



Marine Operations Manual

Section 08 Leisure Zone Management Policy

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1. Introduction

The Port of Dover is a busy area for leisure/recreational activities on the water including swimming, sailing kayaking, power boating, windsurfing and rowing. These activities predominately take place in two distinct areas, namely the Western Docks Marina complex and the Outer Harbour Recreational Area, which encompasses the seafront and associated sections of beach.

In line with the principles of the Port Marine Safety Code, the Port of Dover has recognised and taken a proactive approach to the risk management of such leisure activities. Having consulted with appropriate stakeholders and utilising the Guide to Good Practice on Port Marine Operations, the Port has developed a Leisure Zone Management Policy to enable a safe environment for all users to enjoy their particular activity.

Responsibility for monitoring the effective management of the recreational areas rests with the Harbour Master and his deputies (as defined in Port of Dover Marine Safety Code, Section 01 –



Compliance Plan – Section 5.1, d), who will as necessary and through stakeholder meetings carry out regular consultations to review the policy and reinforce compliance when required.

Whilst the Port has responsibility under the Port Marine Safety Code to ensure that marine activities are effectively managed to keep risks as low as reasonably practicable, it should be noted that all those who use the Harbour, whether in charge of a vessel or swimming, also have an important part to play in ensuring a safe environment for all. (See Section 7 – General Safety Advice for Leisure Users other than Swimmers and Section 8 – General Safety Advice for Swimmers).

2. Western Docks Marina Complex

Dover Marina provides extensive facilities and specialist management for the recreational navigation user. The navigation of all craft to and from the Marina confines are regulated by two centres, in the first instance by 'Dover VTS' on VHF Radio Channel 74, controlling the movements in the Port's main navigational fairways and then by 'Dover Marina' on VHF Radio Channel 80, once within the Marina and enclosed dock areas.

General navigational directions are issued and promulgated to local yacht clubs, yachting publications, Nautical Almanacs and are also available on the Port of Dover website. For example, speed limits in force for the Outer Harbour (8kts) and Marina areas (4kts) and details of safe water marks published. Detailed information concerning the use of the Harbour by leisure craft is published in the Marina Guide issued to all berth holders.

From the 20th of May 2024, the Wick Channel, Tidal Basin and Granville Dock are closed to all vessels, other than those involved in the land reclamation works planned to commence later in the year. Therefore, the inner harbour will become a restricted area to small vessels other than in the case of an emergency.

3. The Outer Harbour Recreational Area

The Outer Harbour Recreational Area is a large but relatively shallow part of the Harbour extending seaward from the beaches to the edge of the main shipping fairway which crosses the Harbour and the Eastern Docks Exclusion Zone. It is an area which encompasses all of the regular seafront beach-based leisure activities. The outer limit is marked by a west cardinal buoy, one yellow special buoy and an east cardinal buoy. Craft should not proceed beyond this point unless departing the harbour with authorisation from Port Control or returning to the Marina.

The maximum speed for all craft in the Outer Harbour and Recreational area is 8 knots. For all craft transiting the designated area of the swim zone to gain access to and from the public slipway the maximum speed is 4 knots.

Numerous types of leisure activities take place within this area, such as Dinghy Sailing, Sail Boarding, Stand-up Paddle Boarding, limited Yachting, Power Boating, Rowing, Kayaking and Swimming. High speed leisure activities involving the use of power craft such as Power Boats and Jet Skis are not permitted within the Harbour, unless manoeuvring at the permitted speed limits. Requests to carry out activities such as kite surfing, may be considered on an individually risk assessed basis by application in writing to the Harbour Master. It should be noted that recreational Scuba Diving is not permitted in the Harbour.

Fishing is not permitted from the beach or from any piers or wharfs within the Recreational Area due to its incompatibility with Swimmers and other leisure Zone users. Fishing is permitted in the designated zone of the Recreational Area by leisure vessels at anchor.

Only those vessels in receipt of written permission from the Harbour Master are permitted to fish at anchor within this zone and it is limited to a maximum of 3 vessels at any one time. Further information for Leisure Zone users intending to fish at anchor can be obtained from the Leisure Zone Users page of the Port of Dover Community Portal, <https://doverportal.portlink.co/home>.



Whilst all of these activities take place within a common area, the prime strategy for the effective safety management is one that so far as reasonably practicable separates or delineates conflicting activities.

During the summer months from 1st April until 31st October a line of 5 yellow pellet buoys will be laid running North East/South West, which marks the designated swimming area. Although swimming is permitted throughout the recreational area it is strongly recommended, that for their own safety, swimmers remain within the designated area due to the multi-use nature of the remainder of the beach front and potentially strong tidal streams running in the outer part of the recreational area.

Dinghies, Yachts, Power Boats, Personal Water Craft (PWC), Sail Boards, Stand-up Paddle Boards, Rowing Boats or Kayaks should only cross into the bathing area to the North West of the line of buoys to access the slipway by means of the 'gate' defined by the green and red lateral buoys.

Before launching from or returning to the public slipway, all craft should contact 'Dover VTS' on VHF Radio Channel 74 or Telephone 01304 206063 for permission to proceed. All vessels shall pass directly through the swim zone between the green and red lateral buoys at a maximum speed of 4 knots, keeping a sharp look out for and well clear of all swimmers.

Buoyage is in place marking the edge of the recreational area and the recommended approach channel for all vessels intending to access the Outer Marina and/or Wellington Dock. All vessels intending to enter or exit the Outer Marina entrance shall observe the traffic light signal and contact 'Dover VTS' on VHF Radio Channel 74 for permission to proceed.

The area around WD4 berth is restricted and all leisure craft should keep clear of this area. There is also an advisory 15 metre area to be avoided running along the length of the Outer Marina Pier. The purpose of this is primarily to prevent larger craft from coming into contact with the pier structure.

There is a designated area between the Outer Marina Pier and the designated Swimmers Area allocated to Dover Sea Sports Centre only. This is to allow the Sea Sports Centre and associated clubs to have direct access to the beach for their Sailing Dinghies, PWC, Kayaks, Stand-up Paddle Boards, Sail Boards and Rowing Boats without compromising the safety of other leisure users. This will also enable the Sea Sports Centre to deliver starter training sessions from the beach as well as safely monitor their training activities afloat.

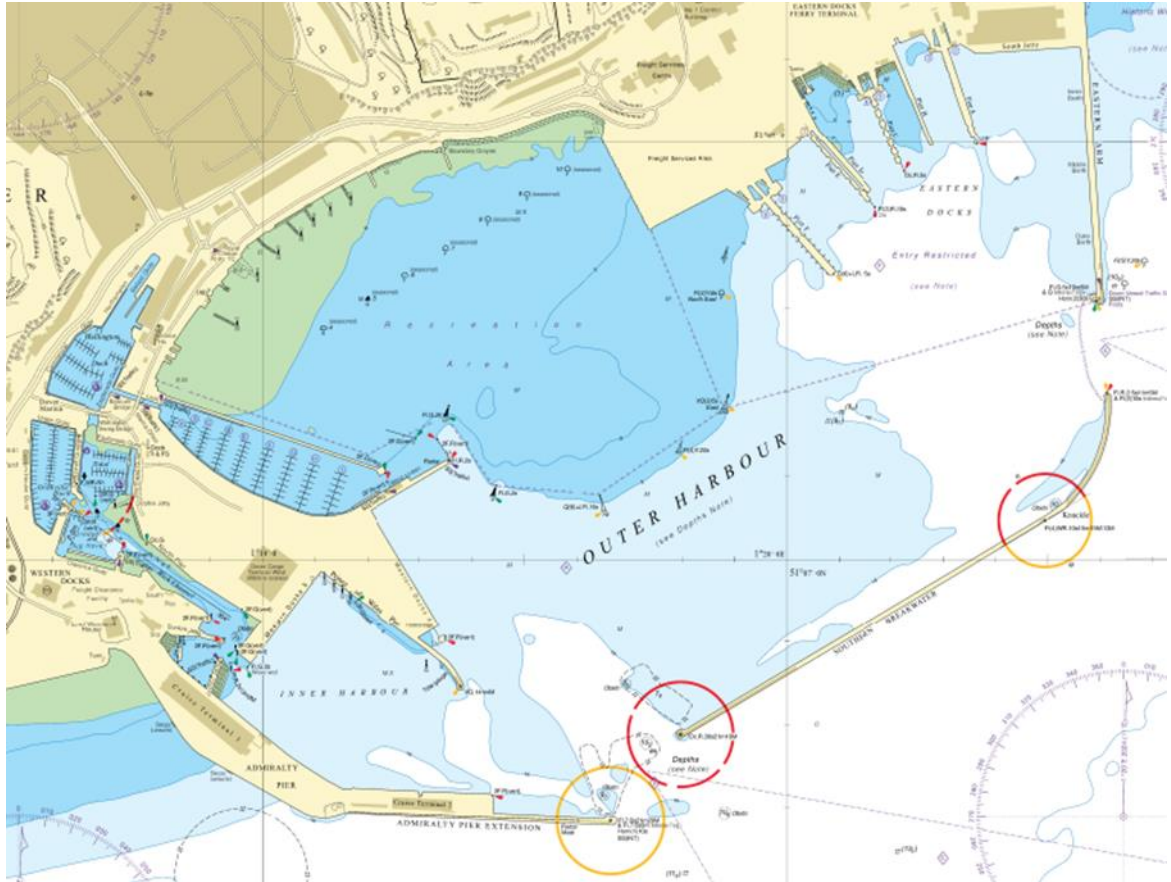


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4. General Public Access and Use

The public have direct access to all the beaches from the promenade and a public slipway for the launching of small craft on trailers is provided at a single location. Prominent information signs are displayed on the promenade in the vicinity of the slipway and at the most popular access routes to the town beaches. These notices contain simple guidance as to the conditions of use of the Recreational Area and give specific advice regarding the 'multi-use' nature of this part of the Harbour, detailing specific buoyed areas designated for each activity and the access channel through the recreational area for boats launched from the slipway. Further navigational information is supplied for those wishing to proceed beyond the recreational area.

Similarly, in areas where specific dangers are known to exist, appropriate warning or prohibition signs are displayed, e.g. 'No Diving' where the water is too shallow or where the seabed is rocky. Signs are also placed at strategic locations warning bathers of the possibility of large waves caused by ferry movements. Contact numbers are provided in case of emergency.

Supervision of the recreational area is the responsibility of the Port of Dover Police and the Harbour Patrol Launch. Patrols are conducted as required throughout the day dependent on activity at any particular time, but especially so in the main swimming season (April through to October).

In addition to this direct management and monitoring policy, Dover VTS maintains a visual watch on small craft navigating within the area, as does the Dover Sea Sports Centre, which has the ability to report directly to Port Control when any incident does occur. When it is necessary to warn or advise of anything that may temporarily affect the use of the recreational area, additional signs are displayed along the promenade and, if considered appropriate, formal notices can be placed in the local press and Local Notice to Mariners issued.



5. Dover Sea Sports Centre (DSSC)

The leisure operations for Dover Sea Sports, Dover Sea Safari, Dover Rowing Club and Dover Lifeguard Club, are based in a single building known as the DSSC, with direct communication and facilities also available for the Channel Swimming Associations.

The DSSC is a tenant of the Port of Dover and is therefore subject to the terms and conditions of the Port's 'Access and Use Guide'. The purpose of this guide is to draw attention to the key issues to be considered when using Port premises, including the recreational area of the Harbour as part of the lease arrangements.

In furtherance of this aim, Port of Dover sets its own standards and procedures to apply specifically to the use of its land including the application of health and safety regulations and actions to be followed in the event of an incident. The Port of Dover aims to minimise and control any risks so that the Harbour remains a safe place for all who use and visit it.

It is therefore now possible to route the water safety management strategy for virtually all of the organised leisure activity in the leisure zone area through this single facility for these formally independent organisations.

The agreed water safety management procedures relate specifically to the beach area that falls within the footprint of the building and boat storage area, down to the waterfront and include the Recreational Area within the Harbour. They are provided to ensure clubs and organisations operating from the Sea Sports Centre are aware of the safety issues surrounding their sport or activity and the impact of the activity on the general public.

DSSC and the partner organisations have a responsibility to ensure the safety of their members and participants at all times and to consider and minimise any risks that may be presented to other users of the beach and the water. DSSC and partner organisations do not have any responsibility for the actions of the general public or any other user of the Harbour or beach area. Users of the Sea Sports Centre, however, may from time to time offer advice to recreational Harbour users should they be deemed to be putting themselves or others in danger.

The agreement between leisure organisations is for Sail to give way to Rowers and Swimmers, Rowers give way to Swimmers, and Power Boats give way to all.

6. Incident/Accident Reporting

An incident afloat where assistance is required must be reported to Dover VTS, either by VHF Radio on Channel 74 or telephone on 01304 206063. It is also a requirement that Port Safety is notified in the event of any reportable incident or accident. If in doubt, please seek clarification directly from Port Safety (01304 240400). It is recognised that DSSC, RCPYC, individual clubs and other organisations will have their own reporting procedures.

7. General Safety Advice for Leisure Users other than Swimmers

The person in charge of a vessel is responsible for its safety and shall, at all times, navigate and control it in a safe and seaman-like manner in accordance with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGS), the General Directions for the Port, Local Notice to Mariners and any Special Directions the Harbour Master may issue. It is the responsibility of those in charge of a vessel to familiarise themselves with these regulations and non-compliance may result in prosecution.

Prior to going afloat, the person in charge of the vessel should always check that the weather forecast and sea conditions will be suitable for the period they intend to remain afloat. They should ensure that they are familiar with the tides, charted depth of water and any hazards in the area within which they intend to operate.



Particular care must be taken when proceeding to and from the public slipway on the beach. All craft must ensure they remain within the designated approach channel marked by the red and green lateral buoys, maintaining a sharp lookout for Swimmers crossing the channel. All craft must comply with the 4-knot speed limit and communicate with Dover VTS on VHF Radio Channel 74 before launching from or returning to the public slipway.

Craft leaving or returning during the hours of darkness or in poor visibility must display the appropriate navigational lights according to the COLREGS.

It is essential that lifejackets and or buoyancy aids are maintained as per manufacturer's instructions and worn at all times. Always carry a means of obtaining assistance if required, such as flares, smoke floats and VHF Radio. These should be easily accessible in the event of an emergency.

Please note that the use of a VHF radio requires an operator's licence and Ship radio or Ship Portable Radio licence under the Wireless Telegraphy (WT) Act 2006 (See www.ofcom.org.uk for further information).

The speed limit in the Outer Harbour is 8 knots, in the Wick Channel, Tidal Basin and the Marina areas it is 4 knots, and the approach to and from the public slipway through the designated swimming area is 4 knots.

When operating power craft within the recreational area, users should be aware of their wash and the effect this may have on smaller non-powered craft, such as stand up paddleboards, when in close proximity.

Operators of power craft should ALWAYS use a kill cord.

8. General Advice for Swimmers

Dover Harbour has become a favourite open water training area for Swimmers preparing to cross the Channel. It is also popular with recreational bathers.

The Harbour offers some degree of shelter and, in the Port's opinion, its beach is considerably safer than many locations along the UK coastline, with lifeboats and Harbour Patrol Launches regularly operating in the vicinity. In addition, the Port of Dover has a designated swimming area to ensure that interaction between bathers and watercraft is kept to a minimum. However, the beach does not have a lifeguard service and in common with other beaches in Britain, swimmers enter the sea at their own risk.



Swimmers and Bathers should:

- Never dive or jump into water of an unknown depth.
- Never dive or jump from any pier or structure.
- Never swim near moving boats, boats running their engines or boats which may depart their moorings.



- Never swim outside the designated swimming area.
- Be aware of strong tides and currents which run along the beach, and that the beach shelves steeply into the water.
- Avoid swimming alone.
- Always swim within their limitations.
- Always tell someone ashore where they are swimming and when they expect to return to the shore. Make sure the person ashore knows what to do if the swimmer encounters trouble.
- Consider wearing a high visibility swim cap and using a high visibility buoy to identify their position.
- Be aware that wash from ships can result in a sudden change of sea surface conditions.
- Never swim near manmade structures. These may have hidden hazards or generate unpredictable currents.
- Keep a lookout for boats and leisure craft crossing the designated swimming area between the slipway and the red and green lateral buoys.
- Be mindful of the weather – poor visibility, prolonged exposure to heat or cold, and strong winds could put swimmers at risk.
- Avoid the use of inflatable water toys – these are susceptible to offshore winds.
- Never leave young children unsupervised.
- Always seek medical attention when having breathed water into their lungs, even if they appear to have recovered.
- Never swim while under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or after consuming a meal.
- Be aware of the dangers of cold-water shock.
- Be aware that some aquatic life around the UK coast (jellyfish, weaver fish etc) can sting.
- Wear appropriate footwear on Dover's shingle beach.
- Never swim after dark – Swimmers may not be spotted if they get into difficulty.
- Take advice from the Port of Dover, RNLI, established Harbour Users, or beach front signage if there are aspects of sea conditions or Port operations that lead to uncertainty.

In addition, long distance / Channel Swimmers should:

- Carry out a risk assessment.
- Check tides and currents.
- Have a spotter ashore capable of raising the alarm and competent in recognising the symptoms of cold / hypothermic casualties and administering first aid.

The above list is not exhaustive, for further information visit:

The Royal Life Saving Society www.rlss.org.uk

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution <http://rnli.org/safety/respect-the-water/Pages/Safety.aspx>

The Channel Swimming Association <http://www.channelswimmingassociation.com>





If you see someone in trouble, dial 999 or 112 and ask for the Coastguard. If you have a VHF radio, call Dover VTS on VHF Ch74.

Dover Port Control is manned 24/7 and will be able to co-ordinate a response to any emergency you may have. Dover VTS can also be contacted on 01304 206063.

9. Marina – Statutory Powers, Byelaws and General Safety Advice

The Harbour Master is empowered to give directions regarding the mooring, removal from or sailing of vessels within the limits of the harbour, including the Marina. Details of these powers may be obtained from the Board's Company Secretary. The Board reserves the right to take any action it deems appropriate for failure to comply with any directions, general directions, instructions or requirements issued by the Harbour Master and this may include immediate termination of the Berthing Licence.

The attention of a vessel's owner is drawn to the authority of the Harbour Master under the Board's Byelaws (these set rules which govern matters such as how you use the Marina). All instructions of the Harbour Master must be obeyed. Any use of vessels or of vehicles within the area of the harbour and its approaches, including the Marina, is subject to the Board's Byelaws and other requirements administered by the Harbour Master. Copies of the Byelaws may be obtained from the Board's Company Secretary.

The person in charge of a vessel shall observe the speed limit of 8 knots within the harbour and 4 knots within the Marina and Wick Channel. If a vessel is underway within the marina its engine(s) must be used.

Sail-boarding, swimming, fishing, diving or similar activities and the use of drones are prohibited in the Marina.

Whilst at the Marina life jackets must be worn at all times and children must be supervised by a responsible adult.

The owner of a vessel shall take all necessary precautions against the outbreak of fire in or upon the vessel and shall observe all statutory and local regulations relating to fire prevention. Each vessel shall carry at least one fire extinguisher of a BSI standard type and size, in good working order and ready for immediate use in case of a fire.

Dangerous. Flammable, poisonous or noxious substances, spirit, oil or fluid must not be brought into the Marina except in properly secured containers, staunch against leakage and in compliance with relevant legal requirements. Acetylene (UN 1001) and Dimethyl Sulphate (UN 1595) must not under any circumstances be brought into the Marina. The owner shall comply with the Dover Harbour Revision orders 1978 and 2006, as well as with the provisions relating to Dangerous Goods in Harbour Areas Regulations 2016 at all times.

Living aboard boats is prohibited. No one is permitted to reside aboard a boat in the Marina for residential purposes and nor should a boat be hired out or rented to third parties for residential purposes. The Board may at its sole discretion terminate a berthing licence immediately for failure to comply with this clause. The Marina must not be used as a personal mailing or correspondence address.

10. Event Planning

Any recreational event which represents a departure from what is recognised as regular or routine activities within the Harbour should not take place until permission from the Harbour Master has been sought and granted.

Those intending to hold a recreational event for which any form of risk assessment will be required should be encouraged to consult the Harbour Master at the earliest opportunity. Formal approval



for such events can then be granted subject to a proper risk assessment conducted by the event organiser. Where an event occurs regularly, the scope of subsequent risk assessments may be adjusted accordingly.

In approving any event, the Harbour Master needs to be satisfied that any risk to the general public, the safety of navigation, or other Port users has been effectively mitigated. The Harbour Master also needs to ensure that the event organiser has consulted with, and has met the requirements of, the Police, the MCA (Coastguard), the RNLI, local emergency services, and the local authority where appropriate. Also, if applicable the event should be conducted in accordance with the guidance provided by, and with the approval of, the national bodies representing the types, or classes of craft participating in the event.

Any requirement for additional Harbour Authority resources, be they additional navigational marks, craft to patrol, control, or escort the event, or any emergency or SAR response resources, would normally be at the expense of the event organiser. The same would normally apply to any public safety or emergency provision considered necessary by the Police or other emergency services.

Applications to hold an event in the recreational area of the Harbour can be made using the Port of Dover Community Portal, <https://doverportal.portlink.co/home>.

A guide with instructions on how to complete an application to hold an event in the Recreational Area can be accessed from the Leisure Users page of the Port of Dover Community Portal.