EXEMPLARY ROLE FOR DEN HELDER AIRPORT

Ellen Kuipers of the Waddenzeevereniging (Wadden Sea Society) and Cor Smit of Imares believe that Den Helder Airport and all involved parties should be praised for the constructive way in which they handled the permit process for additional flight movements. As a result, Den Helder Airport can soon work toward acquiring a permit without legal squabbling.

For years, the increase in activities on the Dutch Continental Shelf has meant that Den Helder Airport has been steadily approaching the limit in the number of flight movements permitted for civilian helicopters. This was the reason behind the efforts by airport management to expand this number through a new permit within the framework of the Nature Conservation Act. The basis for this process had already been set in 2003. Initially in 2003 and 2004, Cor Smit, a researcher at Imares, performed preliminary research on the mud flats to determine the potential effects of expanding the number of civilian helicopter flight movements on the bird population. He concluded at the time that there were no significant effects. However, we only studied potential consequences during a certain time of the year and the Wadden Sea Society and other environmental organizations criticized us for this. Ellen Kuipers, project manager for shipping safety, disaster relief and military activities with the Wadden Sea Society, had this to say: "We raised objections against this, which were accepted by the Minister of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Food Quality. This meant that part of the research had to be redone." Imares performed a more extensive follow-up study on the mud flats in 2006; the results were incorporated in a report. Long-term research

Before the start of this follow-up study, intensive consultation was conducted between all involved parties. Cor Smit: "We prepared a plan of action and discussed it with various organizations, including the Wadden Sea Society."

Cor Smit and Ellen Kuipers argue for setting up an independent organization to supervise potential activities in Natur 2000 areas.

EXEMPLARY ROLE FOR DEN HELDER AIRPORT

Foreword

In the previous issue of this newsletter, we proudly reported the start of scheduled service between Den Helder and Norwich. Unfortunately, this project did not turn out as we expected. Insufficient interest in this destination by the offshore sector has meant that profitable development is no longer possible. Nevertheless, the plan for scheduled service with the United Kingdom has not been entirely shelved. A new party recently reported its intention to set up service between Den Helder and Aberdeen. You can read more about it in the 'Short News' section.

Also, co-founder Pieter de Ridder discusses the activities of Heli Holland Offshore, a helicopter operator that has been active in the offshore sector since December 2007. Peter van der Hoek of Heldair Aviation talks about his love of flying and the activities that he has been developing at Den Helder Airport. In addition, researcher Cor Smit of Imares and project manager Ellen Kuipers of the Wadden Sea Society extensively discuss the constructive way in which Den Helder Airport, along with all the other involved parties, has handled the permit process for additional flight movements. Both believe that we have approached this very well and that it can serve as a model for other procedures. Moreover, we hope to be able to complete our permit procedure soon.

We also have accounts by Jac van Steijn, who has been serving as our technical support for the past ten years, and newcomer Marion Tijsen, who has joined our team as accounts officer, succeeding Margriet Nelis.

Finally, Roel Hijmans talks about his career in aviation and the transfer of his position to Conny van den Hoff on 1 January 2009.

Luchthavenweg 10A, 1786 PP Den Helder
Telefon: (0223) 63 56 66 | Fax: (0223) 66 08 92
Internet: www.denhelderairport.nl
E-mail: marketing@denhelderairport.nl

Once again, we wish you a lot of reading pleasure!
Roel Hijmans & Conny van den Hoff

For years, the increase in activities on the Dutch Continental Shelf has meant that Den Helder Airport has been steadily approaching the limit in the number of flight movements permitted for civilian helicopters. This was the reason behind the efforts by airport management to expand this number through a new permit within the framework of the Nature Conservation Act. The basis for this process had already been set in 2003. Initially in 2003 and 2004, Cor Smit, a researcher at Imares, performed preliminary research on the mud flats to determine the potential effects of expanding the number of civilian helicopter flight movements on the bird population. He concluded at the time that there were no significant effects. However, we only studied potential consequences during a certain time of the year and the Wadden Sea Society and other environmental organizations criticized us for this. Ellen Kuipers, project manager for shipping safety, disaster relief and military activities with the Wadden Sea Society, had this to say: "We raised objections against this, which were accepted by the Minister of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Food Quality. This meant that part of the research had to be redone." Imares performed a more extensive follow-up study on the mud flats in 2006; the results were incorporated in a report.
when as many as seven to ten helicopters can fly over the mud flats within an hour. Here, too, no significant effects on the bird population were observed.

Unique situation

I believe that the entire situation is unique since we were able to inspect the application for the new permit and the draft regulations at an early stage”, Ellen Kuipers continues, “and we were free to talk about it with all parties involved. But we also saw the opportunity to establish the preconditions in cooperation with Den Helder Airport. We had some heated discussions every now and then, but we always continued to discuss the matter with mutual respect. We were able to work it all out together which avoided involvement in legal procedures. As far as that’s concerned, Den Helder Airport certainly deserves commendation. Other companies, organizations and governments should use it as a model. We also believe that it’s unpleasant to start a course with all involved parties at an early stage, so you always know what you’re up against. This requires an initial investment, but you easily earn it back fair and square since you can go through a certain procedure more quickly and ultimately acquire a workable permit.”

Model

Cor Smit: “I’m very pleased with this case and every now and then I present it as a model of how things should go. We’re dealing with European Natura 2000 legislation, which has now been translated into the Dutch Nature Conservation Act. Politicians and the media sometimes create the impression that this Natura 2000 legislation precludes all activities in the Wadden Sea. The same applies for other areas that fall under this regulation. I’d like to emphasize that it doesn’t have to be this way. If as the initiator, you can clearly show that there are no significant effects, some activities are certainly possible within given boundaries. This legislation also takes into account that any significant effects can be mitigated or counterbalanced. All parties can ultimately achieve the desired result with open and transparent consultation, as was the case with Den Helder Airport and all the other parties involved.” Ellen Kuipers continues: “A lot of rumours have been circulating about Natura 2000 and about us. One of them is that the Wadden Sea Society wants to have everyone out of the Wadden Sea. The press is sometimes biased, particularly when it comes to legal cases. The Wadden Sea is a unique wildlife area, which also provides work and recreation. And it has to remain so. It’s only possible if we can talk about how to deal with it.”

Both Cor and Ellen also argue for an approach that is used in England, where an independent organization supervises potential activities in Natura 2000 areas from start to finish. Cor Smit: “This semi-government organization plays a coordinating role in going through the permit process and ensures that everyone involved can have a say. As a result, it’s very rare in England for an initiative to reach a court of law or the Council of State. This occurs far too often in the Netherlands. A similar construction should be sought here.”

The permit procedure for Den Helder Airport, for an expansion to 25,000 flight movements a year is expected to be completed soon.
Heli Holland Offshore Spreads its Wings

It's been a long time since they were rare birds at Den Helder Airport: the staff and helicopter of Heli Holland Offshore, a new helicopter company that, as a division of the Heli Holland Group, has been active in the offshore sector since December 2007. And they have been successful, as general manager Pieter de Ridder explains, as he immediately seized the opportunity to announce the arrival of a second helicopter.

Pieter de Ridder

Heli Holland Offshore was founded by Edwin Soeters and Pieter de Ridder, both from the aviation sector where they worked for Schreiner among others. Pieter de Ridder was also present at the start of the Air Logistics Centre at Den Helder Airport, which was developed by logistic service provider Peterson SBS. The search to realize their plans in the offshore sector took them to Emmer Compaccum, where the headquarters of Heli Holland is located. The company had already been making helicopter flights over land, performing helicopter maintenance work and training helicopter pilots for more than 25 years. The Heli Holland fleet is comprised of eighteen helicopters of eight different types. "The founder and owner of Heli Holland, René van der Haring, believed in our plans", Pieter de Ridder explains, "which resulted in the founding of Heli Holland Offshore on 27 May 2007. We established ourselves at Amsterdam Heliport in the Western Harbour area and shortly afterwards we were able to acquire an EC155B1 helicopter that had been owned by Prince Albert of Monaco. It needed very few adjustments to prepare it for performing offshore flights."

The first helicopter Heli Holland Offshore used for work in the offshore sector is an EC155B1 aircraft.

A lot of work from CGG Veritas

After the arrival of the first helicopter, the business developed rapidly. "We obtained the Air Operators Certificate on 12 December 2007, and a day later we had already made our first offshore flight. This involved Allseas staff who had to be transferred to the pipe layer Audacia, which was working in the L9 block on the Dutch Continental Shelf at the time."

Oil companies such as GDF SUEZ E&P Nederland, Wintershall and Chevron also approached the new helicopter company and audits followed from BP, Targa, Shell and Wyvren, which all went well. Flights were made more frequently, not only from Den Helder Airport, but from airports in England, Scotland, Norway and the Shetland Islands as well. The latter was particularly thanks to the seismic contractor CGG Veritas. "During the summer season, this company was active in the waters of Northwest Europe with four seismic vessels. We were called in to provide the crew changes for all these ships. They were so satisfied that we were asked if we would perform this work in the summer season of 2009. One of the four seismic vessels will also remain active in..."
NEW DIRECTOR MAKES SOFT LANDING

Although she’s been occupying his chair for almost a year, Conny van den Hoff will officially take over the position of airport director from Roel Hijmans on 1 January 2009. For the departing director, it will signify an end to his long career in aviation, 32 years of which were spent in Den Helder. Next year, Roel will remain at Den Helder Airport only one day a week to supervise a number of projects, including the construction of a hangar.

Expansion fleet

Until recently, the EC155B1 flew an average of some 40 to 50 hours a month. Since a contract has now been concluded with GDF SUEZ E&P Nederland, another 90 to 120 hours a month have been added. That was good reason for Heli Holland Offshore to deploy extra helicopters. “We leased an AW139 helicopter from Faerøe Island-based Atlantic Airways. We are also looking for a new EC155B1 helicopter now that we’re flying so much, we’d like to have two heli’s permanently stationed at Den Helder Airport.” There is also a plan to expand the hangar and office facilities at Heliport Amsterdam for which permits have already been requested. “We’re working hard at it, but are still very busy in the start-up and growth phase. We can already prove ourselves thanks to the contract concluded with GDF SUEZ E&P Nederland. 2009 will be a very important year for us.” According to Pieter de Ridder, the major strength of Heli Holland Offshore is its ability to respond to ad hoc requests from the offshore sector with flexibility and speed. “We’ve already managed to fly our heli ten minutes after receiving a phone call.”

Although Roel Hijmans initially started work at KLM Noordzee Helicopters in Den Helder with mixed feelings, he would never be sorry about this step in his career. He explains: “During all those years I never hesitated going to work.” Roel began his aviation career in 1968 at Schiphol. For the first four years, he worked for a handling agent, followed by another four years for the Israeli airline El Al. He also obtained his pilot’s licence during that time. In 1976, Roel transferred to Beek Airport, but he would not remain there for long. “After I had been at Beek for a couple of months, I heard from a friend that there was a vacancy at KLM North Sea Helicopters. I applied for the job and was hired. The intention was for me to become station manager at the municipal helicopter port in Den Helder, which was still located on the Ravelijnweg in those days. It didn’t really interest me, since I preferred to continue working at Schiphol. They also wanted to keep me there: But I went to work in Den Helder on a rotational basis, two weeks on, one week off. Fortunately, I developed a liking to it after some time.” From manager to director

In 1981, the helicopter port moved to De Kooy Naval Air Base. There was an agreement with the oil companies that they would guarantee the operating expenses of the civilian part of Den Helder Airport for ten years. “When, in 1990, the oil companies indicated that they wanted out of this contract, it was obvious that the Municipality of Den Helder, in cooperation with KLM ERA Helicopters, would set up a private limited company for this. It was later converted into a limited partnership. Aside from my job as station manager, I was also appointed director.” Until 1994, Roel would hold both jobs, but after that time he could focus exclusively on the directorship. Due to his fine handling of the job, the results were favourable.
Den Helder Airport expanded into a modern airport with a magnificent terminal building, which gave it the opportunity to acquire a very good position and reputation in the offshore industry. Moreover, a good relationship developed with everyone involved, neighbours and environmental organizations, which was entirely based on openness and mutual respect. “We’re proud of what we built up together.”

Confidant
On 1 January 1992, Roel was joined by Conny van den Hoff, who assisted him as executive secretary and who developed tremendously from that time on. In addition to her secretarial work, Conny took on an increasing number of tasks, including PR and Marketing and the organization of the Open Days. She became Roel’s confidant. Together for years, they would be the face of Den Helder Airport. “Through the years I’ve always had a lot of support from Conny. We always discussed and planned everything together. Beside the good cooperation with Conny, I have had much support of Ernst Kip. As Chairman of the Board of Directors he has had a large share in the success of Den Helder Airport, especially at managerial level.”

Conny: “The close cooperation with Roel and Ernst gave me the opportunity to acquire a lot of knowledge and experience and build up a large business network. It provided a solid foundation to take over Roel’s tasks in the long term.” Conny had already been appointed Deputy Director as of 1 January 2007 and starting early next year, she’ll take over all the tasks from the retiring director of Den Helder Airport. Roel has already been working two days a week less this year. “I wanted to arrange a couple of matters before my departure, but unfortunately I was not successful in doing so. These included the set-up of a scheduled service and the construction of a testing spot. The testing spot has been under discussion for so long that it should have been achieved by now. But Conny can get to work on that.”

Now that Airport Director Roel Hijmans is passing on the baton to Conny van den Hoff, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Den Helder Airport, Ernst Kip, looks back on more than eighteen years of intensive and pleasant cooperation with him.

Roel Hijmans and Ernst Kip first met in the 1980s, when the latter was working in Den Helder as the director of the municipal fish auction and the municipal port authority. Their contact became even more intensive in 1990, when Ernst Kip assumed responsibility as alderman of Economic Affairs and also became commissioner of Den Helder Airport in that capacity. Two years later, this position was changed to Chairman of the Board of Directors. “Since then I’ve been coming to the airport once or twice a week, not only as a commissioner, but also as a sparring partner for the management board. I got to know Roel well during that period. I’m particularly impressed by his skill at making contacts. He talks just as easily with neighbours as with representatives of environmental movements, oil companies and governments. He also knows how to effectively manage a large and complex organization with a small team. I have also come to admire his persuasive powers and how he presents himself among the management boards of other airports in the Netherlands. The advantage is that Roel grew up in the aviation sector. Thanks to this background, he’s very knowledgeable, speaks the language and knows how to run things. He’s also an enthusiastic pilot. I’ve always had very pleasant experiences in cooperating with him and arranging all sorts of matters together. The negotiations that were conducted several years ago to keep Den Helder Airport open were particularly exciting. During such negotiations I play the ‘bad guy’ while Roel plays the balanced party. This teamwork has always worked well. Now that he’s found a good successor in Conny van den Hoff, I’m also happy that Roel is still involved at the airport one day a week to supervise special projects. Roel is a very pleasant person who has made tremendous achievements over the years.”
JAC VAN STEIJN: THE MAN BEHIND THE SCENES AT DEN HELDER AIRPORT

In January 2009, assistant airport master Jac van Steijn (60) will have worked at Den Helder Airport for exactly ten years. His primary task is the technical management of all airport facilities. He is also co-responsible for tanking up the fixed-wing planes. But Jac has many more talents up his sleeve.

His life began on the Keizerstraat in Den Helder where Jac and his five brothers and two sisters grew up. “My father was a carpenter and all my brothers were also in construction. However, I wanted something different and therefore decided to take a three-year basic training course at the baker school in Den Helder.” He then went to work in the baker trade as an assistant. Later he became first assistant and ultimately master. He still took various courses in the evening hours, including a training course to become an inspector. “Actually I wanted to be a teacher in the baker’s trade, but nothing ever came of it.” Jac worked for thirty years in various bakeries in Den Helder and Schagen. In addition to his work, he also had entirely different interests. “I always put a lot of time and energy into sports, particularly basketball. I played in the first team of HAV (Noordkop) and WGW for some fifteen years. After receiving my trainers’ diploma, I also gave training for many years. I then started refereeing matches. I enjoyed it so much that I continued doing this throughout the Netherlands, up to the top level, until four years ago. I know a lot of people from the basketball world, including presenter Mart Smets, who was also a very good basketball player.”

A new job

Since Jac acquired increasing physical problems, he had to leave the heavy baker profession at the age of 50 and look for another job. He was appointed assistant airport master at Den Helder Airport and still enjoys this work. “I make sure that all technical matters here run smoothly. I also perform small repair and maintenance work and I tank up fixed-wing planes. I've taken several courses for my work. In addition to an in-house emergency and first aid course and an automatic external defibrillator course, I also took a difficult course in dealing with dangerous substances, which I passed in one go.”

Jac believes that the highlights of the past ten years were the Open Days that are held at Den Helder Airport and everything that has to do with its preparation, as well as the construction of the new terminal building. “In my work, the variation and the contact with people attract me the most.”

In his free time, Jac can often be found in his garage, where he enjoys handiwork and devising practical solutions for technical problems. “I also regularly go to Alanya, Turkey, where my wife and I have a house.”

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**Recent News:**

- A new candidate has come forward to set up a scheduled service. The English company Highland Airways is considering regular flight service between Aberdeen, Scotland and Den Helder Airport starting in April 2009.
- Now that the building permit for a fifth hangar at Den Helder Airport has been requested, its construction can probably start early next year. The new hangar, with a floor area of 1600 square metres, should offer accommodation for five to six helicopters. The hangar is expected to be put into use next year.
- A closed smokers’ area will be created in Restaurant Vice Versa to accommodate hard-core smokers. It will be equipped with a powerful exhaust system to satisfy all the legal requirements. It will be constructed by the Den Helder companies Aannemingsbedrijf Van der Wal, Bouman Elektrotechniek and Technisch Bedrijf Schellingen.
- Air traffic safety in the lower air space has improved significantly thanks to the use of a new radio network over the North Sea. The radio communication system consists of transmitting and receiving equipment that is installed on twelve oil and gas production platforms distributed over the Dutch Continental Shelf. Annually, some 70,000 helicopter flights will be made from, to and between more than 120 platforms in this area. The construction of the new system is financed by NOGEP A, the Netherlands Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Association.
- The Municipality of Den Helder, the Ministry of Defence and Den Helder Airport will be drawing up a new future vision to fully utilize the economic development of Den Helder Airport and the surrounding area. The procedure for this has been started.
- Recently a new technique has been applied for the layout of our digital newsletter. Unfortunately, this also means that readers who have already registered for the newsletter must re-register via our internet site.
FLYING HAS SEIZED ME LIKE A VIRUS

He used to play with model airplanes. He taught himself to fly in various types of aeroplanes and then flew for various employers in Africa and Europe. Nowadays he divides his time among work in the offshore industry and running his own aviation company Heldair Aviation. That is the life story of Peter van der Hoek in a nutshell.

Peter van der Hoek started Heldair Aviation in 2001. At the time, he worked with his brother, Henk-Jan, who decided that the young aviation company was not for him after only nine months. Peter continued alone with a Cessna 172 four-seater, which is still used quite a lot. “I now fly this plane an average of some 40 hours a year for sight-seeing flights above the Netherlands, photo and film flights and scattering ashes. For this latter activity, a special funnel is installed in the plane. It is constructed so that the ashes are sucked out of the funnel and have no chance of coming onto the plane. I provide these flights for funeral service organizations such as Yardan as well as for private crematoriums. We also perform a number of private scatterings each year. A maximum of two next of kin can come along per flight, if desired.” The ashes are always scattered over water and are supervised by an employee from the crematorium. In the Netherlands, there are more than thirty locations along the North Sea coast and over the Wadden Sea, the Ijsselmeer and the Markermeer where this is permitted. Peter van der Hoek also conducts flowerbulb flights in the spring. “I start as early as April when the first bulbs come into bloom. Personally, I think it’s a pity that the flowerbulb growers switch to topping so quickly. As far as I’m concerned, they can leave those flowers a bit longer.”

Evidently lost hours don’t count. Business people prefer sitting in the car five days a week over covering the same distance in two days in an aeroplane. People believe that the price that has to be paid for flying is too high.” Still, Peter van der Hoek expects that business flights will be possible from Den Helder Airport in time. “However, a couple of restrictions would have to be removed, primarily with respect to opening hours. They’d have to be expanded by an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. The weekend closing would also have to be abandoned. I could then see opportunities for starting a charter company.” He cites the good accessibility of the airport, the extensive parking facilities and the rapid check-in options as advantages of flying from Den Helder Airport. “Everything here is geared toward very quick service. And with somewhat larger aircraft that can transport eight to nine passengers, it should be possible to get something off the ground.” Should there be an unexpectedly demand to transport larger groups, they would be passed on to Avicharter Heldair Aviation maintains good contacts with this company.

Offshore work
In addition to his activities for Heldair Aviation, Peter van der Hoek also began to work as a radio operator and logistics planner in the offshore industry. “I hired myself out to USG Energy, which in turn sent me on secondment to Wintershall. I regularly stay offshore for a week for them. Should there be an unexpected need to fly during my absence, I always have a couple of pilots on reserve.” Finally, Peter still conducts business in jacuzzis that are delivered throughout the Netherlands. But flying is and remains his great passion. “Flying has seized me like a virus. Actually, it’s a kind of addiction.”
MARION TIJSEN COMPLETES THE TEAM

Last year she was still working in flowerbulb export; she’s now been working as accounts officer at Den Helder Airport for the past few months. How things can change. Marion Tijsen took on this vacancy through the departure of Margriet Nelis. She didn’t have to think twice about taking on this new challenge, thereby completing the Den Helder Airport team.

Marion Tijsen is ambitious and enterprising. "My father used to have an agricultural company and you certainly learned how to work hard and in particular, to work independently." After Marion completed her senior general secondary education, she received her diploma in senior secondary commercial education at an accelerated pace. "I then went to work at a flowerbulb export company. First full-time, but after my daughter Maartje and two years later my son Stijn were born, I decided to work fewer hours. I enjoyed working at various jobs in this company for 16 years. During the last few years, I did the administration and performed secretarial duties, but virtually by routine." And then Marion shows her ambition. "I wanted to improve myself and work in other surroundings. Take training courses and learn. Certainly now that the children are somewhat older, I have more time to develop myself. In the meantime, I completed the executive secretary training and I just started with a training certificate in bookkeeping. It’s fantastic to have landed this job. It suits me perfectly. I work in a very nice team here and it’s a job with lots of independence, responsibility and potential for development." In addition to her work, study and children, Marion also finds time to play tennis and visit the sports school. She also enjoys going out to eat. All of this shows that Marion has found her niche at Den Helder Airport. She hopes to be able to enjoy this work for many years to come.

The rare bird that descended on Den Helder Airport on Wednesday, 10 September at 09:00 a.m. was one of the four Antonov An-2 aircraft from Uden-based Classic Wings. Eleven passengers, who went to visit the Submarine Service of the Royal Netherlands Navy, were on board. This 1000 hp plane is unusual in that it is the world’s largest single engine double-decker. More than 18,000 of these planes have been built in Russia, Poland and even China. The double-decker that landed at Den Helder Airport was built in 1957 and is one of the last planes that were manufactured in Russia. Classic Wings uses its planes for incentive flights and sightseeing flights. At 2.00 p.m., the double-decker took off again for its return to Lelystad.