

Airprox, ASK 23 B, PH-760 and Van's RV-9A, F-PDAD

Noordkop glider airfield, 8 July 2023

The FLARM¹¹ equipped ASK 23 B single-seat glider took off from Runway 03 at Noordkop glider airfield (hereafter Noordkop) for a local flight using the winch launch method. On board was a pilot who did not yet hold an Sailplane Pilot Licence and was making his 25th solo flight. Towards the end of the winch launch, the pilot observed a motorised aircraft at his 10 o'clock position flying towards a position above the winch path where the glider would soon afterwards be at almost the same altitude. The pilot pushed the stick forward and levelled the glider off after which he released the winch cable early. According to his estimate, the vertical distance between both aircraft at that moment was less than 50 metres. FLARM gave no warning.

The motorised aircraft was a single-engined Van's RV-9A. The aircraft had taken off from Texel International Airport (EHTX, hereafter Texel) for a VFR flight to Grimbergen Airfield (EBGB) in Belgium. The aircraft was flying from the south of the Wadden Sea Corridor towards the Pampus VOR¹² at an altitude of 1,275 feet. The pilot, who navigated using SkyDemon navigation software, was aware that he was in the vicinity of Noordkop. He tried to visually locate it, but did not see any airfield nor gliders (in the sky). Since, according to the pilot, there were no thermals above 1,200 feet, he had assumed that no gliding activities were taking place. The SafeSky application he used also gave no indication of any activity on the ground or in the air.



▲ The flight path of the RV-9A.

(Source data: LVNL, source map: OpenStreetMap)

In the figure below, Texel is shown to the north and Noordkop to the east of De Kooy CTR. On the chart, the glider airfield is indicated with a G (of glider site) and the number 23 (indicating the maximum altitude of the winch cable, in hundreds of feet). The Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP) states that gliders can be launched daily up to a height of 2,300 feet from Noordkop before releasing the winch cable. The AIP also states that the winch cable represents an almost invisible obstacle, at a distance of approximately 1 NM all around the geographical location of the airfield.

The occurrence took place at 15.41 hours in class G airspace. This airspace is uncontrolled and pilots themselves are responsible for maintaining sufficient separation from other aircraft in order to avoid a collision. At the time of the occurrence, there were no clouds and the visibility values were between 30 and 50 km. Visibility was greater than the minimum required for VFR traffic in uncontrolled airspace.

The Wadden Sea Corridor is a busy route for aircraft flying to and from Texel. The location of Noordkop and its glider

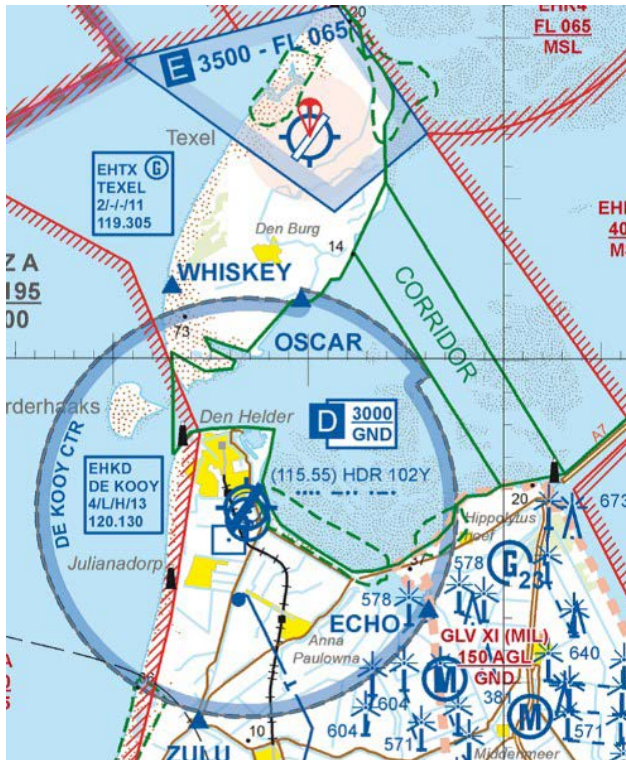
¹¹ FLARM is a traffic awareness and collision avoidance system.

¹² VHF Omnidirectional Range transmitter.

activities close to this corridor means aircraft and gliders frequently come into close proximity of one another. It is essential to take this into account during flight preparation. During the flight, it is crucial to maintain a constant lookout for other air traffic and employing a good scanning technique.

Classification: Serious incident

Reference: 2023137



▲ Cut-out from aeronautical chart, the Netherlands.
(Source: Air Traffic Control the Netherlands)