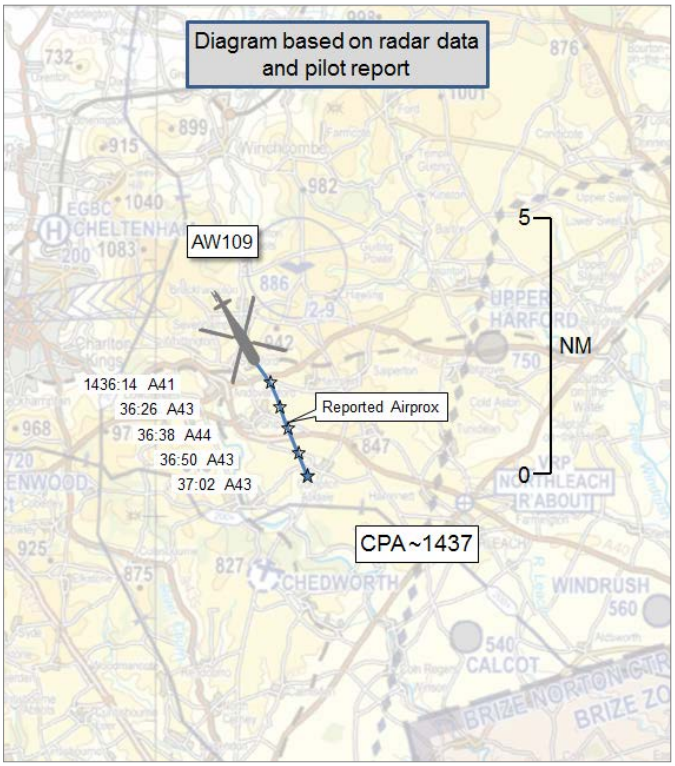
AIRPROX REPORT No 2017147

Date: 05 Jul 2017 Time: 1437Z Position: 5152N 00156W Location: 5nm ESE Cheltenham

PART A: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION REPORTED TO UKAB

Recorded	Aircraft 1	Aircraft 2
Aircraft	AW109	Untraced glider
Operator	Civ Comm	Unknown
Airspace	London FIR	London FIR
Class	G	G
Rules	VFR	
Service	Traffic	
Provider	Brize Norton	
Altitude/FL	4400ft	
Transponder	A, C, S	
Reported		Not reported
Colours	Blue	
Lighting	Anti-col, nav, taxi	
Conditions	VMC	
Visibility	40km	
Altitude/FL	4400ft	
Altimeter	QNH (1017hPa)	
Heading	155°	
Speed	150kt	
ACAS/TAS	TCAS I	
Alert	None	
Separation		
Reported	~50ft V/0.25nm H	NK
Recorded	NK	



THE AW109 PILOT reports established in the cruise. He had recently been advised of traffic to the left and below (about 2000ft or so he recalled) and had just passed the traffic when the co-pilot saw a glider in the right 12.30 at a range of about ¼ - ½ mile. The glider was on a steady course and similar track to theirs, although offset to the right. The AW109 pilot took avoiding action by turning left to ensure separation. He noted that had they maintained course the risk of collision would have been high, and that it was unlikely the glider pilot saw them until they passed left-abeam.

He assessed the risk of collision as 'High'.

THE GLIDER PILOT: The glider pilot did not file an Airprox and could not be traced.

THE BRIZE NORTON CONTROLLER reports that he was notified of the Airprox 9 days after the event and did not recall working the AW109 track.

THE BRIZE NORTON SUPERVISOR reports that he had no recollection of the unit working the AW109 on the date in question. He was unable to recall the controller's and unit's workload at the time of the incident.

Factual Background

The weather at Gloucester and Brize Norton was recorded as follows:

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METAR EGBJ 051450Z 31003KT CAVOK 27/15 Q1017=
METAR EGVN 051450Z 36003KT CAVOK 26/12 Q1017 BLU NOSIG=
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Analysis and Investigation

Military ATM

An Airprox occurred on 5 Jul 17 at approximately 1435hrs UTC, ESE of Cheltenham, between an AW109 and a Glider. The AW109 was in receipt of a Traffic Service (TS) from Brize Zone while in transit but the Glider could not be traced. Radar replays from NATS radar sources were able to identify the AW109 but no other conflicting traffic was visible in the aircraft's vicinity during the time of the Airprox. It is not known what traffic the radar picture available to Brize Norton ATC had displayed.

As the incident was not reported on frequency at the time, the Brize Zone controller did not recall it when asked to submit a report. They had however passed Traffic Information to the AW109 pilot on multiple occasions in the lead up to the Airprox.

UKAB Secretariat

The AW109 and glider 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 overtaking then the glider pilot had right of way and the AW109 pilot was required to keep out of the way of the other aircraft by altering course to the right[2], notwithstanding his responsibility for collision avoidance.

Summary

An Airprox was reported when an AW109 and an unidentified glider flew into proximity at about 1437 on Wednesday 5th July 2017. Both pilots were operating in VMC, the AW109 pilot under VFR and in receipt of a Traffic Service from Brize Norton and the glider pilot most likely under VFR and not in receipt of an Air Traffic Service.

PART B: SUMMARY OF THE BOARD'S DISCUSSIONS

Information available consisted of a report from the AW109 pilot, radar photographs/video recordings, reports from the air traffic controllers involved and a report from the appropriate ATC authority.

Members quickly agreed that there was little information other than the AW109 pilot's report on which to base their deliberations. It was apparent that he had been passed Traffic Information but not on the subject glider, and that the co-pilot's visual scan had independently picked up the glider. Members commented that even a surveillance based service was not guaranteed to pick up all aircraft which may be a factor, as was the case in this Airprox, and that the helicopter crew had used see-and-avoid – the basis of flight in Class G airspace – to detect the glider and avoid it using the most expeditious course of action.

Some members wondered whether this event was simply a conflict in Class G in which normal procedures had applied, but the majority agreed that the reported separation was such that it had been a late sighting by the AW109 pilot, albeit with the result that timely and effective action had been taken to avert the risk of collision.

PART C: ASSESSMENT OF CAUSE, RISK AND SAFETY BARRIERS

Cause: A late sighting by the AW109 pilot.

Degree of Risk: C.

[1] SERA.3205 Proximity.
[2] SERA.3210 Right-of-way (c)(3) Overtaking.

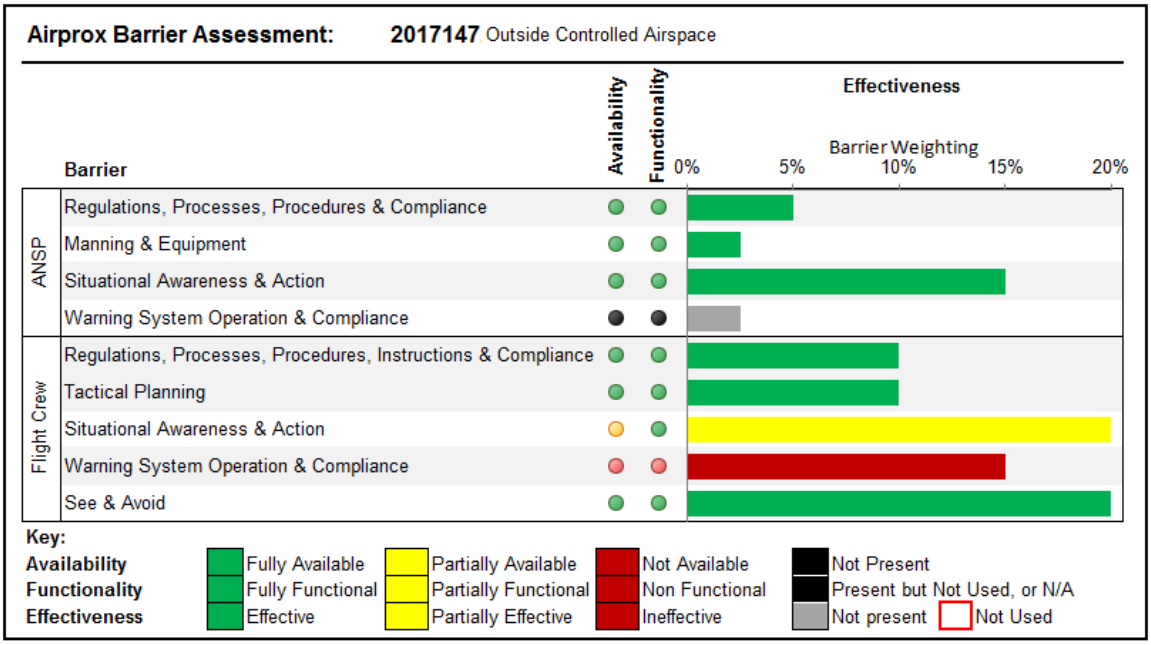
Safety Barrier Assessment[3]

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

Flight Crew:

Situational Awareness and Action were assessed as **partially effective** because although the AW109 crew received Traffic Information on aircraft in the vicinity, the subject glider did not appear on radar and hence its position could not be passed to the AW109 crew.

Warning System Operation and Compliance were assessed as **ineffective** because although the AW109 was fitted with TCAS, the glider was apparently not fitted with a system with which to generate a TCAS alert in the AW109.



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