

HGC procedures when parachuting is in progress

Glider and tug pilots need to avoid conflict with parachute operations at Shobdon. This document lays down the procedures that should be adopted. All glider and tug pilots should read this and conform. These procedures may need to be adapted in the light of experience. Please let me as HGC Safety Officer know if you have any comments. If you are aware of any incidents where something did not work as intended or where safety was compromised please raise an HAC Problem Report and also let me know.

Skydive Shobdon

Skydive Shobdon will start operations on Friday 6th April 2018. Initially they plan to operate on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. All drops will be carried out by experienced parachutists who should be capable of accurate landing on the designated parachute landing area (PLA). The PLA is on the grass area south of the met station and north of taxiway Bravo. Drops will typically be from FL100 and the parachutists will freefall down to about 3000'. The jump plane will initially be an Airvan G-SCOL.

Parachuting operations

Initially parachuting operations will only be allowed when a FISO is on duty. Gliding interaction with the parachute operation will be coordinated by the FISO. Drops will be coordinated between the FISO, the pilot of the jump plane and the Drop Zone (DZ) controller on the ground. When these three individuals agree that the DZ is clear there will be up to a 2 minute delay before the parachutists exit the plane and then it will take up to 5 minutes for all the parachutes to land.

Landings

Landing on either the grass or the hard runway is allowed even when parachutists are dropping. It is not expected that parachutists will drift onto the runways although it is always wise to be prepared for the unexpected!

Early solo pilots

We should inform the FISO by radio when an early solo pilot is about to launch. The FISO will suspend parachuting operations while an early solo pilot is flying. For these purposes an early solo pilot is anyone who hasn't yet converted to the Junior or is on their first flight in the Junior. There are similar provisions for early power pilots.

Changes to circuit procedure

You must do a full circuit and must not turn in early unless you can be sure that no parachutes are in the air. If you get low and think it may be necessary to do an abbreviated circuit then call the FISO and let them know sooner rather than later. They will be able to tell you if it is clear to turn in early or hold the drop if the parachutists are still in the aircraft. Note that conflict is more likely when we are operating on 08 than when we are on 26.

Radio calls

It is vital that you have a working radio with a fully charged battery before you take off. If you are in any doubt check your radio by calling the FISO. If you don't find it too distracting listen out on the airfield frequency while you are local to Shobdon so as to improve your situational awareness. Make sure the radio is on the correct frequency and the volume turned up before you join circuit. Join circuit at sufficient height for a full circuit and call in good time. If you have been away on cross country or on a long local flight it is good practice to call before joining circuit to let the FISO know you will shortly be joining downwind.

Changes to aerotowing

No launches may be initiated when parachutes are dropping. This is so that in the case of a low launch failure the tug and glider are free to complete an abbreviated circuit and landing. When launching on 08 the tug pilot must request permission from the FISO before starting the engine. This is because of the proximity of the tug parking area to the DZ.

The tug pilot must fly a full glider circuit if parachuting is in progress. This is roughly over the village (on a line between Ledicot and The Cott) instead of over the old cinema. However remember that you must not fly over the village below 500' QFE.

Parachuting Sector

It is impossible to spot free-falling parachutists in time to avoid them. Therefore it is imperative that we keep clear of the parachuting sector unless we can verify that no parachutists are dropping. You must keep clear of the sector at all heights (i.e. up to FL145) except that it is OK to fly through the sector on the base leg and approach as part of a normal circuit. The sector will be a wedge with its point centred on the Parachute Landing Area and extending upwind for 2 nautical miles. Each morning the parachute operation will determine the orientation of the sector depending on the wind and produce a chart showing the sector before operations start. If the wind changes significantly the parachute operation will change the sector. You must carefully note the sector before you take off.

If you are outside the Shobdon ATZ (e.g. north of Shobdon Hill, west of Wapley Hill or east of Mortimer's Cross) then you will be clear of the sector.

I have yet to formalise an effective and foolproof method of ensuring that we know where the parachute sector is and when it changes. I will update this draft document when the method is in place.

Phil King
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