

**AERONAUTICAL INFORMATION
CIRCULAR****UK FLIGHT INFORMATION SERVICES - AIR TRAFFIC SERVICES OUTSIDE CONTROLLED AIRSPACE (ATSOCAS).****1 Background**

1.1 The ICAO requirements for a Flight Information Service are met in the UK FIRs through a suite of services, collectively known as the UK Flight Information Services (FIS), as detailed at UK AIP ENR 1.1, section 2 (Air Traffic Services Outside Controlled Airspace) and CAP774. These services have been traditionally referred to as ATSOCAS.

1.2 This Circular is intended to highlight to pilots the most important aspects of the services, and in particular those areas where incident and AIRPROX investigation has identified that increased pilot awareness is required.

1.3 This Circular is directly relevant to all pilots of flights that operate in UK Class G Airspace.

2 Key Principles

2.1 The following key principles are highlighted:

- a. Within Class G Airspace, regardless of the service being provided, pilots are ultimately responsible for collision avoidance and terrain clearance;
- b. It is not mandatory for a pilot to be in receipt of an Air Traffic Service; this generates an 'unknown' traffic environment;
- c. Controllers shall make all reasonable endeavours to provide the service that a pilot requests, however a reduction in traffic information may have to be applied or in some cases an alternative service may have to be provided.

3 Basic Service - Traffic Information

3.1 Within Class G Airspace Basic Service can be provided from various locations, and by either an Air Traffic Control Officer (ATCO) or Flight Information Services Officer (FISO). When receiving a Basic Service on any frequency, it is important to keep a good look out and listen to other aircraft transmissions to develop a mental picture of where aircraft are. Do remember that Class G Airspace is an 'unknown environment.'

3.2 An aerodrome FISO may provide a Basic Service to aircraft in the local area. In such circumstances FISOs will only be able to pass generic traffic information based on traffic reports and reported activity. Therefore, it may not be accurate and is unlikely to be complete. However, in the vicinity and within the aerodrome traffic pattern, the information will be more specific and detailed as part of the provision of an Aerodrome Flight Information Service (AFIS).

3.3 FISOs also provide the 'London Information' Basic Service. Their area of coverage is very large, and as a result the degree of traffic information is likely to be very generic. Although the London Information FISO will normally ask a pilot to 'Squawk' an SSR code, this is done for the benefit of other radar (surveillance) equipped airfields to indicate that a particular aircraft is in RT contact with London Information. Therefore, pilots are not to expect any form of radar derived traffic information based on the fact that they have been asked to 'squawk'.

3.4 A wide variety of ATCOs in varying roles and positions can provide a Basic Service, and this again affects the degree and accuracy of the traffic information provided. An Aerodrome Controller (identified by the RTF call sign 'TOWER') may provide a Basic Service to aircraft in the local area. A Basic Service may also be provided by Approach Controllers, either with or without radar.

3.5 Approach Controllers that are using radar have more real time information on traffic in the local area. However, it is important that controllers do not provide a routine and regular flow of specific traffic information to pilots receiving a Basic Service as this would blur the difference with a Traffic Services. Nevertheless, if a controller considers that a definite risk of collision exists, they are encouraged to issue a warning to the pilot, but their ability to do so will also be affected by their workload and their perception of the confliction. Therefore, even though you may have previously been warned about a definite risk of collision whilst receiving a Basic Service, do not expect this in all occasions as it may not be possible for controllers to always pass such warnings. Whilst controllers with or without radar may ask you to squawk, this does not indicate that you are identified or imply that you are getting any additional protection. Even if a controller tells you that you are identified, it does not imply that you will get any additional protection beyond the normal terms of a Basic Service.

4 Traffic Service - Traffic Information

4.1 ATCOs providing a Traffic Service will be using radar information and should provide traffic information if they consider there is a relevant confliction. Traffic is normally considered to be relevant when, in the judgement of the controller, the conflicting aircraft's observed flight profile indicates that it will pass within 3 NM and, where level information is available, 3000 ft of the aircraft in receipt of the Traffic Service. Controllers shall aim to pass information on relevant traffic before the conflicting aircraft is within 5 NM, in order to give the pilot sufficient time to meet his collision avoidance responsibilities and to allow for an update in traffic information if considered necessary.

4.2 Controllers should update the traffic information if it continues to constitute a definite hazard, or if requested by the pilot. However, pilots need to remember that in all cases the provision of traffic information will be dependent upon radar coverage, controller workload and priorities. Controllers will not provide deconfliction advice or avoiding action, it is up to the pilot to see and avoid other traffic. Therefore, when receiving a Traffic Service keep a good look out and develop a mental picture of where traffic might be. Listen to the TI given and manoeuvre as necessary to avoid any aircraft seen. The 'Rules of the Air' apply.

5 Traffic Service - ATC Vectors

5.1 Under a Traffic Service, a controller may provide headings for the purpose of positioning, sequencing or as navigational assistance. However, the controller is not required to achieve deconfliction minima, and the avoidance of other traffic is the pilot's responsibility. Therefore, in such circumstances, a pilot is expected to discharge his collision avoidance responsibility without assistance from the controller.

6 Choosing the Most Appropriate Service

6.1 A pilot shall determine and request the appropriate service for the various phases and conditions of flight.

- a. If you don't need specific traffic information but just want just want generic information, then a Basic Service might be appropriate to your needs;
- b. If a pilot requires traffic information a Traffic Service should be requested from ATC radar units;
- c. If your flight conditions and/or nature of flight are such that you need advice on how to avoid conflicting aircraft (e.g. flight in IMC and/or where cockpit lookout is constrained) then you should ask ATC radar units for a Deconfliction Service. If you are speaking to an ATC unit without radar, then you could ask for a Procedural Service, where the controller will provide advice to deconflict from other aircraft participating in the service. However, under a Procedural Service the controller will only know about the aircraft that he is talking to.