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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 These guidelines have been developed jointly by the Harbour Master and Poole Yachting Association. Poole is recognised as a nationally and internationally important venue for sail racing which is a valued and long-standing activity in the Harbour. These procedures are intended for all who play a part in ensuring the safety of yacht and dinghy racing within the shipping channels in Poole Harbour Commissioners area of jurisdiction. This includes transiting between club and start line if this results in transiting in or across any shipping channel.
- 1.2 The procedures are based on good communication throughout which requires all yachts and safety boats involved in racing in the Harbour to carry VHF and to keep a listening watch.

Definition - Commercial Vessel: All vessels subject to compulsory pilotage and all vessels over 25m required to use the reporting points in accordance with VTS rules.

Definition - Controlled Vessel: Movement: VTS will broadcast on VHF channel 14 when a vessel is classed as a Controlled Vessel Movement. This information should it occur when racing is underway, will be relayed to you via Race Control. There shall be a moving exclusion zone around the Controlled Vessel of 500m ahead, 50m either side and 50m astern. When an escort vessel is displaying blue flashing lights, racing yachts must not pass between the escort vessel and the commercial vessel. At times for operational reasons the escort vessel may be closer than the above exclusion zone, in this case yachts are still required to maintain a 500m minimum limit.

2. GUIDANCE FOR VTS OFFICERS

- 2.1 VTS Officers have a responsibility to monitor and organize commercial vessel movements with the aim of reducing any risk to the safety of navigation in Poole Harbour to As Low as Reasonably Practicable (ALARP). To do this, it is essential that good communication is maintained with Race Officers to exchange relevant information.
- 2.2 The Harbour entrance is a high-risk area. It is narrow, subject to strong tidal streams and a very choppy sea state in certain conditions; there are many movements of commercial and leisure craft particularly at weekends and bank holidays in the summer, and uniquely, the Sandbanks Chain Ferry transits across the entrance at the narrowest point.
- 2.3 VTS Officers must:
- A.) Be aware of sailing races taking place during their period of duty by reference to the PYA annual fixture list.
 - B.) Respond to Race Officers' requests for information giving latest shipping movements, including type of vessel, and other known activity in the Harbour.
 - C.) Discuss with and advise the Race Officer where proposed courses have the potential

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to impede commercial shipping.

- D.) Call the Yacht Club hosting the event if the Race Officer has not called approximately 30 minutes before start time. Request information and direct contact number for the Race Officer.
- E.) Call Sandbanks Ferry and advise them of all races or fleet transits through the Harbour entrance, giving as much information as possible.
- F.) Make a broadcast on Channel 14 warning other Harbour users, if considered appropriate.
- G.) Keep a record of any changes to races, e.g. cancellation, modification, etc. as advised by the Race Officer.
- H.) Issue a Special Direction, on behalf of the Harbour Master, prohibiting the race to take place if it is considered unsafe to race through the harbour entrance on a Saturday, Sunday, or bank holiday. Record the event in the log with all the relevant details. If in any doubt, telephone the Duty Assistant Harbour Master for advice, particularly if your decision is challenged.
- I.) Racing is not to be permitted in the main shipping channels while Restricted Visibility Routine is in force. This routine is implemented when visibility is 500 metres or less. If Restricted Visibility Routine comes into force while racing is taking place, the VTS Officer should contact the Race Officer to discuss the safest way forward to get the racing fleet safely back to the yacht club.
- J.) When a racecourse is planned to use or enter any part of the main deep water channels and the race start time will conflict with a commercial vessel movement, then the start time must be delayed. Race officers will take commercial movements into account when setting courses.
(Reference - Guidance to Race Officers part 4 - When a commercial ship is about to depart from the port or is inbound at the Harbour entrance, then the race start time should be delayed until that vessel is clear if appropriate.)
- K.) If, due to a change of plan, a commercial vessel is ready to depart, when conflict with a yacht race fleet is likely, then the departure time of the commercial vessel should, if possible, be delayed for a short period to mitigate risk. The Race Officer must be advised.
- L.) VTS Officer to broadcast on Channel 14 if a ship will be turning in the Turning Basin, when racing is in progress.

3. GUIDANCE FOR RACE OFFICERS

3.1 These guidelines are intended for Race Officers to assist them in their race planning.


3.2 Contact VTS by telephone (01202 440230). It is important that a telephone link is maintained between VTS and the Race Officer for the duration of the race. Call VTS

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approximately 30 minutes before start time and give the VTS Officer (VTSO) your mobile number. Find out the latest shipping movements to ensure that craft, racing or otherwise, do not affect the passage of any commercial shipping. The VTS Officer will also update you with any other relevant information, which may affect safety, such as congestion of other small craft. Advise VTS when racing has completed for the day, and all participants safely accounted-for.

3.3 It is preferred that a Race Officer is available for all racing in the Harbour. However, when one is not available then the gate boat skipper must assume this responsibility.

3.4 **Monitoring and broadcasting Commercial Vessel movements:**

(Commercial vessels have a mandatory obligation to report to VTS via VHF channel 14 as they pass the reporting points, listed below and also marked on navigation charts as . This information is useful to smaller craft as the latter can monitor a commercial vessel's live progress via VHF and make decisions based on this information to avoid close quarter situations).

A.) The Race Officer must monitor VHF channel 14 throughout the event and keep themselves apprised of any changes to shipping movements.

B.) All racing yachts must be informed of the expected commercial vessel movements prior to the start of the race, and also informed that when a ferry is navigating the channel, that it can be difficult to judge the speed when head on and can therefore be going faster than the impression given, also at Aunt Betty and North Haven the ship is turning and therefore changes direction rapidly.

C.) The Race Officer should rebroadcast on the VHF channel monitored by the racing fleet and club patrol boats all relevant information that will mitigate potential conflict.

D.) See Guidance for Yacht Skippers, item 4.4 – Monitoring Commercial Vessel Movements. Item 4.11 - Controlled Vessel Movements

3.5 **When a commercial vessel is manoeuvring in the Turning Basin, the exclusion zone around the vessel changes to 100m in all directions.** Race Officers are to broadcast to the racing fleet that all racing yachts are to stay clear of vessels manoeuvring in the Turning Basin. The Race Officer can then rebroadcast when the restriction is lifted.

3.6 **Shipping Channels and race marks.**

A.) Use of all Main Shipping Channel buoys from No1 Bar and No2 buoys to No29 Stakes and No34 buoys inclusive as 'turning marks' or 'rounding marks' must be avoided.

B.) The only exception to the above is where race participants are expected to follow the Main Shipping Channel inbound/outbound for a significant distance (i.e for greater than 4 pairs of buoys) so use of main channel buoy(s) as a 'passing mark', 'turning mark' or 'rounding mark' is required to facilitate orderly joining of the channel, leaving of the channel or remaining within the channel around a bend - noting that all parts of IRCPS Rule 9 and all other procedures in this document continue to apply. When other

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conditions and criteria allow, use North Channel in preference to the Middle Ship Channel.

- C.) Navigation buoys not forming part of the Main Shipping Channel (i.e. those exclusively within the East Looe Cut, North Channel and Wareham Channel) may be used as ‘turning marks’ or ‘rounding marks’ where opportunities to use the 36x designated race marks within the harbour and other race marks in Poole Bay have already been exhausted.
 - D.) Fixed beacons or stakes may not ever be used as ‘turning marks’ or ‘rounding marks’
 - E.) Where it is necessary to cross a channel, the course should ensure the crossing is at a right angle, or as near right angled as possible
 - F.) When a commercial ship is about to depart from the port or is inbound at the Harbour entrance, and the race course includes use or crossing of the main channel, then the race time should be delayed until that vessel is clear (or will be clear without any doubt in the shared opinion of the Race Officer Harbour Control Officer)”
- 3.7 **Weather Forecast.** Obtain a reliable detailed forecast. Conditions may be obvious at start time, but might they deteriorate during the race?
- 3.8 **What is the wind direction and strength?** They may be similar in harbour and Bay, but sea conditions do vary. Obtain a report from outside if possible. Consider the known wind shadow areas and the possible lack of wind as well as the wind strength.
- 3.9 **Check tide times at start and estimated finish.** Assess the tidal stream for the times participants are expected to pass through the entrance. Are there likely to be difficulties?
- 3.10 **Visibility.** Check for visibility and the forecast for the duration of the race. Check with VTS if Restricted Visibility Routine is in force. Racing is not permitted in the main shipping channels when RVR is in force or while visibility is 500 metres or less in the race area.
- 3.11 **Suitability of craft.** Is the type of craft competing suitable for the predicted weather conditions?
- 3.12 **Consider the start line.** If racing through the entrance, the Start Line should be located far enough away so that craft are dispersed by the time they pass through. Avoid situations where a number of yachts will transit en-mass.
- 3.13 **Safety Boats.** Whenever yachts, which are NOT carrying fully operational engines, are racing through the Harbour Entrance the Race Organisers are to station adequate safety boat cover at the Harbour Entrance. If there are likely to be difficulties with craft making way through the entrance, consider extra safety boats for towing. The safety boats are to be in communication with the Race Officer and VTS.

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- 3.14 Density of Traffic.** Consider other activities taking place, e.g. leisure craft transiting shipping channels immediately either side of bridge lift times, water skiing, number of personal watercraft using the PW area, etc.
- 3.15 Decisions.** Having considered all these matters it remains the responsibility of the organising club, via the Race Officer, to decide about starting the race and its conduct. Attention is also drawn to the desirability of including within the Sailing Instructions, a competitor’s declaration of insurance and waiver of liability against the race organisation.
- 3.16** It remains the Race Officer’s responsibility to minimise the risk.
The options will normally be:
- A.) Run the race as planned.
 - B.) Run the race with modifications/restrictions. *e.g. advance or delay start time or station extra safety boats.*
 - C.) Cancel the race.
- 3.17** Inform VTS of your decision. The VTSO has the authority to issue a Special Direction on behalf of the Harbour Master to prohibit racing through the Harbour entrance if he believes that the conditions and circumstances pose too great a risk. If this happens the Harbour Master will follow up with a written explanation.


4. GUIDANCE FOR RACING YACHTS AND DINGHIES

Nothing in these guidelines exonerates the Skipper of a Racing Yacht or Dinghy from their obligation to fully comply with IRPCS and Poole Harbour Byelaws.

- 4.1** Skippers of Racing Yachts and Dinghies competing within Poole Harbour must be fully aware of these guidelines.
- 4.2** The Skipper must be aware and accept that they remain fully responsible for the safety of their vessel and crew at all times and that no blame can be placed on PHC or the race organisers due to information or instruction received.
- 4.3** Before racing commences ensure you are aware of:
- A.) Expected commercial vessel movements, via Race Control on VHF or the club’s notice board.
 - B.) Weather forecast.
 - C.) Expected tidal conditions.

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4.4 Monitoring commercial vessel movements.

(Commercial vessels have a mandatory obligation to report to VTS via VHF channel 14 as they pass the reporting points, listed below and also marked on navigation charts as . This information is useful to smaller craft as the latter can monitor a commercial vessel's live progress via VHF and make decisions based on this information to avoid close quarter situations).

A.) Monitor your race designated VHF channel where appropriate and take note of any commercial vessel movements in progress within Poole Harbour as it is relayed to you via race control.

B.) All skippers of racing yachts should be aware that commercial vessels report in via VHF channel 14 at the following positions:

- Underway from her berth.
- Outbound at Stakes Buoy.
- Outbound at Aunt Betty Buoy.
- Outbound at the Bar Buoy.

- Inbound 15 minutes from the Bar Buoy.
- Inbound at the Bar Buoy.
- Inbound at the No.8 Channel Buoy
- Inbound at Aunt Betty Buoy.
- Inbound at Stakes Buoy.
- All Fast on her berth.

4.5 Lookout.

At all times maintain a 360° lookout taking care not to get caught out by vessels approaching from the area obscured by your sails.

4.6 Exclusion zone.

Yacht Skippers are reminded of IRPCS Rule 9 (a), (b) & (d) – Narrow Channels.

- (a) A vessel proceeding along the course of a narrow channel or fairway shall keep as near to the outer limit of the channel or fairway which lies on her starboard side as is safe and practicable.
- (b) A vessel of less than 20 metres in length or a sailing vessel shall not impede the passage of a vessel which can safely navigate only within a narrow channel or fairway.
- (d) A vessel shall not cross a narrow channel or fairway if such crossing impedes the passage of a vessel which can safely navigate only within such channel or fairway. The latter vessel may use the sound signal prescribed in Rule 34(d) if in doubt as to the intention of the crossing vessel

4.7 Exclusion Zone is 500m clear ahead.

As a guide a racing yacht should keep at least the distance of the next set of navigation buoys clear ahead of a commercial vessel in the Middle Ship Channel and Swash

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Channel. South of Aunt Betty Buoy, in Brownsea Roads and the Harbour Entrance this should be extended to two sets of navigation buoys.

4.8 This guide in no way replaces the statutory obligations under the IRPCS.

4.9 When an escort vessel is being used, racing yachts must not pass between the escort vessel and the commercial vessel. The escort vessel will have blue flashing lights. At times for operational reasons the escort vessel may be closer than the above guide however, in this case yachts are still expected to maintain the distances explained in the guidance above.

4.10 Turning Basin. When a commercial vessel is manoeuvring in the Turning Basin the exclusion zone changes to 100m in all directions. All racing yachts must keep clear.

4.11 Controlled Vessel Movement. VTS will broadcast on VHF channel 14 when a vessel is classed as a Controlled Vessel Movement. This information, should it occur when racing is underway, will be relayed to you via Race Control.

There shall be a moving exclusion zone around the Controlled Vessel Movement of 500m ahead, 50 metres either side and 50m astern. The same guidance above can be used when estimating distance ahead. When an escort vessel is displaying blue flashing lights, racing yachts must not pass between the escort vessel and the commercial vessel. At times for operational reasons the escort vessel may be closer than the above exclusion zone, in this case yachts are still required to maintain a 500m minimum limit.

4.12 Restricted Visibility Routine. Restricted Visibility Routine will be in force when the visibility is reduced (500 metres or less) such that an extra risk is imposed on vessels navigating in the main shipping channels.

When Restricted Visibility Routine is in force, any racing that includes courses set within or crossing the main shipping channels will be postponed or cancelled. When visibility is 500 metres or less in the race area then racing will be postponed or cancelled. If racing in these areas is already underway when visibility reduces, races will be abandoned by the Race Officer. Competitors will be informed by normal racing signals, VHF and/or safety boats. Yachts returning ashore from the race area should follow RVR procedures, monitoring channel 14 where possible, remaining in the small boat channels etc. and should follow directions given by club safety boats.

5. GUIDANCE FOR PILOTS AND SHIPS MASTERS /OFFICERS

5.1 Communication. Establish radio contact with the escort vessel on VHF Channel 14.

5.2 Exclusion Zone. Advise escort vessel and VTS if the distance required ahead to provide a safe exclusion zone is other than 500 metres. Notwithstanding IRPCS Rule 6, the safe stopping distance of the escorted vessel and the Harbour traffic density should be taken into consideration.

- Adjust exclusion zone distance ahead as required during passage.
- Advise escort vessel when no longer required.

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6. GUIDANCE FOR PHC ESCORT COXSWAINS

- 6.1 **Communication.** Establish radio contact with the escorted vessel on VHF Channel 14.
- 6.2 **Exclusion Zone.** Adjust distance ahead as per master / pilot's requirements.
- 6.3 Maintain distance ahead unless advised otherwise by master / pilot or if there is an incident.
- 6.4 Blue flashing lights should always be used when escorting.
- 6.5 Loud hailer should be used to attract attention as required.

7. GUIDANCE FOR PYA PATROL BOAT COXSWAINS

- 7.1 The PYA Patrol boat (when assisting with PHC's escort duties) flying the "U" flag should hold station abeam of the escort vessel. If the escort vessel is required to break from station then the Patrol boat should maintain the distance ahead (but not directly ahead) until all racing dinghies/yachts are clear.
- 7.2 The Patrol boat crew should relay information to dinghies that are not permitted to carry a VHF under race rules.

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