



AIRPROX *Insight*

DIRECTOR UKAB'S MONTHLY UPDATE

November 2024



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AIRPROX OF THE MONTH

Is 'far enough' fair enough'?

So just how far away is 'far enough away' – it might be too close for the other pilot

With most Airprox in UK airspace occurring in Class G (uncontrolled) airspace, one of the most important (but not the only) safety barriers available in that environment is the See and Avoid barrier. In fact, I often hear Class G airspace described as 'see and be seen' or 'see and avoid' airspace.

While these descriptions are not wholly inaccurate, they do rather miss the point that there are a number of other ways of avoiding getting close to another aircraft – reacting to Traffic Information from an air traffic controller or from an indication on electronic conspicuity (EC) equipment (if carried) to name but two. Often, this information will cue our lookout in the direction of the known threat, but do we have to wait until we see it to act?

With that in mind, I've chosen **Airprox 2024131** between a Cessna 172 and a Grumman American AA-5 over Tilbury for discussion this month.

The Cessna pilot was transiting northbound in receipt of a Basic Service from Southend Radar and they were not carrying any additional form of EC equipment other than their transponder. The AA-5 pilot, meanwhile, was on a north-westerly track

in the same area and at a similar altitude and was also in receipt of a Basic Service from Southend Radar; they were carrying a PilotAware device in addition to their transponder.

Neither pilot received any Traffic Information regarding the other aircraft from the Southend controller, but the AA-5 pilot reported that they had received information on the presence of the Cessna from their PilotAware device and they also spotted it. However, the AA-5 pilot didn't take any action to increase separation as they had not deemed it necessary – the radar, however, recorded a separation of 0ft vertically and <0.1NM horizontally at their closest point.

There are a number of things worth noting from this encounter; firstly, with both pilots being in receipt of a Basic Service from Southend, there was no requirement for the Southend controller to have been monitoring either aircraft. This means that neither pilot was likely to have received Traffic Information about the other aircraft.

There is, though, provision within CAP774 – UK Flight Information Services for controllers to pass Traffic Information to pilots under a Basic Service – Chapter 2 paragraph 2.8 states 'If a controller/ FISO

considers that a definite risk of collision exists, a warning shall be issued to the pilot ((UK) SERA.9005(b)(2) and GM1 (UK) SERA.9005(b)(2)).'

I think that, in this case, had the controller actually seen the confliction on their radar screen they would probably have issued a warning, so the crux of the problem here is how do we make sure that the controller sees the confliction?

Well, the onus is on the pilot to request an appropriate level of service – in this case, had either pilot requested (and been given) a Traffic Service, then the controller would have been obliged to have kept an eye on that aircraft and would therefore have been much more likely to have seen the impending conflict.

The second point I want to highlight is the difference between 'converging' and 'overtaking'. Although in this case the AA-5 pilot was on the right ('on the right, in the right'), the two aircraft were not actually in a 'converging' situation. This was an 'overtaking' situation because the AA-5 was approaching the Cessna from behind and was within an angle of 70° from either side of its extended centreline (see [The Skyway Code](#) page 63 for more detail).

This meant that the responsibility to avoid the other aircraft lay with the AA-5 pilot, and not with the Cessna pilot (as it would have had it been a 'converging' situation).

It's not always easy to judge whether you are converging with or overtaking another aircraft until you get quite close to it, so to avoid doubt – and keep things as safe as possible – why not manoeuvre early to maintain a healthy degree of separation?

"But what about maintaining course and speed (as required by (UK)SERA.3210)?" I hear you cry. Well, the simple answer is that there is nothing in the rules that prevents a pilot changing altitude to maintain separation, so think about that third dimension. Equally, although the rules do tell us which pilot should avoid the other aircraft in most situations, don't assume that the other pilot has seen you or even knows that you're there; even if it is the responsibility of the other pilot to give way, we all have a responsibility under (UK)SERA.3205 not to operate '...in such proximity to other aircraft as to create a collision hazard', so don't leave it until the last minute to do something about it.

Finally, I wanted to say something about 'miss distance'. Although, in Class G airspace, there is no prescribed distance by which we should avoid other aircraft, it makes sense to give them as wide a berth as possible. Think about what you might do if the other aircraft suddenly changes altitude or heading. Will you have enough time to react? Is your lookout in other directions compromised because you want to keep an especially close eye on the aircraft that is near to you?

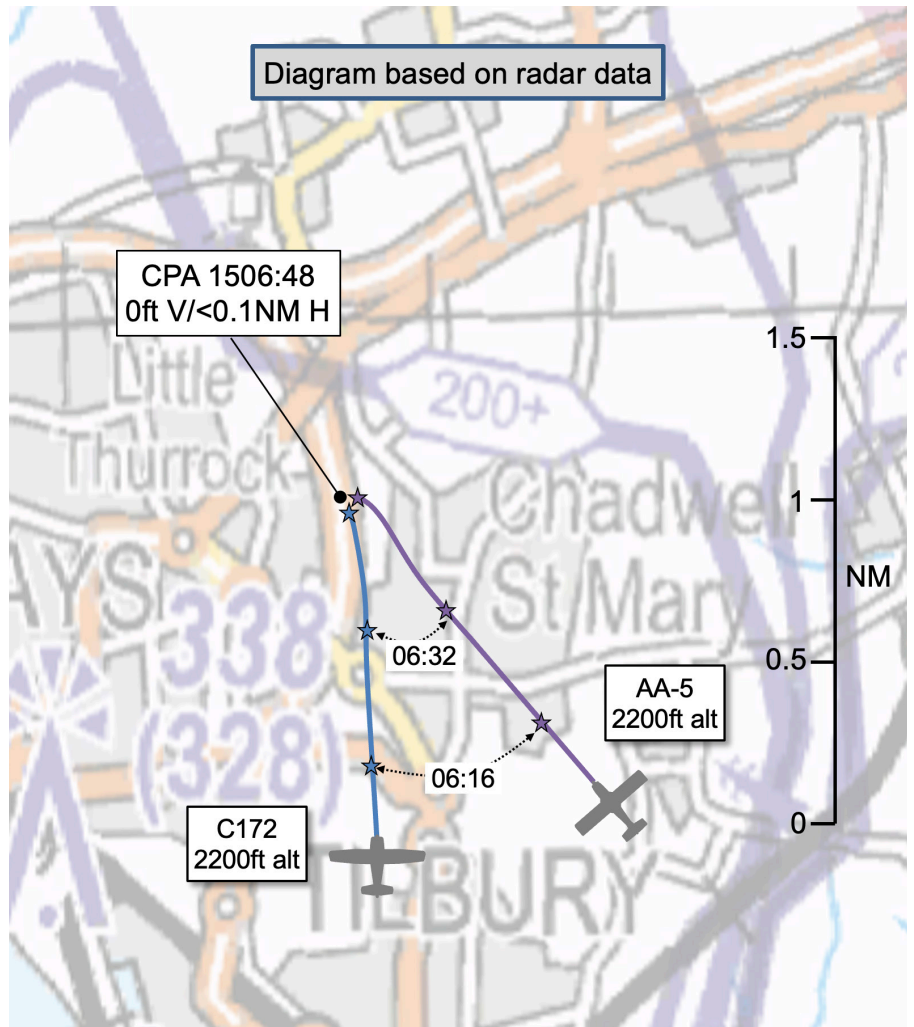
Remember – what you deem to be a 'sufficient' distance away from another aircraft may well be 'far too close' for the other pilot.

UKAB MONTHLY ROUND-UP

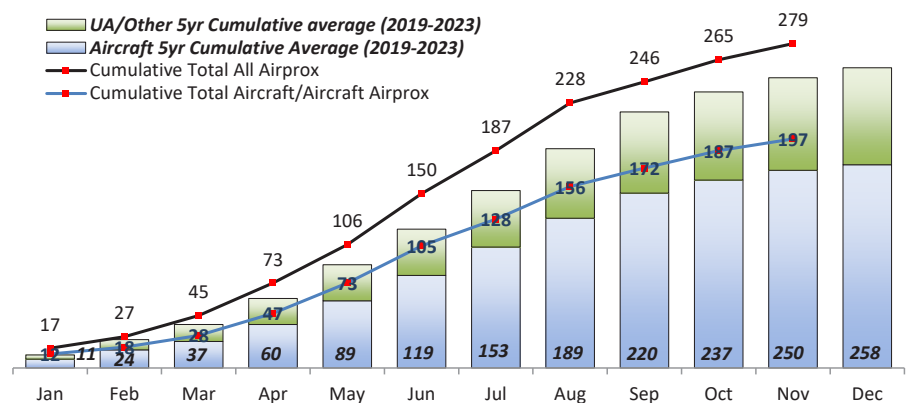
This month the Board evaluated 25 Airprox, including three UA/Other events, two of which were reported by the piloted aircraft and one by the RPAS operator. Of the 24 full evaluations, ten were classified as risk-bearing – one as category A and nine as category B.

The Board made one Safety Recommendation this month to hopefully address an issue where pilots visiting Oxford Airport and operating under VFR do not receive a warning from the Oxford controllers to remain clear of EGD129 (Weston on the Green parachuting drop zone) when it is active (those operating under IFR do receive a warning). **Airprox 2024157** has more details.

As I write this, winter has well and truly arrived, and we have seen a significant



2024 Airprox - Cumulative Distribution



(although seasonally normal) reduction in the number of Airprox reports. That said, we have already exceeded the number of reports received in both 2022 and 2023 (when there were no COVID-related restrictions on GA flying) and look on track to have the highest number of aircraft-to-aircraft events we have ever had in one calendar year.

This higher level of reporting might suggest that the UK skies are becoming 'less safe', but it's always difficult to measure 'how safe' something actually is. We do know that not all Airprox incidents are reported, so it's perhaps

encouraging that more people are reporting these safety incidents so that we can all learn from them.

I'd encourage every pilot to take a look back through some of these Insight articles and ask themselves if there is anything they would have done differently had they found themselves in similar situations.

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