

**Clued<sup>up</sup>**

# GA Update

April 2021

# TOO CLOSE ENCOUNTERS





# ON THE RISE

Airprox numbers are up, so here are a few pointers to make sure yours isn't...

It's a troubling thought, but in 2019 (the last full flying year before the various lockdowns) GA pilots were for the first time more likely to encounter an airprox within a GA aircraft than in a military aircraft and, worryingly, the general aviation risk trend is steadily increasing.

So, getting a bit statto about it, here's a few numbers from the UK Airprox Board (UKAB) which examines the reported incidents: In 2019 there were 328 airproxes filed, 203 of which

were manned aircraft-aircraft incidents, and these were only the reported ones. In the previous five years the numbers were 180 in 2018, 159 (2017), 171 (2016), 177 (2015) and 215 (2014).

While some of the increase could be down to a rise in reporting, there's an increased likelihood of a collision risk in some areas so it's worth looking at where they are and what you can do to help keep yourself and your passengers safe.



With a VRP it might be worth offsetting your track



High workloads at airfields can lead to lapses in lookout

**Visual Reference Points**

Because they're prominent landscape features it's likely that any VFR pilot navigating within the area will be using the same VRP as you. During your planning you're likely to incorporate a VRP into the route and, if you're accurate enough, you might fly straight over the top of it — but so might others. So to minimise risk it might be worth slightly offsetting the planned track, if possible, to a land feature near the VRP, and to think about the altitude you plan to fly at; for example, 2000ft is a common choice and flying even 200ft higher or lower could reduce your risk.

**Actions**

- Practise good lookout techniques and prioritise lookout in areas where you think collision risk is higher
- If you're receiving a radio service be precise about where you are heading. This will allow them to pre-empt your route and help with any potential conflicts
- If in Class G airspace, keep a listening watch on the local Lower Airspace Radar Service (LARS) frequency to get awareness of other pilots in the same vicinity. Use a Frequency Monitoring Code if possible
- Using an Electronic Conspicuity (EC) device could aid in your situational awareness of others
- The [CAA's Safety Sense leaflet No. 13, Collision Avoidance](#) has some more useful tips

**Airfields**

The risk of mid-air collisions is highest in the vicinity of GA airfields, almost all of which have no ATC or radar to assist in deconflicting traffic. Pilots in the circuit, or those leaving or joining, will have higher workloads with a consequently greater possibility of distraction leading to lapses in lookout. This can, of course, intensify during fly-ins or charity events where high numbers of aircraft are joining and departing the circuit.

**Actions**

- Before reaching your destination, keep a listening watch on the airfield frequency well ahead of time to understand what other traffic is doing and where they are
- Ensure your radio calls are clear, succinct and accurately reflect your position reporting
- Plan ahead and understand what the circuit pattern is, and what you'll do if the airfield has changed runways while en route
- Be prepared to go around or delay joining the circuit if it's too busy
- Again, there's a [CAA Safety Sense leaflet No. 6e, Aerodrome Sense](#) to help refresh your knowledge

**Narrow Routes**

Some commonly-used routes allow pilots to travel between areas of controlled airspace while staying within uncontrolled airspace without having to obtain a service from air

traffic control. By their nature these routes will channel aircraft into a smaller space, decreasing available distance between aircraft.

**Actions**

- Consider getting a clearance to cross controlled airspace — the route might be shorter and safer if you can use the protection of an ATC service
- If you stay outside controlled airspace, understand which ATC unit you can contact while travelling through these areas and be proactive about getting a service to help with your lookout
- Prioritise lookout while approaching, travelling in and exiting these areas
- Take 2 – plan to stay at least 200ft vertically and 2nm horizontally from controlled airspace to allow yourself greater room for manoeuvring without increasing your collision risk with commercial aircraft
- Check out the [Airspace Safety website](#) where there's lots of helpful resources, hints and tips for staying safe while flying



Visual Reference Point on Northleach Roundabout