



AIRPROX *Insight*

DIRECTOR UKAB'S MONTHLY UPDATE

September 2024



Photo for illustrative purposes: Andy Pearson

AIRPROX OF THE MONTH

When a clearance isn't quite what you think...

Did you really understand what ATC's instructions were?

Over recent years there have been a number of expansions of controlled airspace around aerodromes that, historically, hadn't had any controlled airspace associated with their approach and departure procedures.

One such instance is the change to the airspace around Farnborough Airport. The alterations, way back in February 2020, introduced a significant amount of Class D airspace and, initially, many pilots were reluctant to request a crossing of the 'new' Class D area, preferring instead to route around it and remain in Class G airspace.

However, there are a number of Class D airspace areas in the UK where routeing around isn't really a viable option. One example is Edinburgh's CTR, which is why I have chosen **Airprox 2024057** for discussion this month because not only does it involve an aircraft crossing Edinburgh's Class D airspace, but it also involves activity other than IFR arrivals and departures.

This particular event concerned a Viking glider and a PA-28. The Viking pilot had just released from the top of a winch-launch at Kirknewton while the PA-28 pilot was on a VFR transit through the Edinburgh CTR.

The glider was fitted with FLARM and also carried a SkyEcho device configured for ADS-B out only (i.e. the Viking pilot was not carrying any means of exploiting SkyEcho received information). The PA-28 was also fitted with SkyEcho, but the pilot didn't report having received an alert regarding the glider.

The PA-28 pilot had requested a routeing via VRPs at The Bridges (Forth road and rail), Kirkliston and Cobbinshaw Reservoir; however, Edinburgh Airport was operating on RW06 and this routeing would have taken the PA-28 through the approach lane to RW06. Therefore, the controller instructed a routeing of The Bridges, Hermiston (2½ miles SE of the airport), then south and east of Kirknewton and onwards to Cobbinshaw.

The PA-28 pilot appeared to have difficulty in understanding the routeing, confusing VRPs due to the similarity in their names, and not acknowledging the element of the controller's instructions to route to the east and south of Kirknewton (to avoid the Designated Gliding Area – more on that later).

What's more, although the controller had passed information to the PA-28

pilot that Kirknewton gliding was active, their instructions to route to the east and then south of Kirknewton did not specify whether that was to be the VRP or the identically-named airfield.

As it became apparent that the PA-28 pilot's routeing was going to take them close to the gliding activity, the Edinburgh Radar controller transmitted an 'all-stations' broadcast on the Kirknewton gliding frequency warning of the proximity of the PA-28 – unfortunately, it was issued too late for the Viking pilot to abort their launch. Ultimately, the PA-28 pilot routed close to Kirknewton airfield and into proximity with the Viking.

So, what lessons can we take from this? Well, firstly, none of us should be fearful of crossing Class D airspace – the controllers at Edinburgh were doing their best to facilitate a crossing for the PA-28 pilot while trying to keep them clear of the gliding area. When it became apparent that the PA-28 pilot's requested routeing wasn't going to work with the Edinburgh traffic, they looked to get the PA-28 pilot to where they wanted to be by the safest route.

The second lesson I want to draw out is the importance of listening to the clearance and reading back what you understand it to be. If the read back is not what the controller is expecting, then they should correct it. Of course, in this case there was some ambiguity regarding the similar-sounding names of the VRPs (there's a reason why, some years ago, we changed from 'affirmative' to 'affirm'.....), not to mention the reference to 'Kirknewton' – which is both a VRP and an airfield – so all the ingredients for a bit of confusion were there.

In pre-flight preparation we should be looking at where we think we might get 'tripped up' (such as a CTR crossing, perhaps because we don't do these very often) and work through a few 'what-ifs' before setting off. In this particular case, it could have been anticipated that the planned routeing might be changed to cater for Edinburgh's traffic, and a good look at the VRPs and other features within the CTR before flight could highlight that there is, in certain cases, potential for ambiguity.

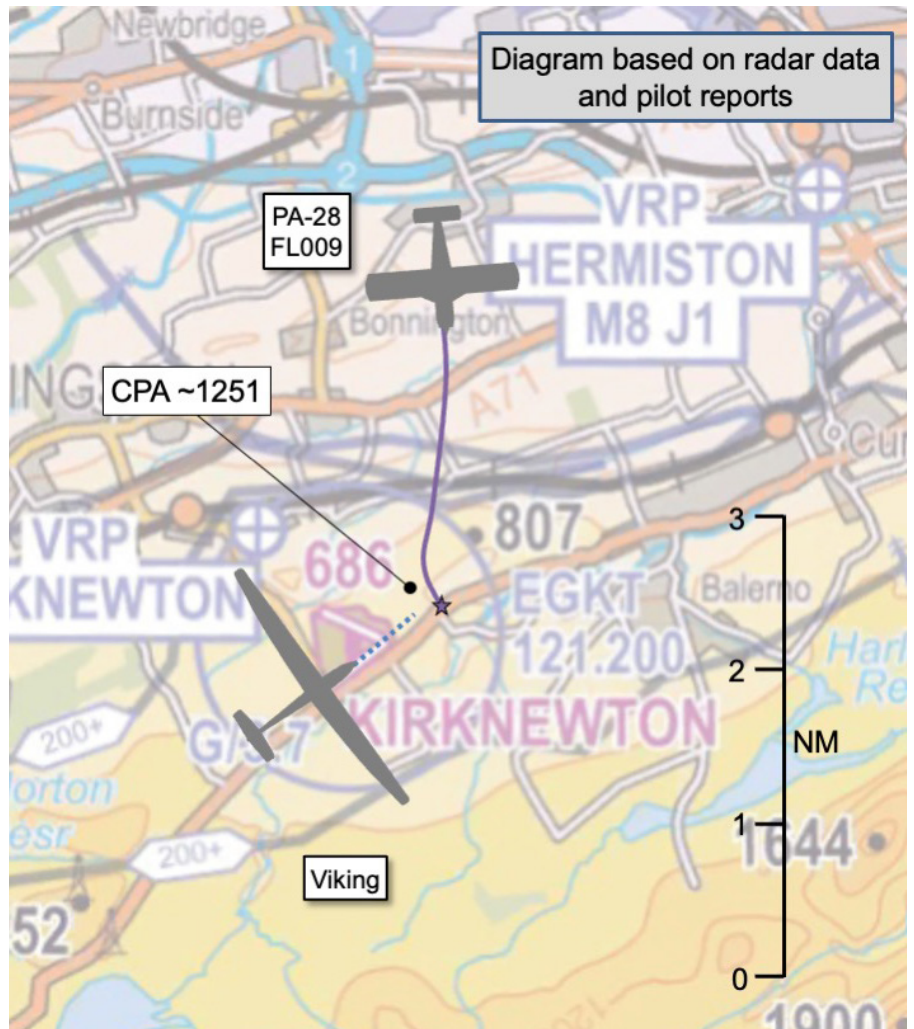
It's also the case that the UK AIP entry for Edinburgh Airport makes no mention of the Kirknewton Designated Gliding Area – it only appears in the Edinburgh MATS part 2 (instructions to controllers at Edinburgh) and a Letter of Agreement between Edinburgh Airport and RAF Kirknewton – so how could the PA-28 pilot have known that the Edinburgh controller was trying to route them clear of a particular area? There is a similar arrangement between Dunstable Downs gliding site and Luton Airport, but the dimensions of the gliding area are published for all to see in the UK AIP entry for Luton Airport.

My final thought is this: if intending to cross Class D airspace, why not call the Air Traffic Control unit during the planning stage and ask what the likely routeing is going to be? Forewarned is forearmed...

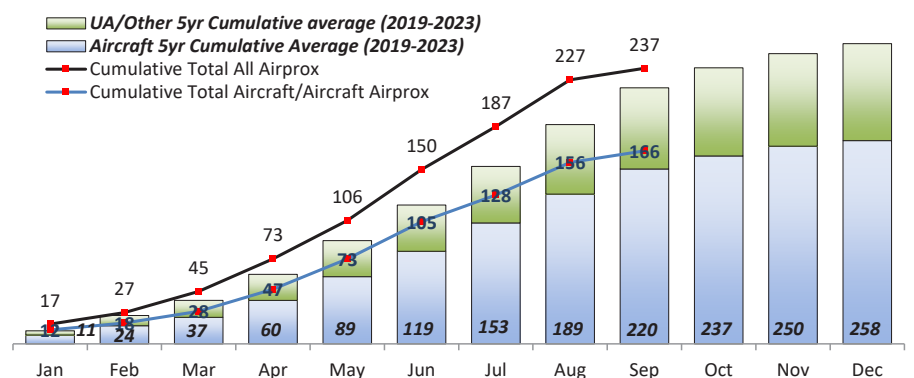
UKAB MONTHLY ROUND-UP

This month the Board evaluated 40 Airprox, including 18 UA/Other events, all of which were reported by the piloted aircraft. Of the 22 full evaluations, eight were classified as risk-bearing – one as category A and seven as category B.

The Board also made two Safety Recommendations, both as a result of my Airprox of the Month. The Board recommended that Edinburgh Airport review the naming of its VRPS to remove potential ambiguity, and to publish details



2024 Airprox - Cumulative Distribution



of the RAF Kirknewton Designated Gliding Area in the UK AIP entry for Edinburgh Airport.

Airprox reporting continues to be higher so far in 2024 than we would normally have expected, although it is very similar to the reporting levels seen in 2023. However, with autumn well and truly here, I would anticipate fewer reports being submitted over the last quarter of the year.

As the number of 'VFR days' reduces, perhaps now is a good time to take a look back over your summer's flying and ask

yourself if there's anything you did well (and want to repeat) or not so well (and want to improve). And here's another thought: while you might not want to fly on bad weather days, they're an ideal opportunity to refresh some of the information that might have faded a touch in the memory bank.

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