LIMITED OCCURRENCE INVESTIGATION REPORT – FINAL

Reference Number	CA18/2/3/10639										
Classification	Accident		**Date**	25 February 2026			**Time**	0747Z			
Type of Operation	Aerial Work Operations (Part 137)										
Location											
Place of Departure	Denneoord Aerial Fire Base, George, Western Cape Province			Place of Intended Landing			Knysna Highway Aerodrome, Western Cape Province				
Place of Occurrence	On Runway 13, Knysna Highway Aerodrome, Western Cape Province										
GPS Co-ordinates	Latitude	33°57'01.18" S		Longitude	022°58'35.67" E		Elevation	785 feet			
Aircraft Information											
Registration	ZS-PFS										
Make; Model; S/N	Cessna, U206 (Serial Number: U206-0323)										
Damage to Aircraft	Substantial					Total Aircraft Hours	12 218.6				
Pilot-in-command											
Licence Type	Commercial Pilot Licence			Gender	Male		Age	53			
Licence Valid	Yes	Total Hours	1 226.2		Total Hours on Type	107.5					
Total Hours 30 Days	34.2			Total Flying on Type Past 90 Days	20.7						
People On-board	1 + 0	**Injuries**	0	**Fatalities**	0	**Other (on ground)**	0				

What Happened

On Wednesday morning, 25 February 2026, a pilot on-board a Cessna U206 aircraft registered ZS-PFS departed on a positioning flight from Denneoord Aerial Fire Base near George in Western Cape province to Knysna Highway Aerodrome in the same province. The flight was conducted under visual meteorological conditions (VMC) and under the provisions of Part 137 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011, as amended.

The pilot stated that after departure from Denneoord Aerial Fire Base at 0730Z, he flew to Knysna Highway Aerodrome to collect a person (an incident commander from a nature conservation entity) who was to evaluate a fire that was raging in the mountains, north of the aerodrome. This was the pilot's first landing at this aerodrome which comprised a single grass-covered runway that was 606 metres (m) long and 15m wide.

The pilot stated that he followed the unmanned aerodrome procedure (see Figure 1), joining left downwind for Runway 13. The surface wind was 4 knots (kts) blowing from the north with clear skies, according to his assessment of the prevailing wind. With this being a relatively short runway, the pilot stated that he had planned to land at the threshold of Runway 13 to ensure ample runway distance to bring the aircraft to a stop. During the final approach segment, the wing flaps were full down to

40° with the aircraft's recorded airspeed indicating a progressive decay. The aircraft descended below the optimal glide path whilst on short finals and touched down on a dirt road, approximately 18m short of the runway threshold. Upon initial ground contact, the main wheels struck an embankment next to the road, and the aircraft bounced and came down in a nose-down attitude. After the second ground contact, the nose wheel fork broke off from the landing gear oleo strut, and the nose gear strut assembly dug into the soft soil before the aircraft nosed over. It came to rest in an inverted attitude on the runway.

The incident commander recorded a video of the aircraft when it was on final approach for Runway 13 and the subsequent accident sequence using his mobile phone. The aircraft sustained substantial damage to the nose landing gear, propeller, wings and empennage. After the accident, the pilot had disembarked from the aircraft unassisted. The incident commander contacted the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) who assessed the pilot on-site and, later, transported him to a hospital in Knysna; he was kept overnight under medical supervision.

The accident occurred during daylight at Knysna Highway Aerodrome at Global Positioning System (GPS) co-ordinates determined to be 33°57'01.18" South 022°58'35.67" East, at an elevation of 785 feet (ft).

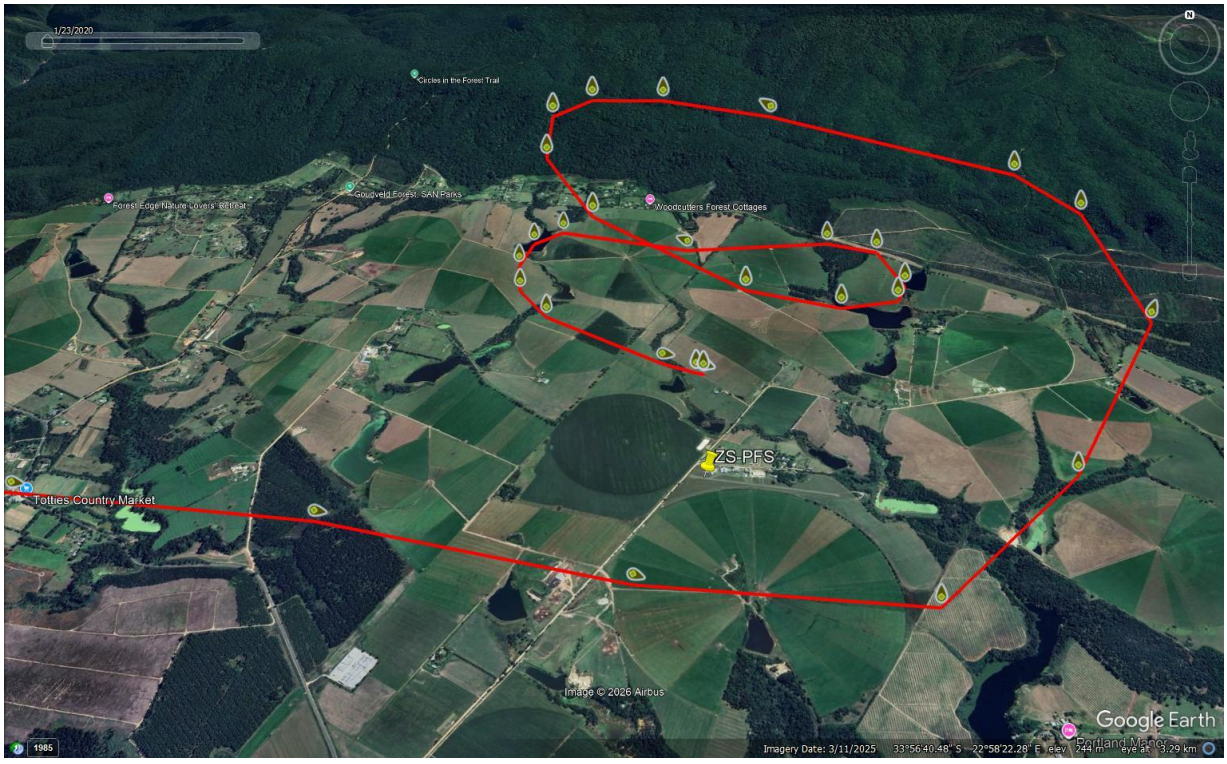

Figure 1: The aircraft was fitted with Spider Tracks. The red line indicates the track flown during the unmanned aerodrome joining procedure. (Source: Google Earth)

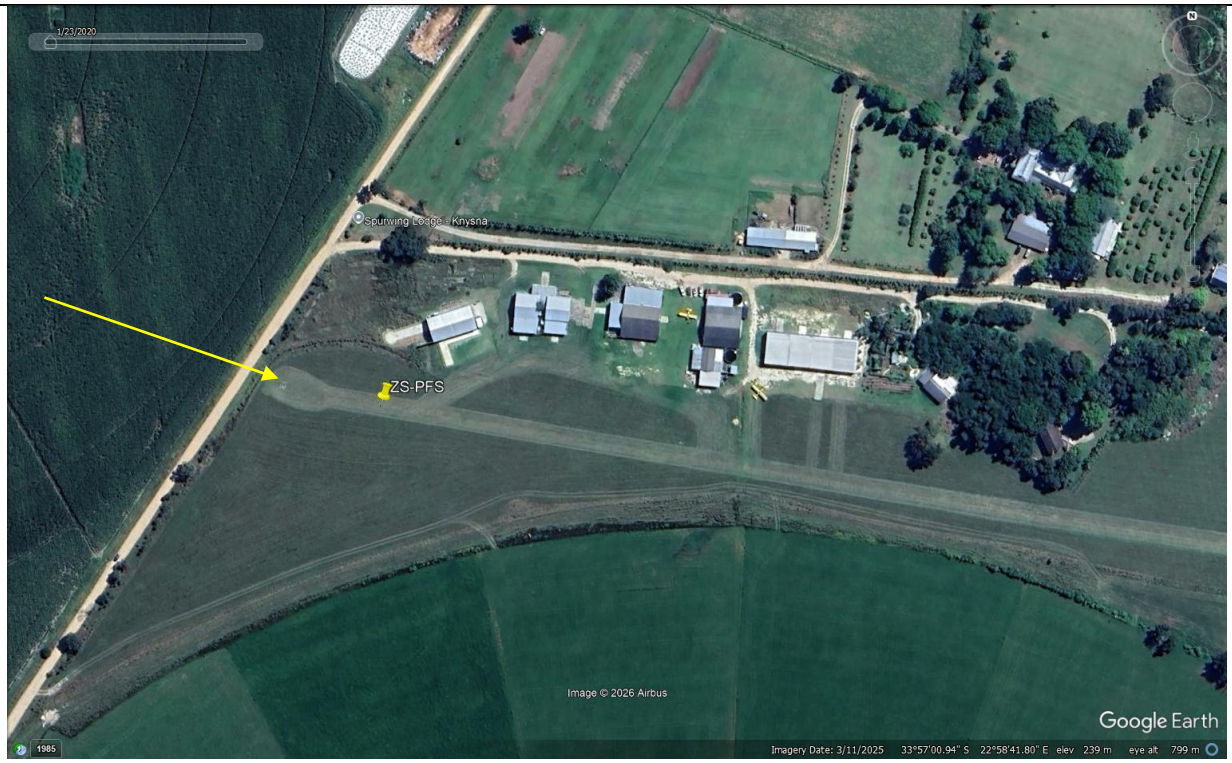

Figure 2: The aircraft approached from the west and came to rest on Runway 13. (Source: Google Earth)

Figure 3: The dirt road on which the aircraft touched down. (Source: Operator)

Figure 4: The embankment next to the road impacted by the main wheels. (Source: Operator)

Figure 5: The nose gear oleo strut assembly that dug into the soft soil. (Source: Operator)

Figure 6: Snapshot from the video footage showing the dug-in left-wing tip as the aircraft nosed over. (Source: Incident Commander)

Figure 7: The area where the nose wheel assembly broke off. (Source: Incident Commander)

Figure 8: The aircraft in its final rest after the accident. (Source: Incident Commander)

Weight and Balance

The pilot was the sole occupant on-board the aircraft. He took off with 300 litres (L) of Avgas LL100 on-board, which accounted for 210 kilograms (kg). The aircraft's empty weight was 949kg (2 092 pounds), the maximum take-off weight (MTOW) was 1 496kg (3 300 pounds), and the flight time was 17 minutes. The aircraft was operated within its prescribed weight and balance limitations.

Required Runway Distance

According to the landing distance table as per the POH, Section 6, Operational Data, the ground roll distance is 224.08m (735 feet [ft]) with 22% added due to the grass runway surface, which accounts for an additional distance of 49.29m. The total landing distance required was approximately 273.37m (896.65ft).

LANDING DISTANCE TABLE

LANDING DISTANCE WITH 40° FLAPS ON HARD SURFACE RUNWAY

GROSS WEIGHT POUNDS	APPROACH IAS MPH	@ SEA LEVEL & 59°F		@ 2500 FEET & 50°F		@ 5000 FEET & 41°F		@ 7500 FEET & 32°F	
		GROUND ROLL	TOTAL TO CLEAR 50 FT. OBS.	GROUND ROLL	TOTAL TO CLEAR 50 FT. OBS.	GROUND ROLL	TOTAL TO CLEAR 50 FT. OBS.	GROUND ROLL	TOTAL TO CLEAR 50 FT. OBS.
3600	75	735	1395	780	1480	825	1570	875	1665

NOTES: 1. Distancesn shown are based on zero wind, power off, and heavy breaking.
2. Reduce landing distances 10% for each 4 knots headwind.
3. For operation on dry, grass runway, increase distances (both "ground roll" and "total to clear 50 ft. obstacle") by 22% of "total to clear 50 ft. obstacle" figure

Table 1: Landing distance table as per the POH.

Meteorological Information

The weather information below was obtained from the Meteorological Aerodrome Report (METAR) that was issued by the South African Weather Service (SAWS), recorded at George Aerodrome (FAGG) on 25 February 2026 at 0730Z. The accident site was 30 nautical miles (nm) north-east of FAGG.

FAGG 250730Z VRB01KT 9999 FEW035 24/17 Q1012=

Wind Direction	Variable	Wind Speed	Light	Visibility	9999m
Temperature	24°C	Cloud Cover	1-2 oktas	Cloud Base	3 500ft
Dew Point	17°C	QNH	1012hPa		

Knysna Highway Aerodrome

The Knysna Highway Aerodrome is unlicensed. It has a single runway with a grass-covered surface orientated 13/31. The runway is 606m long and 15m wide.

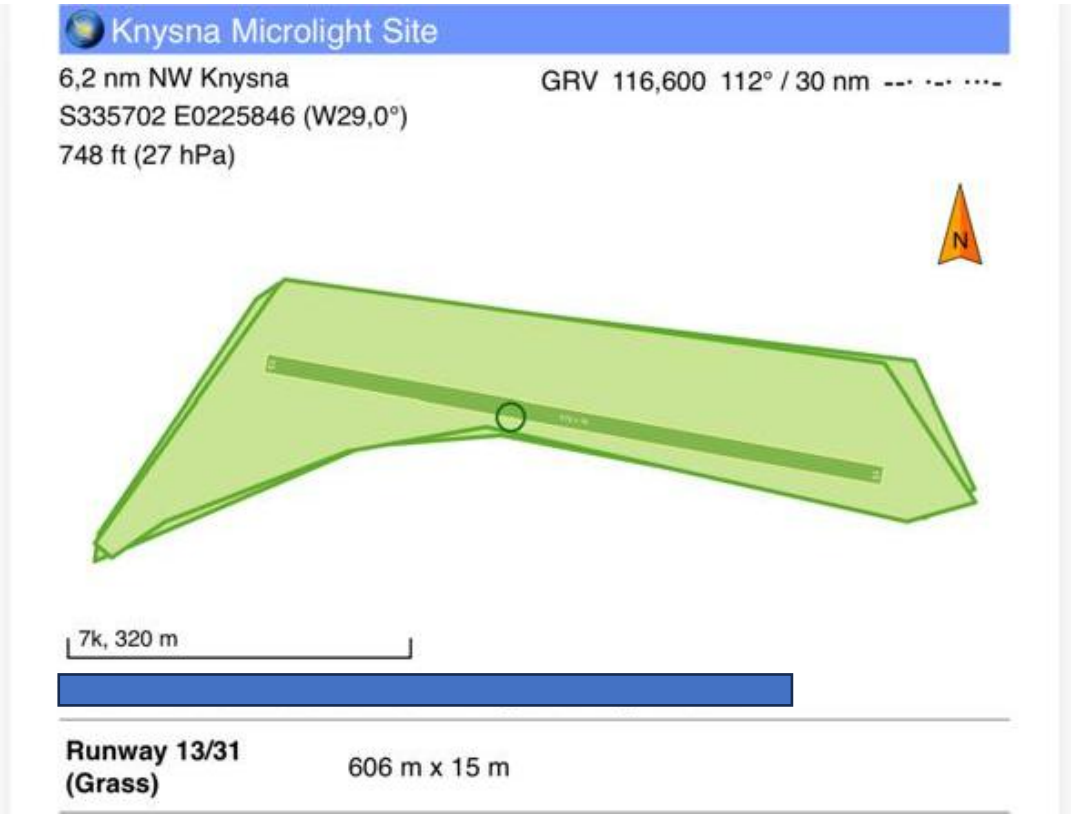

Diagram 1: Aerodrome layout chart.

Findings

1. Personnel

1.1 The pilot had a Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) that was initially issued by the Regulator (SACAA) on 28 March 2017. The pilot had flown a total of 1 226.2 hours of which 107.5 were on the aircraft type. He had a night rating as well as a Grade III Flight Instructor rating.

1.2 The pilot had a Class 1 aviation medical certificate that was issued on 1 December 2025 with an expiry date of 31 December 2026. Two limitations were applicable: (i) Valid only for correction for defective distant, intermediate, and near vision (VML); and (ii) Valid only with correction for defective near vision (VNL).

1.3 This was the pilot's first landing at this aerodrome.

1.4 The pilot had flown 34.2 hours during the past 30 days aboard various aircraft.

2. Aircraft

2.1 The last mandatory periodic inspection (MPI) of the aircraft was conducted and certified on 17 September 2025 at 12 137.0 total airframe hours. X. The aircraft had accrued 81.6 hours since the last MPI. The aircraft was manufactured in 1965.

2.2 The aircraft was issued a Certificate of Airworthiness (C of A) with the original issue date being 13 December 2007. The latest C of A had an expiry date of 31 December 2026.

2.3 The aircraft Certificate of Registration (C of R) was issued to the present owner on 25 April 2016.

2.4 The aircraft was issued a Certificate of Release to Service (CRS) on 17 September 2025 and valid until 16 September 2026 or at 12 237.0 airframe hours, whichever occurs first.

2.5 The aircraft's maximum take-off weight (MTOW) is 1 496 kilograms (kg) (3 300 pounds). The aircraft was correctly loaded for the flight as per the prescribed weight and balance limitations.

2.6 The aircraft was serviceable when it was dispatched for the flight; it sustained substantial damage during the accident.

3. Meteorological Information

3.1 Fine weather conditions prevailed at the time of the flight; the weather had no bearing in this accident.

4. Aerodrome

4.1 The pilot flew an approach for landing on Runway 13 at Knysna Highway Aerodrome, which is an unlicensed aerodrome.

Probable Cause

The pilot flew an unstable approach (low and slow on the final segment) and the aircraft touched down on a dirt road short of the runway, struck an embankment with the main wheels, bounced and, on ground contact, the nose wheel fork broke off. The nose gear oleo strut dug into the soft soil and the aircraft nosed over.

Contributing Factors

1. The pilot was unfamiliar with the aerodrome as he had never landed on it before. Being a relatively short runway, he had planned to touch down on the threshold of Runway 13.

2. At no stage during the approach had the pilot opted to perform a go-around.

Safety Action

None.

Safety Message and/or Safety Recommendation

Pilot/s not familiar with the Knysna Highway Aerodrome should ensure that they are aware of the hazards associated with the aerodrome, especially the approach and overrun areas as there is little margin for error. Proper flight planning is essential before making use of this aerodrome. When in doubt during an approach, pilot/s should perform a go-around.

About this Report

The decision to conduct a limited investigation is based on factors including whether the cause is known and the evidence supporting the cause is clear, the level of safety benefit likely to be obtained from an investigation, and that will determine the scope of an investigation. For this occurrence, a limited investigation has been conducted, and the Accident and Incident Investigations Division (AIID) has relied on the information submitted by the affected person/s and organisation/s to compile this limited report. The report has been compiled using information supplied in the initial notification, as well as from follow-up desk top enquiries to bring awareness of potential safety issues to the industry in respect of this occurrence, as well as possible safety action/s that the industry might want to consider in preventing a recurrence of a similar occurrence.

All times given in this report are Co-ordinated Universal Time (UTC) and will be denoted by (Z). South African Standard Time is UTC plus 2 hours.

Purpose
In terms of Regulation 12.03.1 of the Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR) 2011 and ICAO Annex 13, this report was compiled in the interest of the promotion of aviation safety and the reduction of the risk of aviation accidents or incidents, and not to apportion blame or liability.
Disclaimer
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This report is issued by:

Accident and Incident Investigations Division
South African Civil Aviation Authority
Republic of South Africa