



General Directions 2025



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Accountable Owner

The Accountable Owner for this Policy.

Accountable Owner	Title	Geographical Location
Steven Masters	Harbour Master	Southampton

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. COMMENCEMENT	4
3. DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION	5
GENERAL DIRECTION 01 - MASTERS OF DAMAGED VESSELS	8
GENERAL DIRECTION 02 - SPEED RESTRICTIONS IN SOUTHAMPTON WATER	9
GENERAL DIRECTION 03 - MOVEMENT OF GAS TANKERS	10
GENERAL DIRECTION 04 - NAVIGATION AND PILOTAGE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE OPERATION OF HYDROFOIL, HOVERCRAFT AND OTHER HIGH-SPEED CATAMARAN OR MONOHULL PASSENGER VESSELS	11
GENERAL DIRECTION 05 - CALSHOT WATERSPORTS AREA.....	13
GENERAL DIRECTION 06 - CALSHOT BUOYED SWIMMING AREA AND PERSONAL WATERCRAFT/JET SKI CORRIDOR	14
GENERAL DIRECTION 07 - SEAPLANES.....	15
GENERAL DIRECTION 08 - NOTICE OF RECREATIONAL EVENT	16
GENERAL DIRECTION 09 - AUTONOU MOUS UNMANNED VESSELS	17
GENERAL DIRECTION 10 - CLEAR CHANNEL VESSELS & PRECAUTIONARY AREA (THORN CHANNEL) 19	
GENERAL DIRECTION 11 - REGISTRATION OF SMALL COMMERCIAL CRAFT/VESSELS.....	21
GENERAL DIRECTION 12 - ANCHORING WITHIN THE STATUTORY HARBOUR AREA.....	22

GENERAL DIRECTIONS FOR VESSELS NAVIGATING IN THE PORT OF SOUTHAMPTON

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Associated British Ports (“**ABP**”), as Statutory Harbour Authority for the port of Southampton (“**Port**”), (pursuant to Section 52 of the Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847, as incorporated in Section 17 of the Southampton Harbour Act 1863, and article 5 of the Port of Southampton Harbour Revision Order 2025), gives the following General Directions, which shall apply to vessels in and approaching the Port.

1.2 Under the powers granted to the Harbour Master of the Port by way of Sections 12-13 of the Southampton Harbour Act 1939, these General Directions shall apply to classes of vessel, as opposed to Special Directions which apply to individual vessels, only.

1.3 It is the duty of the Master of a vessel to which a General Direction applies to comply with that General Direction. It is vital that Owners, Agents, Charters, Marinas, Yacht Clubs and Recreational Sailing Organisations ensure that the contents of these General Directions are made known to Masters or any other persons in charge of each vessel or craft for which that organisation is responsible.

1.4 These General Directions are to be construed in conjunction with:

- a) ABP Southampton Harbour Byelaws (2003);
- b) Any Special Direction given by the Harbour Master from time to time; and
- c) Local Notices to Mariners.

1.5 In addition to complying with these General Directions it is important that Masters of vessels are aware of the Associated British Ports Southampton Byelaws (2003), Pilotage Directions and Local Notice to Mariners in order to maintain and enhance safety of navigation with the Port and its approaches.

1.6 Any General Direction does not diminish or in any other way affect the responsibility of the Master in relation to his or her vessel, any persons on board, its cargo or any other person or property.

2. COMMENCEMENT

2.1 These Directions shall come into force on 21 May 2025.

3. DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 In these General Directions, unless the context otherwise requires, the following terms have the following meanings:

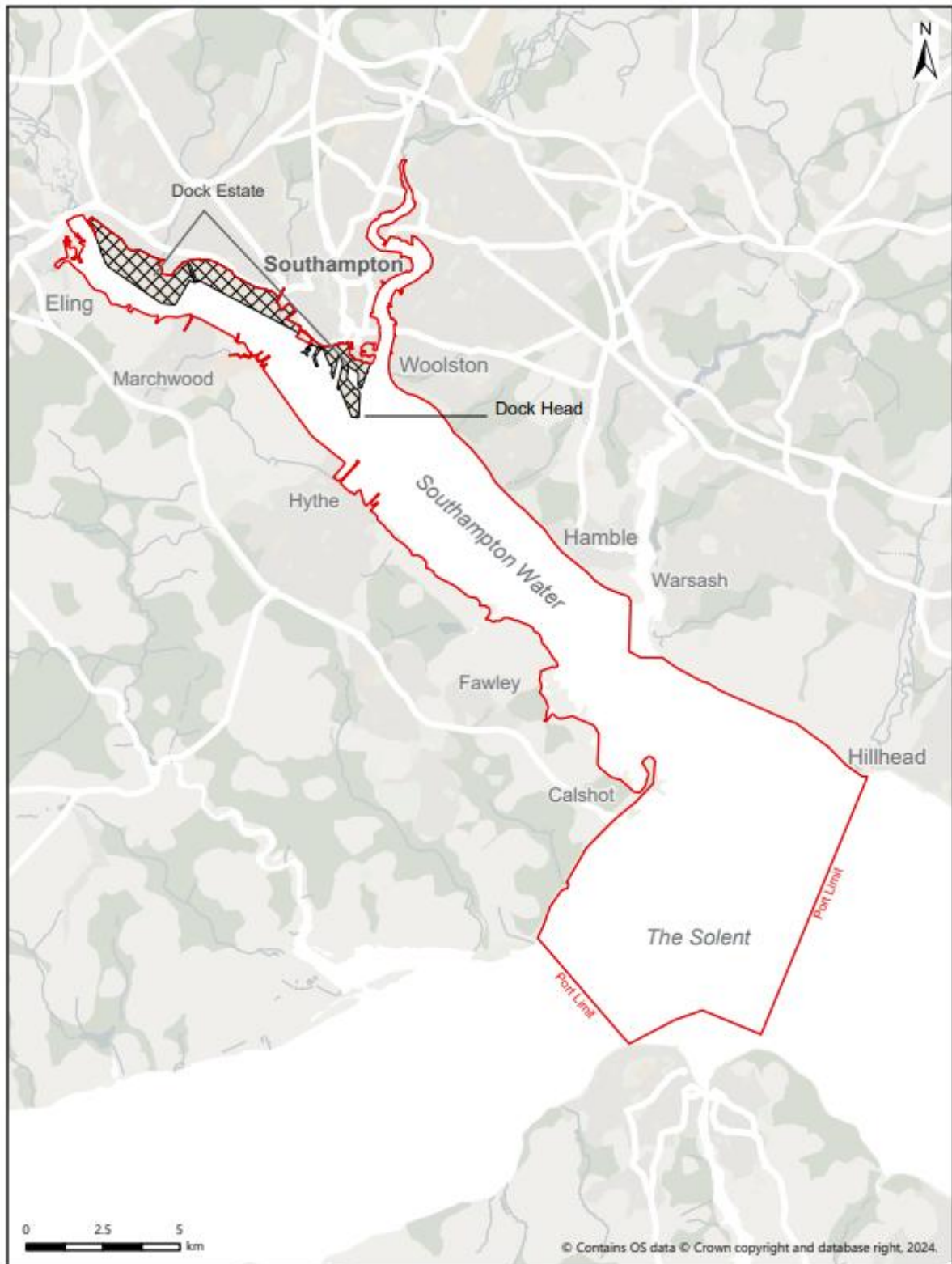
- a) **“ABP”** means Associated British Ports whose principal office is at 25 Bedford Street, London WC2E 9ES;
- b) **“Anchorage Area”** means any designated area within the SHA considered suitable for vessels to anchor;
- c) **“CHA”** means the Competent Harbour Authority, as defined in the Pilotage Act 1987;
- d) **“Clear Channel Vessel”** means a large vessel (>220m LOA) which shall be given a “clear channel” between the Hook Buoy and the Prince Consort Buoy. The term “clear channel” is further defined as:
 - i) A “clear channel vessel” is one which requires a clear and unimpeded passage ahead when transiting the “Precautionary Area”.
 - ii) Vessels may enter the “Precautionary Area” maintaining a safe distance astern of a “clear channel vessel”.
 - iii) A vessel of any size experiencing manoeuvrability problems may also request a “clear channel”.
- e) **“Dock Head”** means the point known as the entrance to the Docks of Southampton – See Figure 1;
- f) **“Gas Tanker”** means a ship designed to transport LPG, LNG, CNG, or liquefied chemical gases in bulk;
- g) **“Harbour Authority”** means ABP, in which are invested under an Act of Parliament, or an order or other instrument made under such an Act, powers or duties of improving, maintaining and managing the Port;
- h) **“Harbour Master”** means any person appointed under Section 51 of the Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847 as incorporated in Section 17 of the Southampton Harbour Act 1863 as such by the Harbour Authority including deputies and assistants for the person so appointed, and any other person or employee of the Harbour for the time being authorised by the Harbour Authority to act, either generally or for a specific purpose, in the capacity of Harbour Master;
- i) **“Master”** means when used in relation to any vessel, means any person having the command, charge or management of the vessel for the time being whether lawfully or not lawfully;
- j) **“Nab Tower”** means a geographical reference point used for navigational purposes at the eastern end of the Solent;
- k) **“Moving Prohibited Zone”** means an area extending 1000 metres ahead and 100 metres either side of any vessel of over 150 metres length overall while it is navigating within the Precautionary Area.
- l) **“Nautical Mile”** means the unit used in measuring distances at sea, equal to 1852 metres;
- m) **“Passenger Vessel”** means a vessel carrying more than 12 passengers;
- n) **“Watercraft”** means any type or craft which:

- i) is capable of moving under its own mechanical power,
- ii) is used, navigated or situated wholly or partly in or on water, and
- iii) is capable of being used to carry one or more persons,

but does not include a ship or fishing vessel within the meanings given in section 313(1) of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995(e).

- o) **“Port of Southampton”** means all within or to the northwards of an imaginary straight line drawn from Stansore Point on the western side of the entrance to Southampton Water to Hillhead on the eastern side and including the whole of Southampton Water, the River Itchen up to Woodmill, the River Test up to the Causeway at Redbridge and the Eling River up to the Eling Causeway;
- p) **“Portsmouth Harbour”** means the area North of a line joining Horse Sand Fort, Outer Spit Buoy and Fort Gilkicker Light;
- q) **“Precautionary Area”** As shown at Figure 6 means the main navigable channel which lies between an imaginary line drawn between Prince Consort and South Bramble Buoys and an imaginary line drawn between Black Jack and Hook Buoys
- r) **“Recreational Event”** means any vessel/s, craft or person/s participating in an organised gathering and/or scheduled activity that may affect the safety of navigation or impact directly on any other water users in the SHA.
- s) **“Seaplane”** means an aircraft with floats or skis instead of wheels, designed to land on and take off from water;
- t) **“Seaward Limit”** means limit to the Southampton CHA area shown as Western and Eastern Outer Limit’s at Figure 2;
- u) **“SHA”** means the Statutory Harbour Area and is the area shown within the port limits at Figure 1;
- v) **“Small Vessel”** means any vessel of less than 20 metres in length or a sailing vessel;
- w) **“Southampton VTS”** means Southampton vessel traffic services, an International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities compliant Vessel Traffic Service covering the Port, the Solent, NAB and a part of the Dockyard Port of Portsmouth to ensure continuity of communication and coordination of shipping movements within the SHA and CHA;
- x) **“Southampton Water”** means the area that lies to the north west of an imaginary line between Calshot Castle and Solent Breezes Holiday Park and to the south of an imaginary line between Hythe Pier through the Western Shelf buoy to the Weston shore;
- y) **“The Solent”** means the channel between the north-western coast of the Isle of Wight and the mainland of southern England;
- z) **“Town Quay”** means the ABP managed marina situated between the Eastern and Western Docks in the Port of Southampton.

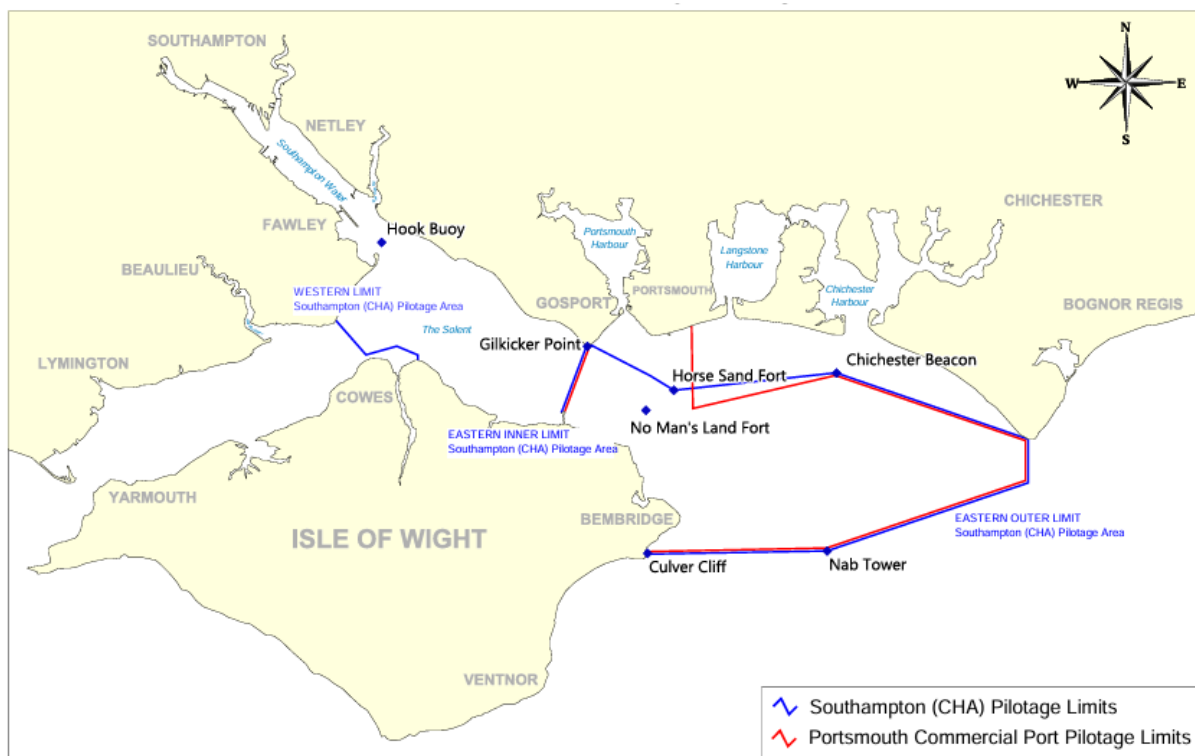
Figure 1 - Statutory Harbour Area



GENERAL DIRECTION 01 - MASTERS OF DAMAGED VESSELS

1. This General Direction applies to Masters of vessels which have sustained damage outside the CHA limit of the Port;
 - i) which affects, or is likely to affect, the seaworthiness of the vessel; or
 - ii) from which oil or dangerous substances are escaping, or are likely to escape from the vessel
 must give notice to the Harbour Master before entering the Port in accordance with this General Direction.
2. The damaged vessel must remain outside the Seaward Limit (shown as Western and Eastern Outer Limit's at Figure 2) of the CHA until permission to enter the Port is given by the Harbour Master.
3. In order to report damage to vessels or seek permission to enter the Port, communication must be made by the Master to Southampton VTS on VHF Channel 12.

Figure 2 - Competent Harbour Authority Pilotage Limits



GENERAL DIRECTION 02 - SPEED RESTRICTIONS IN SOUTHAMPTON WATER

1. This General Direction applies to vessels and watercraft navigating in Southampton Water.
2. No vessel or watercraft shall navigate at speeds in excess of 40kts through the water within Southampton Water, unless the consent in writing of the Harbour Master has first been obtained.

GENERAL DIRECTION 03 - MOVEMENT OF GAS TANKERS

1. This General Direction applies to all gas tankers loaded or partly loaded and to gas tankers which have not been rendered gas free, to ensure the safe navigation of such vessels within the SHA.
2. Gas tankers in transit within the SHA may not enter an area of restricted visibility where visibility is less than ½ Nautical Mile.
3. No vessel may anchor closer to a gas tanker than at a distance equal to twice their combined lengths.
4. At no time are more than three gas tankers permitted to be at anchor in the Anchorage Area in Southampton Water, between the Hamble Point buoy and Coronation buoy, as depicted on Admiralty Chart 2038, Southampton Water and Approaches.

GENERAL DIRECTION 04 - NAVIGATION AND PILOTAGE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE OPERATION OF HYDROFOIL, HOVERCRAFT AND OTHER HIGH-SPEED CATAMARAN OR MONOHULL PASSENGER VESSELS

1. This General Direction applies to all Hydrofoil, Hovercraft or other High-Speed Catamaran or Monohull Passenger Vessel operating within the Port.
2. The Master of a Hydrofoil, Hovercraft or other High-Speed Catamaran or Monohull Passenger Vessel when underway, shall make use only of such channels as are authorised by the Harbour Master (as referred to in the Southampton Harbour Byelaw No 12), except where:
 - i) action is required to reduce risk of collision, including an alteration of course and/or speed, which may take the vessel outside of such authorised channels; or
 - ii) such vessels are required to leave the channel where safe to do so during such period as a "Clear Channel Vessel" is underway in the Precautionary Area, as and when directed by Southampton VTS.
 - iii) in complying (i) and (ii) above, Masters shall have due regard to all dangers of navigation, collision and any special circumstances.
3. The minimum passing distance off Dock Head in the Eastern Docks shall be not less than 30 metres from the face of the quay.
4. When two or more Hydrofoils, Hovercrafts or other High-Speed Catamaran or Monohull Passenger Vessels are operating in the same direction within a speed restricted area:
 - i) no overtaking is permitted; and
 - ii) they should maintain a minimum separation of 100 metres.
5. Identification lights to be shown within the SHA restricted speed limit areas:
 - i) When underway within any restricted speed limit area in the SHA all high-speed passenger vessels must display the following identification light, in addition to the navigation lights specified by Rule 23 (a) of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972, as amended, (IRPCS) and at the times specified by Rule 20 (b) and (c):

At a distance of 1.82 metres (6 feet) above or below the white light required by Rule 23(a)(i), a flashing yellow light visible all-round the horizon at a range of at least 2 miles. The flashing light shall have the same flashing rate as defined in Rule 21(f) namely, flashing at regular intervals at a frequency of 120 flashes or more per minute, and the colour and intensity as described in Annex 1 paragraphs 7 and 8 of the Regulations.
 - ii) In all circumstances the yellow flashing light shall be so placed as to be above and clear of all other lights and obstructions, except the white light described in a. above.

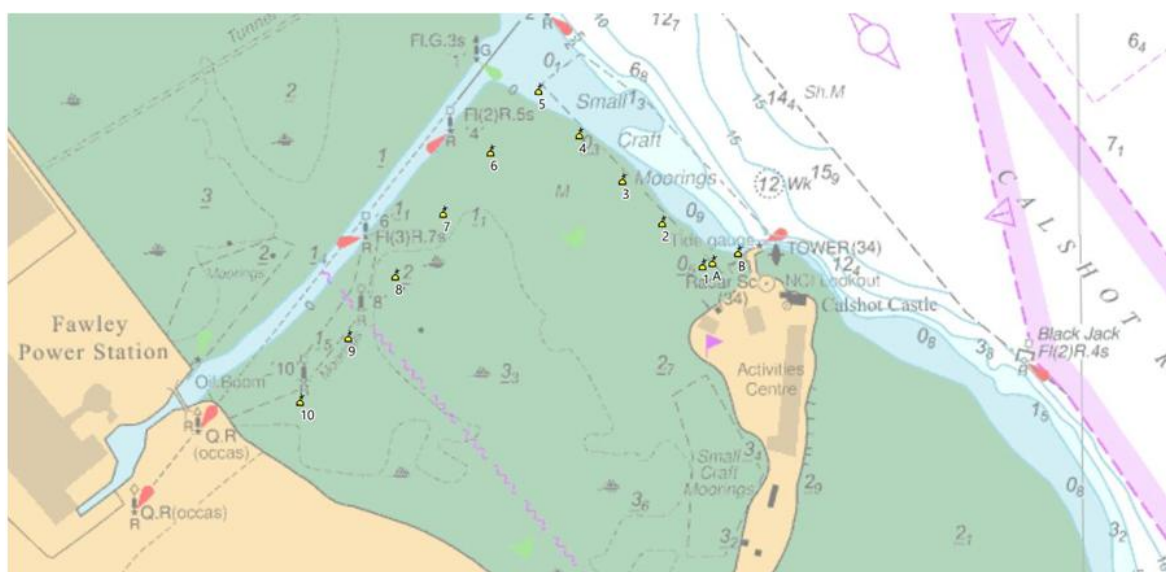
- iii) The flashing light will be displayed only when the vessel is underway within a speed restricted area, i.e. northwards of a line drawn from the seaward end of Hythe Pier to Weston shore, passing through the charted position of Weston Shelf Buoy. The flashing light will also be displayed in other areas when the Harbour Master has imposed a speed limit. Outside these restricted areas, these vessels will display the normal lights and signals for vessels of their class.
- iv) The identification flashing yellow light shown in the manner described in this Notice DOES NOT relieve these vessels of taking any action required by IRPCS.

GENERAL DIRECTION 05 - CALSHOT WATERSPORTS AREA

1. The area bounded by the Calshot Spit and the Fawley Power Station channel and as marked by yellow special marks (see Figure 3), is designated as a watersports area ("**Calshot Watersports Area**").
2. The Calshot Watersports Area provides a safe area for dinghy and dayboat sailing, windsurfing, kite surfing and paddle sports, only. Kitesurfing is not permitted in the Calshot Watersports Area between 1st April and 31st October.
3. Authorised support and rescue craft involved in support of these activities can also operate within the Calshot Watersports Area.
4. Within the Calshot Watersports Area, all other powered craft not providing safety cover must adhere to a 6 knot speed limit.
5. The Calshot Watersports Area must not be used for activities involving the towing of persons.

Buoy Positions			
1.	50° 49' 13.50"N, 1° 18' 35.52"W	7.	50° 49' 16.74"N, 1° 18' 59.88"W
2.	50° 49' 16.08"N, 1° 18' 39.30"W	8.	50° 49' 13.02"N, 1° 19' 4.44"W
3.	50° 49' 18.60"N, 1° 18' 42.96"W	9.	50° 49' 9.36"N, 1° 19' 8.88"W
4.	50° 49' 21.36"N, 1° 18' 46.98"W	10.	50° 49' 5.64"N, 1° 19' 13.50"W
5.	50° 49' 24.00"N, 1° 18' 50.82"W	A.	50° 49' 13.68"N, 1° 18' 34.56"W
6.	50° 49' 20.34"N, 1° 18' 55.38"W	B.	50° 49' 14.22"N, 1° 18' 32.16"W

Figure 3 - Calshot Watersports Area



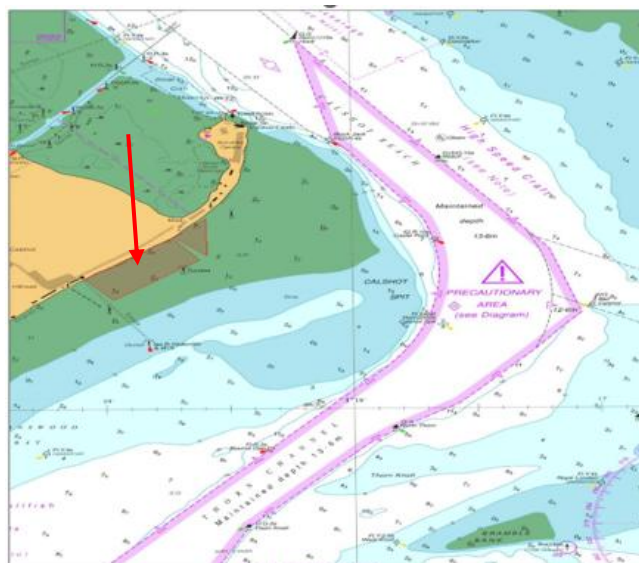
GENERAL DIRECTION 06 - CALSHOT BUOYED SWIMMING AREA AND PERSONAL WATERCRAFT/JET SKI CORRIDOR

1. This General Direction establishes a safe swimming area in the northern part of Stanswood Bay, between the southern part of Calshot Spit and Hillhead ("Safe Swimming Area").
2. The Safe Swimming Area, is 200 metres wide (measured from the shoreline) and approximately 800 metres long (measured along the shoreline) (as detailed in Figures 4 and 5).
3. The Safe Swimming Area will be marked at approximately 70 metre intervals by yellow cone shaped buoys. It is intended that such buoys marking the Safe Swimming Area will be laid at the beginning of May and removed at the end of October, annually, weather permitting.
4. The Safe Swimming Area is sub-divided by a corridor to enable Watercraft etc to get from shore to deeper water

Figure 4 - Safe Swimming Area



Figure 5 - Safe Swimming Area Chartlet



GENERAL DIRECTION 07 - SEAPLANES

1. This General Direction applies to all seaplane's operating within the SHA.
2. No seaplane shall navigate in, alight on or take off from the water within the SHA unless the consent in writing of the Harbour Master has first been obtained.

GENERAL DIRECTION 08 - NOTICE OF RECREATIONAL EVENT

1. This General Direction requires that any organised Recreational Event taking place within the SHA, must not take place until permission from the Harbour Master has been sought and granted.
2. To apply to hold a Recreational Event, the applicant should refer to the Port of Southampton Leisure Events Procedure for full details of the application process. [Recreational Events - Southampton VTS - ABP Southampton](#)
3. A minimum of four weeks' notice must be given to the Harbour Master so a review can be carried out. It is the responsibility of the event organiser/sponsor to update event details ahead of the date if details change.
4. Notwithstanding formal notification, the event organiser/sponsor always remains responsible for the liability, conduct and supervision of the Recreational Event.

GENERAL DIRECTION 09 - AUTONOMOUS UNMANNED VESSELS

1. This General Direction requires that the owner of an autonomous unmanned vessel (AUV) or unmanned surface vessel (USV) is not permitted to enter or operate in the SHA unless the owner has first provided notice in accordance with subsection (a) of this General Direction 09 below and received approval of the Harbour Master to undertake the planned activity.
 - a. Notice must be made in writing to the Harbour Master at least 14 days before the activity is planned to commence and include full details, risk assessment and method statement including contact details, of a person who is:
 - i) in control of the autonomous vessel; or
 - ii) able to take control of the autonomous vessel.

The submission must include details of the qualifications of the persons who will be, at various times, considered to be the “master” of the autonomous vessel and how the AUV or USV will comply with the requirements of the International Rules for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea (IRPCS). In particular, the operator must make it clear how the AUV or USV and its associated control systems will comply with the IRPCS requirements to keep a proper lookout by sight and by hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision.

2. The owner or operator of an AUV or USV that has had previous trials accepted may have this minimum notice period reduced provided that there are no substantial changes in risk controls or nature and area of the trials/operations proposed.
3. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has established four “degrees” to describe different classes of autonomy. These are as follows:

Degree One: Ship with automated processes and decision support: Seafarers are on board to operate and control shipboard systems and functions. Some operations may be automated and at times be unsupervised but with seafarers on board ready to take control.

Degree Two: Remotely controlled ship with seafarers on board: The ship is controlled and operated from another location. Seafarers are available on board to take control and to operate the shipboard systems and functions.

Degree Three: Remotely controlled ship without seafarers on board: The ship is controlled and operated from another location. There are no seafarers on board.

Degree Four: Fully autonomous ship: The operating system of the ship is able to make decisions and determine actions by itself.

5. In general, for the higher Degrees of autonomy, more robust risk assessments and associated control measures will be required to satisfy the Harbour Master that safety risks to other water users as well as to personnel involved in the trials/operations are mitigated to an agreed As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP) level.

6. The level of detail in risk assessments and method statements required to achieve approval for operations will depend on the following factors:

- a. Degree of autonomous operations proposed.
- b. Whether surface, sub-surface or both.
- c. Anticipated traffic density in proposed trials/operating area.
- d. Size, speed and mass of autonomous vessel(s) involved to enable an assessment of the level of risk to other vessels.
- e. Ability to fully comply with the IRPCS in the area proposed for trials/operations.
- f. Guard vessel deployment and control capability (for Degree Two and above).
- g. Technology Readiness Level (TRL) to enable an assessment of the trial/operation's development level and likely reliability of responses.

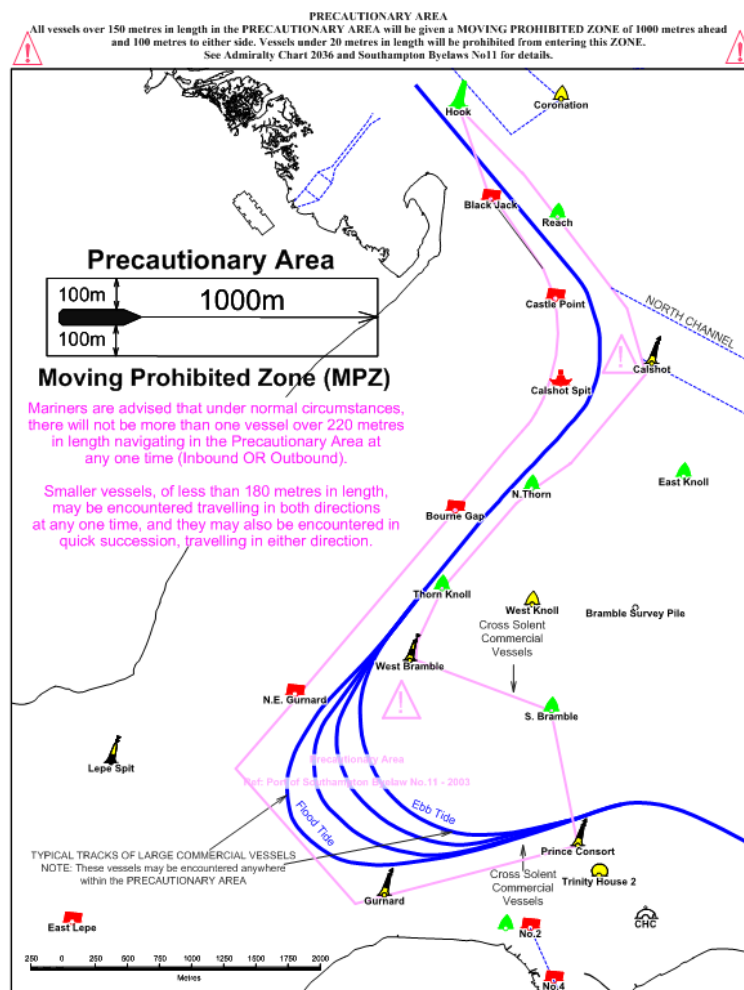
All of the above must be made clear in the documentation supplied, together with a clear statement of how the AUV/USV will be controlled, for each stage of the proposed activity including non-trials transits, and a clear description of all acronyms used.

GENERAL DIRECTION 10 - CLEAR CHANNEL VESSELS & PRECAUTIONARY AREA (THORN CHANNEL)

1. This General Direction requires that all vessels navigating within the SHA shall ensure that a vessel greater than 220 metres in length overall, shall be given a 'clear channel' in the Precautionary Area - (see Figure 6).
 - i) A "clear channel vessel" is one which requires a clear and unimpeded passage ahead when transiting the "Precautionary Area".
 - ii) Vessels may enter the "Precautionary Area" maintaining a safe distance astern of a "clear channel vessel".
 - iii) A vessel of any size experiencing manoeuvrability problems may also request a "clear channel".
2. Precautionary Area:

Two vessels each having a length greater than 180 metres length overall shall not pass or overtake each other between Hook Buoy and a line drawn due south of West Bramble Buoy.

Figure 6 - Precautionary Area



3. Southampton Harbour Master's Patrol Launch

The Southampton Harbour Master's Patrol Launch (VHF Call Sign "SP" – watching VHF Channel 12) may precede all vessels over 150 metres in length overall within 'the Precautionary Area' showing, in addition to the normal steaming lights, an all-round blue light. The absence of a patrol launch does not invalidate the implementation of a vessel's MPZ.

All instructions given by the Southampton Harbour Master's Patrol Launch must be acknowledged and promptly carried out.

GENERAL DIRECTION 11 - REGISTRATION OF SMALL COMMERCIAL CRAFT/VESSELS

1. This General Direction is issued for the purpose of promoting or securing conditions conducive to the ease, convenience or safety of navigation and the safety of persons and property in the SHA, ABP Southampton seek to ensure that all commercial craft operating within the SHA are properly maintained, equipped and manned and used only for purposes for which they are capable.
2. All commercial vessel operators (undertaking paid work, training, or carrying fare paying customers) using watercraft or vessels working within the SHA are therefore required to register their craft with ABP Southampton on an annual basis providing all required information.

This information should be provided [here](#).

Note 1: Commercial craft/vessels on one way delivery voyages within, to or from the Southampton SHA are exempt from the requirements to register.

Note 2: Vessels only attending ABP Southampton authorised events (Seawork and the Southampton International Boat Show) are exempt from the requirements to register, as they are covered by separate Harbour Authority agreements with the event organisers.

Note 3: Ship Assist Tugs authorised for use within the Southampton SHA and listed within LNTM 02 are exempt from the requirements of this General Direction.

Note 4: Vessels operating under the Code of Practice for Intended Pleasure Vessels in Temporary Commercial Use (IPV Code). Which are normally used within the definition of a Pleasure Vessel, and are only being used commercially temporarily on a self-certification basis are not required to register.

ABP Southampton may, where deemed appropriate, conduct inspections of such vessels, such inspections being based on national standards, laws and agreed codes of practice. The results of any inspection, and any limitations on the vessel's use, will be recorded and discussed with the vessel's owner and operator.

3. Commercial craft/vessels for the purposes of this Direction mean any vessel or watercraft which is less than 24 metres in load line length and is not a pleasure vessel. A pleasure vessel is:

Any vessel which is used solely for sport or pleasure by its owners (or the owners' immediate family or friends) or, where the owner is a body corporate, employees or officers of the owner (or their immediate family or friends) on voyages or excursions for which the owner does not receive money for or in connection with operating the vessel or carrying any person, other than as a contribution to the direct expenses of the operation of the vessel incurred during the voyage or excursion; or

Any vessel wholly owned by or on behalf of a members' club formed for the purpose of sport or pleasure which, at the time it is being used, is used only for the sport or pleasure of members of that club or their immediate family, and for the use of which any charges levied are paid into club funds and applied for the general use of the club, as more particularly defined in the Merchant Shipping (Vessels in Commercial use for Sport or Pleasure) Regulations 1998, as amended.

GENERAL DIRECTION 12 - ANCHORING WITHIN THE STATUTORY HARBOUR AREA

1. This General Direction is issued for the purpose of maintaining safe navigation and use of the water space within the SHA for all. It is a requirement that no vessel or watercraft may anchor anywhere within the SHA for periods exceeding 36 hrs without the written permission of the Harbour Master.
2. Any vessel or watercraft requesting permission to anchor for periods in excess of 36 hrs must do so by contacting Southampton VTS on VHF Channel 12.
3. The limited time period is not specific to a singular location within the SHA, it covers any vessel or watercraft anchoring within the entire SHA, even if it moves multiple times within a period of time to not exceed 36 hrs in one specific location.
4. Where a vessel or watercraft's anchoring activity relates to an authorised recreational event being undertaken in compliance with General Direction 08, said vessel or watercraft is not required to comply with General Direction 12.