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To all glider pilots

Dear glider pilot

## **AIRSPACE SAFETY UPDATE**

Earlier this year we wrote to you with important information about airspace. This letter is an update and offers further guidance.

First of all, thanks very much for your contribution so far this year including communicating with air traffic control where appropriate. We have received feedback that the number of awareness radio calls at airfields with instrument traffic is increasing and the quality of radio communication is improving. Geoff Brown's excellent work on airspace files now makes it much easier for us to see ATZs, frequencies and ILS 'feathers' on our moving map software. That awareness really helps.

During meetings with the military this year, we have discussed a number of military/glider proximity hot spots, including around Linton-on-Ouse, Odiham and Benson. Military airfields are busiest during week days, many have procedural traffic and some have fast jet traffic. The same precautions we take with their civilian counterparts apply including avoiding overheads and approaches if we can, and talking to ATC if we can't or are close by. Clubs whose pilots regularly fly past Lakenheath are Mildenhall are liaising with USAF air traffic controllers with the aim of improving awareness. As pilots, we can each learn which airfields are likely to be busy and which are almost inactive.

We are trying to educate air traffic controllers about how, for soaring pilots concentrating as they must on a number of tasks including staying airborne, radio calls can be very distracting. The problems with using a phone while driving are well known. When providing an awareness radio call, all that should be required from the glider pilots having made contact is something like 'For your information glider XYZ is 3 miles east of your airfield climbing in a thermal at 3000' and is then heading south. No service required.' The better informed air traffic controllers will simply thank you for the call. Others may attempt to impose a service on you, which you don't need to take if you are outside an ATZ or controlled airspace.

A recent helpful discussion with Gloucester airport has identified that when the Cheltenham East (CHE) TP is used by thermal soaring cross-country gliders, there is a potential for significant disruption to approach or departure traffic. Any TP with an ILS feather across it is probably best avoided. If it is offered a planned task, why not challenge that decision?

Thanks for taking the time to read this. As noted earlier this year, if we all follow good practice, we can maintain risk at a reasonable level, demonstrate that gliders do not pose

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the level of risk that some incorrectly assume, and have a much better case to oppose future airspace grabs. In operating as responsible airspace users, we should always remember that the old maxim of aviate, navigate, communicate (in that order) still holds true. There is certainly no sense in losing situational awareness in a gaggle while fiddling with a radio. But the more we can communicate responsibly, the less likely we are to come into conflict with traffic which might otherwise look for more controlled airspace. Good pilots will strike the right balance.

Kind regards

John Williams, Sarah Kelman, Andrew Roch – Airspace Committee  
Mark Holden – Competition Committee  
Pete Stratten – Safety Committee