distance between aircraft as well as their relative positions and speed have been such that the safety of the aircraft involved may have been compromised:

- An Airprox does not require a proven loss of separation.

- An Airprox does not require a defined separation minimum to have been infringed.

What went well:

- The ATCO recognised the problem.

- The ATCO followed published unit best practice and CAP493 guidance.

- The avoiding action was timely and correctly delivered.

Root cause - The ATCO [did not] read and apply the departure information contained within the EFPS clearance field and issued GIRLI3X instead of the required GIRLI1Y departure.

Contributing factors

1) The ATCO appeared to have expected the aircraft to receive the routine GIRLI3X departure and consequently did not adequately process the departure information contained within the EFPS clearance field (expectation bias).

2) Recent position handover, the ATCO was likely still establishing situational awareness.

3) Due to long term staffing limitations, the Aerodrome Control and [GMC] positions were combined and operated by a single ATCO.

4) The ATSO position wasn't manned due staff sickness, and the unit had been unable to find additional cover.

5) The Tower frequency was congested during the period leading up to the occurrence.

6) The ATIS did not contain the normal message regarding the active gliding site, because ATSO duties were not being performed (removal of a safety barrier).

7) Previous occurrence investigations had identified similar risks associated with reduced staffing levels, combined operational positions and degraded safety barriers. The actions taken by the organisation had not been sufficient to effectively mitigate these risks.

8) Inadequate staffing resilience.

Observations

1) Immediately prior to the clearance being issued, there was a trainee ATCO struggling with a booking out upon the telephone, within the ATSO position; this may have diverted the ATCO’s attention.

2) The investigation was unable to determine whether this constituted a formal loss of separation, as the applicable separation standard associated with the buffer zone could not be clearly established from available guidance/agreement.

3) After departure, [Embraer 145 C/S] suggested an early transfer to Radar. In accordance with unit safety guidance and recognised best practice, the ATCO retained the aircraft on frequency to verify compliance with the assigned SID (as annotated upon the strip). The ATCO quickly established that the aircraft was following the GIRLI3X departure rather than the required GIRLI1Y. The ATCO promptly issued avoiding action using the correct phraseology, thereby mitigating the developing conflict and limiting the extent of the aircraft's penetration of the buffer zone.

4) The investigation was unable to determine whether other gliders were operating in proximity to [Embraer 145 C/S], as not all aircraft operating within the gliding area may have been visible on radar.

Comments

BGA

The Grob 109 is a Touring Motor Glider (TMG) and was being used in a role for which it is well suited in a gliding club environment - instructor training. The “Zig Zag Circuit” exercise involves showing a student the ‘picture’ when the downwind leg is too close or too far from the landing area. Calibrating the trainee instructor to be able to demonstrate these scenarios without placing a pure glider too far away is important.

It appears that the Letter of Agreement (LOA) would have worked well to ensure proper separation if the correct SID had been assigned. The controller worked expeditiously to mitigate the effect of the error.

The decision to operate the Grob with the transponder OFF might be reviewed so that Newcastle departures are alerted to the proximity of transponder-equipped aircraft in the gliding area if the circumstances recur. The Grob might usefully be equipped with ADS-B IN so that its crew have situational awareness of traffic that might present a threat.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when a Embraer 145 and a Grob 109 were reported as being in proximity near Currock Hill at 1521Z on Monday 8th June 2026. The Embraer 145 pilot was operating under IFR in VMC in receipt of an Aerodrome Control Service from Newcastle Tower, and the Grob 109 pilot was operating under VFR in VMC, not in receipt of a FIS.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD’S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of reports from both pilots, radar photographs/video recordings, GPS data, 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 discussed the ATC aspects of the Airprox, and noted that the sequence of events had been initiated when the Newcastle controller had issued the routine GIRLI3X SID instead of the required GIRLI1Y SID (**CF5**), notwithstanding that the correct departure had been displayed within the EFPS clearance field (**CF2**). Members agreed that expectation bias had appeared to have played a significant role, with the controller having issued the SID most commonly used at Newcastle and the Embraer crew likewise having heard and accepted the clearance that they had been expecting to receive. The Board noted the Embraer pilot's familiarity with gliding operations at Currock Hill and that they too had been subject to a degree of expectation bias, based upon their knowledge that gliding operations had normally taken place on Wednesdays and at weekends and that, consequently, they had expected the

routine GIRLI3X SID on the Monday in question. The Board then discussed the extent to which other safety barriers might have prevented the occurrence. Members noted that the usual ATIS reference to active gliding operations had not been included despite Newcastle ATC having been notified of Currock Hill's activity, thereby removing a cue that might otherwise have prompted the flight crew to question the appropriateness of the GIRLI3X departure. They also noted the operational circumstances within the Tower, including the recent handover, the combination of GMC and Aerodrome Control duties, the absence of ATSO support due to sickness (**CF3**) and a congested frequency, all of which had increased workload and reduced operational resilience (**CF1**). The Board agreed that these factors had combined to create an environment in which the controller's error had been more likely to occur and less likely to have been identified prior to departure.

In considering the actions of the Embraer crew, the Board noted the pilot's candid observation that a preceding aircraft had appeared to make a turn more consistent with the GIRLI1Y SID than the GIRLI3X SID. Members considered that this may have represented an opportunity to challenge their understanding of the clearance; however, they also recognised that there had been no obvious reason for the crew to doubt a clearance that had been issued, read back and acknowledged by ATC, particularly in the absence of any ATIS indication that the gliding site had been active. Although the aircraft EC and see-and-avoid barriers had not been relevant due to the separation between the aircraft involved, the Board noted that neither pilot had had situational awareness of the other aircraft (**CF7**).

The Board then considered the risk. Members noted that the Embraer had reached the edge of the Currock Hill operating area whilst the Grob had been conducting circuit training within the gliding area. The Grob pilot had been operating with the SSR transponder selected off, in accordance with established local practice, and the aircraft had therefore only been observed by ATC as a primary contact; consequently, its altitude could not be verified. Although the horizontal separation had reduced to approximately 1.7NM and there had been no evidence that the aircraft had come close to colliding, the Newcastle controller's inability to determine the Grob's altitude had meant that the actual vertical separation could not have been known (**CF6**), which had caused the Newcastle controller understandable concern (**CF4**). Members also noted that the Newcastle controller could not have known whether other non-transponding gliders had been operating within the area, and which may not necessarily have been visible on radar. Against that background, and acknowledging that the timely avoiding action issued by the Newcastle controller had prevented further encroachment into the gliding area, the Board agreed, by a majority, that there had been no risk of collision. Accordingly, the Airprox was assessed as Risk Category E.

The Board was heartened to learn that Newcastle ATSU and Northumbria Gliding Club (NGC) were currently reviewing their LoA to determine the use of SSR transponders by pilots in the visual circuit at Currock Hill.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS AND RISK

Contributory Factors:

	2026111			
CF	**Factor**	**Description**	**ECCAIRS Amplification**	**UKAB Amplification**
	Ground Elements			
	• Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance			
1	Organisational	• Aeronautical Information Services	An event involving the provision of Aeronautical Information	The Ground entity's regulations or procedures were inadequate
2	Human Factors	• ATM Regulatory Deviation	An event involving a deviation from an Air Traffic Management Regulation.	Regulations and/or procedures not fully complied with
	• Manning and Equipment			
3	Organisational	• ATM Staffing and Scheduling	An event related to the planning and scheduling of ATM personnel	
	• Situational Awareness and Action			
4	Human Factors	• Expectation/ Assumption	Events involving an individual or a crew/ team acting on the basis of expectation	Concerned by the proximity of the aircraft

			or assumptions of a situation that is different from the reality	
5	Human Factors	• Inappropriate Clearance	An event involving the provision of an inappropriate clearance that led to an [potentially] unsafe situation	
6	Contextual	• Traffic Management Information Action	An event involving traffic management information actions	The ground element had only generic, late, no or inaccurate Situational Awareness
	Flight Elements			
	• Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action			
7	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

Degree of Risk: E.

Safety Barrier Assessment[1]

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

Ground Elements:

Regulations, Processes, Procedures and Compliance were assessed as **partially effective** because previous Newcastle occurrence investigations had identified similar risks associated with reduced staffing levels, combined operational positions and degraded safety barriers and the actions taken by the organisation had not been sufficient to effectively mitigate these risks. Additionally, the Newcastle controller had not read the correct SID from the EFPS.

Manning and Equipment were assessed as **partially effective** because there had been no ATSO and the GMC and ADC roles had had to be combined.

Situational Awareness of the Confliction and Action were assessed as **partially effective** because the Newcastle controller had issued the wrong SID clearance and had been concerned by the potential proximity of the Grob 109.

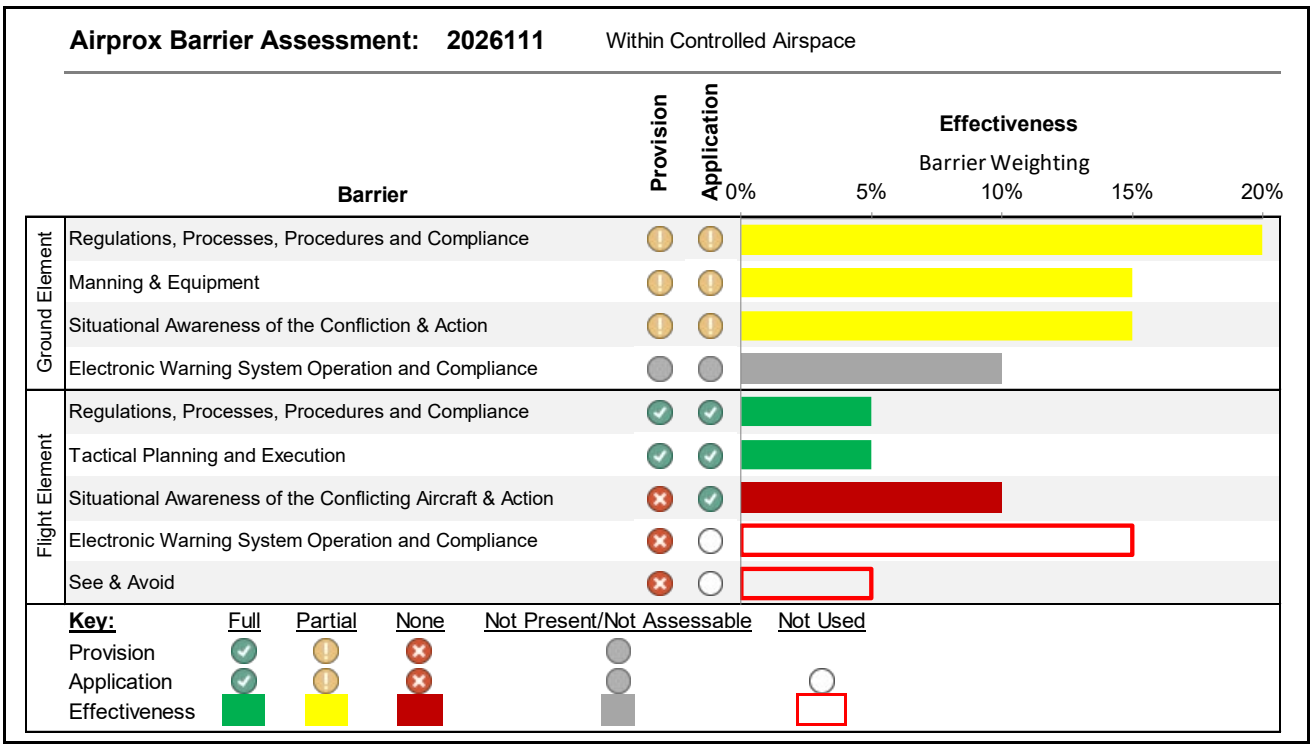
Flight Elements:

Situational Awareness of the Conflicting Aircraft and Action were assessed as **ineffective** because neither pilot had had situational awareness on the other aircraft.

Electronic Warning System Operation and Compliance were assessed as **not used** because the aircraft had been separated by sufficient altitude that the Embraer 145 TCAS would not have alerted even if the Grob 109 SSR transponder had been emitting.

See and Avoid were assessed as **not used** because the aircraft had been separated by a margin that precluded the use of the see-and-avoid barrier.

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


Airprox Barrier Assessment: 2026111
Within 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 Confliction & 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
Key:
Full
Partial
None
Not Present/Not Assessable
Not Used
Provision
Application
Effectiveness