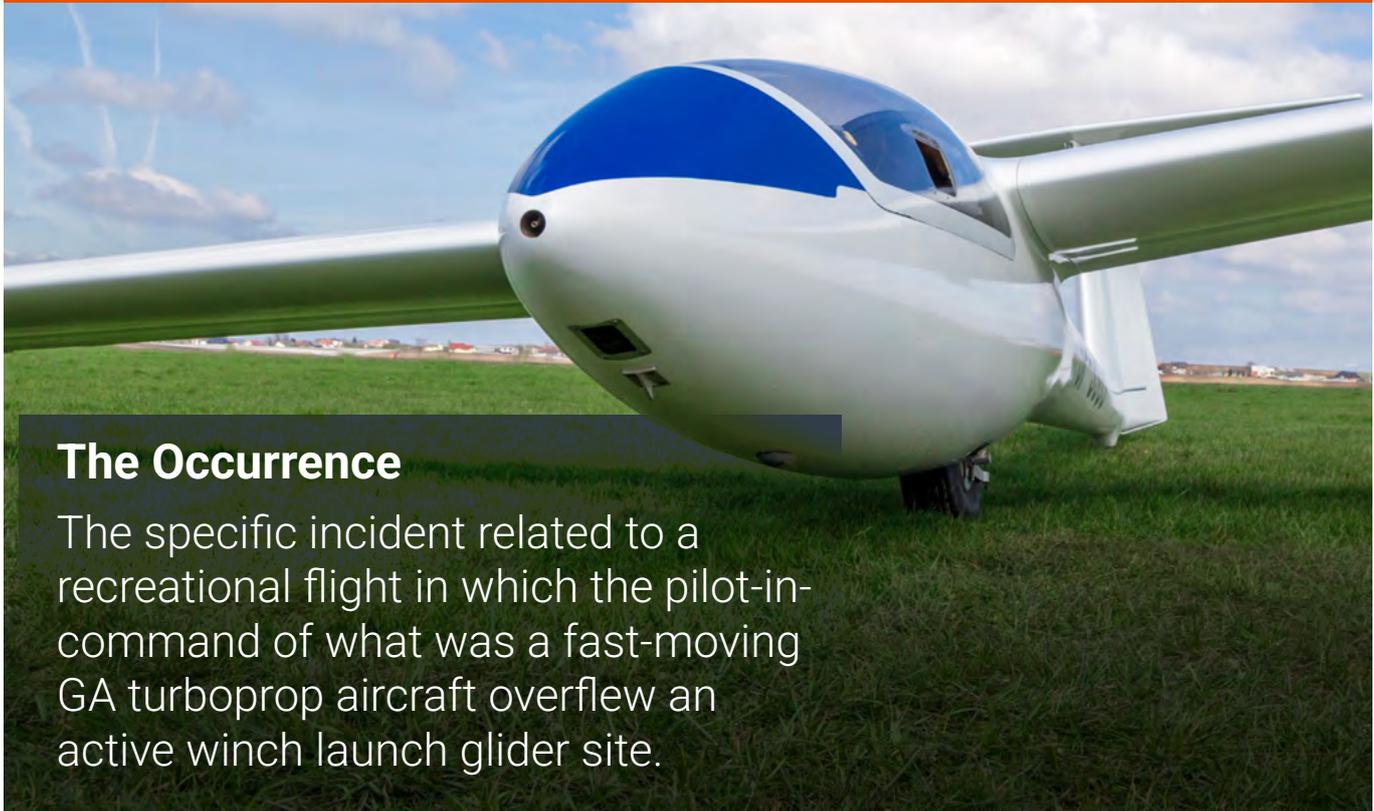


OCCURRENCES



MORs – IMPROVING AVIATION SAFETY CONFIDENTIALLY



The Occurrence

The specific incident related to a recreational flight in which the pilot-in-command of what was a fast-moving GA turboprop aircraft overflew an active winch launch glider site.

The airfield in question, which is promulgated as having winch launch activity up to 3700ft amsl, had four gliders and one tow aircraft in operation at the time of the incident. As another glider was being prepared for launch the aircraft was observed flying at high speed toward the airfield overhead and without a radio call being made. The launch sequence was immediately stopped by the launch-point operator to prevent any conflict and the glider subsequently released the cable on the ground as the aircraft continued overhead at what was observed to be approximately 2000ft aal.

By overflying the site directly and without establishing two-way communication with the airfield the pilot-in-command of the aircraft not only put themselves but other airspace user at significant risk of coming into conflict with the launching cables. With this specific incident there was also a heightened level of risk as the

winch launch cable was seconds away from being activated which could have put both the aircraft and glider in serious conflict.

As part of the GAU investigation the pilot explained that ATC had warned the aircraft's track would take it toward the glider site. Options to deviate from the track were discounted by the pilot due to concerns of infringing the ATZ of two nearby airfields. The pilot instead determined the safest option based upon the weather and an assumption there was no gliding activity, would be to pass overhead the glider site, which consequently resulted in this incident.



UK Civil Aviation
Authority



JUST CULTURE PERSPECTIVE



It fair to assume that a pilot would not deliberately fly over an active glider winch launch site to wilfully endanger other airspace users! Although inadvertent flights over such sites are not a common occurrence, the GAU continues to receive such reports and has noted there are four common root causes, including i) a lack of RT communication with the airfield, ii) lapses in Pre-Flight Planning, iii) lapses in Threat and Error Management and iv) an overreliance of a VFR Moving Map.

With this specific occurrence three of these root causes came into play. Firstly, before the pilot became airborne, they should have undertaken a thorough pre-flight plan using a VFR Paper Chart which would have alerted them to the location of the glider site and the altitude to which they were going to operate. Additionally, details of the glider site was published in the UK AIP at ENR 5.5 (Aerial Sporting and Recreational Activities), which includes winch heights above ground level, site elevations above mean sea level and operator contacts.

This lapse in pre-flight planning ultimately led to the pilot making their second error whilst in flight by not having a 'Plan B' after being warned by ATC about the glider site when flying proximate to the ATZ's of other airfields. Faced with this developing situation the pilot elected to fly directly overhead the airfield, unaware glider winch launches were in operation. Finally, the third error by the pilot was after electing to overfly the airfield they did not change to the airfield's frequency to whom they should have communicated and advised of their proposed intentions.

Although not a root cause in this occurrence, another common theme with winch-launch overflights is when there is a perceived overreliance on using a VFR moving map. It is worth noting that gliding sites are marked differently on paper VFR charts and VFR moving maps. On a paper VFR chart, the site is depicted with a blue circle and a 'G' with the figure in thousands of feet (amsl) to which the cable may extend and be released. However, although a VFR moving map may use a glider symbol to identify the site, the maximum cable altitude may not be visible without action to reveal more details, and the location of the site may not necessarily be as accurate geographically when compared to the paper chart.

In line with a Just Culture the GAU Subject Matter Expert determined the pilot involved would best benefit from an educational MOR closure letter detailing the various root causes that led to the occurrence and mitigating guidance to avoid a repetition. In addition, the letter directed the pilot to other sources of information regarding winch launch glider sites, including the CAA animation 'Flying over Gliding Sites, the Airspace & Safety Initiative website where an example (# 8) is explored within the Infringement Occurrences section and Safety Sense Leaflet #29 detailing Moving Map Devices.

UK MANDATORY OCCURRENCE REPORTING

Mandatory occurrence reporting is aimed at continued learning from aviation occurrences. It's aimed at improving safety by ensuring that relevant safety information relating to civil aviation is reported, collected, stored, protected, exchanged, disseminated, and analysed.

It is not to attribute blame or liability. Occurrence Reports are treated confidentially to maintain full and free reporting from the aviation community.

What should I report?

In a nutshell any occurrence you feel could impact on aviation safety, this will ensure that we always review and learn from events.

How can I report?

Reporters should submit MORs to the UK CAA at the [Aviation Reporting Portal](#). Further details about how reports can be submitted using the reporting portal can be found in [CAP1496](#).

