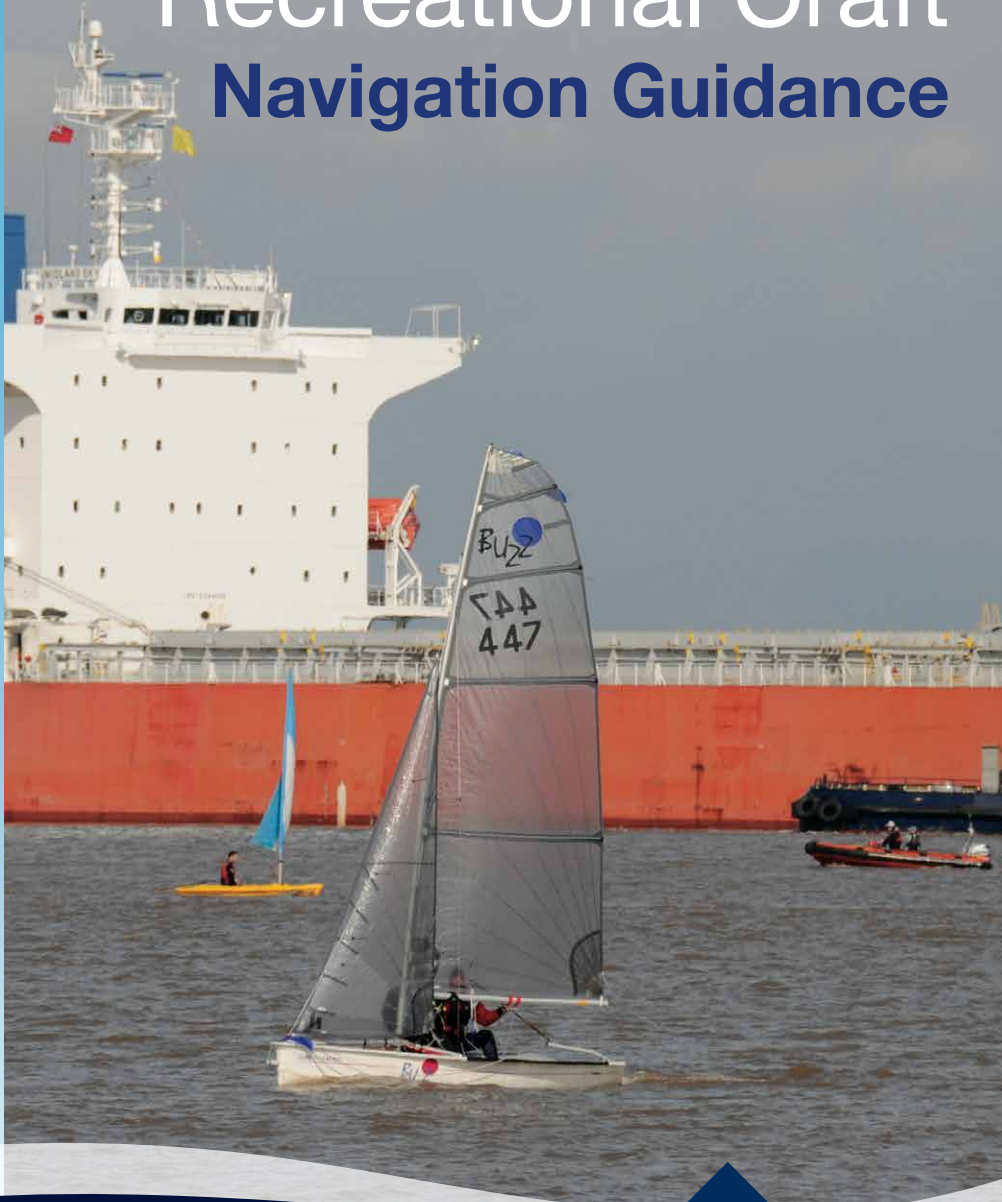


# Recreational Craft Navigation Guidance



THE BRISTOL PORT COMPANY

## Advice to Recreational Craft

This leaflet is intended to help you enjoy the upper reaches of the Bristol Channel in safety and in harmony with commercial users of this waterway. Bristol Port is one of the UK's major ports and as such is used by a wide range of merchant vessels with draughts up to 14.5m, ranging from bulk carriers carrying up to 100,000 tons of coal, through car carriers with up to 6,000 cars on board, to jet fuel tankers and a host of general cargo ships of differing sizes. In addition, the unique tidal conditions present navigational challenges which should not be under-estimated.

Our aim is to enable you to make the most of the recreational opportunities of the estuary and we would encourage you to note advice contained within this leaflet; enjoy using the water, but above all else, stay safe. Please be aware that:

- The main shipping channel is well marked with buoys and lights. This channel is in regular use by large commercial vessels.
- Dredgers operate in the area and are often to be seen outside the main channels when engaged in dredging operations.
- Some small commercial vessels may at times navigate outside of the main channel.
- When possible recreational users should use the offshore or inshore routes, these are marked on the chartlet. When crossing the shipping channel use the recommended crossing area. Crossing should be carried out as near as possible to right angles and should not impede commercial vessels.
- Ships are likely to be traveling faster than you anticipate them to be. A large ship visible on the horizon may take no more than 10 minutes to reach you under clear conditions, in poorer conditions this will be considerably less.
- At 10 knots a ship will travel one nautical mile in 6 minutes, at 15 knots this is reduced to 4 minutes. Be aware that car carriers regularly approach King Road at up to 20 knots over the ground.
- At Portishead Point commercial vessels will often pass within 200 metres of the shoreline.
- Keep a good lookout and be aware of all shipping movements. Live tidal shipping information can be obtained from The Bristol Port Company website.
- Be aware of wash created by tugs assisting and making their way to ships. Deep draught vessels will meet their escort tug at the English and Welsh buoy.
- Deep draught vessels will enter Portbury Dock from the west and pass close to the Firefly buoy. Other vessels entering both Avonmouth and Portbury will generally swing to port off the entrance to the River Avon and dock against the flood tide. Vessels entering on the ebb tide will make a direct approach from the west.
- Further information and byelaws can be found on The Bristol Port Company website – [www.bristolport.co.uk](http://www.bristolport.co.uk)

## Weather

During periods of restricted visibility recreational users should give consideration to their ability to safely navigate in the prevailing conditions. If recreational users are crossing or navigating in the main channel during periods of restricted visibility, when visibility is less than 1 nautical mile, users should call Bristol VTS to obtain shipping information.

When the wind is against the tide a shortsteep sea will develop in King Road. Periods of north westerly, northerly and north easterly winds will also produce difficult sea conditions for recreational craft.

## River Avon – Navigation Advice

When approaching the entrance to the River Avon leave Avonmouth South Pier lighthouse close to your port side. Be aware that at 3 hours to High Water the tidal flow crossing the entrance can reach 4 to 6 knots. Keep the Swash Bank transit lights in line until the St. George's transit lights are in line. Leave the Hoveringham buoy to starboard. Be sure only to enter the River Avon when sufficient depth of water is available for your vessel. For larger sailing vessels consideration should also be given to sufficient air draft clearance for passing under the M5 Motorway Bridge.

The speed limit in the river for vessels with a draught less than 2 metres is 9 knots over the ground and for those with a draught of more than 2 metres 6 knots. However, when passing pills and creeks where boats are moored you should reduce your speed to minimise wash.

Recreational craft should avoid impeding the passage of large vessels transiting the river. This is most important when rounding bends, particularly Horseshoe Bend. Large vessels, particularly those carrying passengers will have an escort tug in attendance.

You should avoid anchoring in the River Avon. Areas of prohibited anchorage within the area are clearly marked on Admiralty chart 1859. There are moorings in a number of the pills and creeks of the River Avon. Licenses and permissions are required from the relevant bodies prior to laying moorings.

## River Avon – Communication

When approaching and transiting the River Avon inbound, all vessels should keep a listening watch on VHF Channel 12. Inbound vessels over 30 metres, or carrying more than 12 passengers, must report to 'Bristol VTS' when at Shirehampton and Sea Mills reporting points. When passing Black Rock all vessels should make contact with 'City Docks Radio' on VHF Channel 14 on low power. A further call should be made to 'City Docks Radio' for final instructions on entering the lock when passing the Hotwells Pontoons.

When transiting the River Avon outbound, keep a listening watch on VHF Channel 12. When passing Nelson Point all vessels should contact 'Bristol VTS' for traffic information in King Road. Outbound vessels over 30 metres, or carrying more than 12 passengers, must report to 'Bristol VTS' at Sea Mills, Shirehampton and Nelson Point.

- For information on pilotage services please contact Bristol Pilots Partnership, licensed River Avon Pilots, on **01179 823 081**.
- For information on locking in and out of Bristol City Docks please contact the Marine Services Supervisor on **01179 273 633**.

## Narrowboats

Narrowboats should contact Bristol VTS for information on weather, traffic and tidal conditions prior to commencing any passage in the Estuary or River Avon. In anything but benign conditions it is not recommended to leave the River Avon or continue seaward past the Second Severn Crossing when outbound from the River Severn.



## Communication

Keep a listening watch on VHF Channel 12 whilst in the Bristol VTS area which extends from the Lower Shoots to the Holm Islands, including the River Avon. All vessels over 50 GRT will call 'Bristol VTS' at the reporting points shown on the relevant charts.

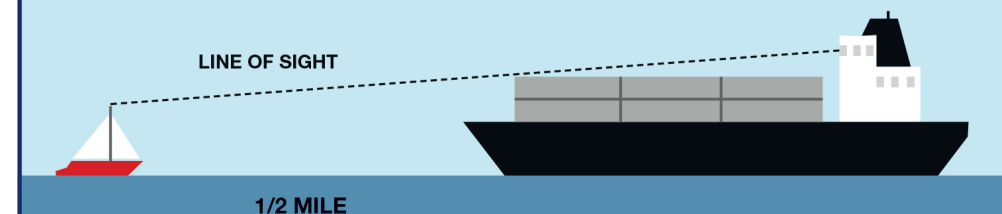
Flotillas of vessels should arrange for the lead vessel to call and then pass the information to the other craft via a different VHF channel. VHF Channels 8, 10 and 72 should not be used as these are commonly used for ship and tug communications. Vessels within Portbury and Avonmouth Docks will use VHF Channel 14. Vessels embarking or disembarking a pilot, usually at the Breaksea Pilot Station will use VHF Channel 6.

For communication in the River Avon see overleaf.

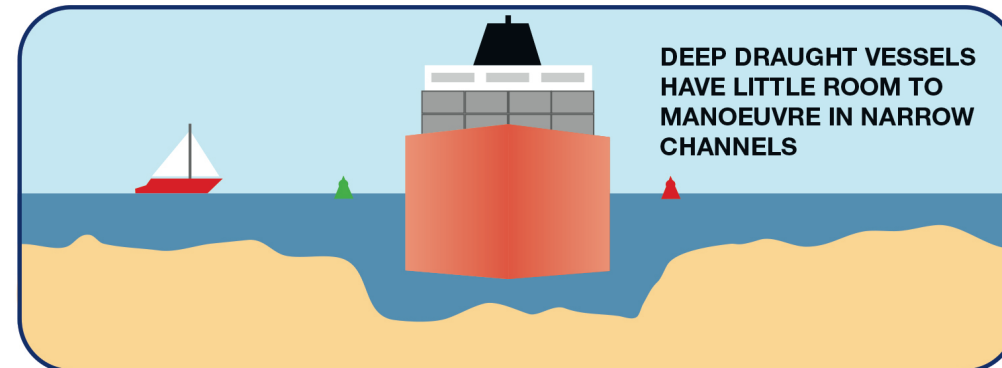
## Useful Telephone Numbers and websites

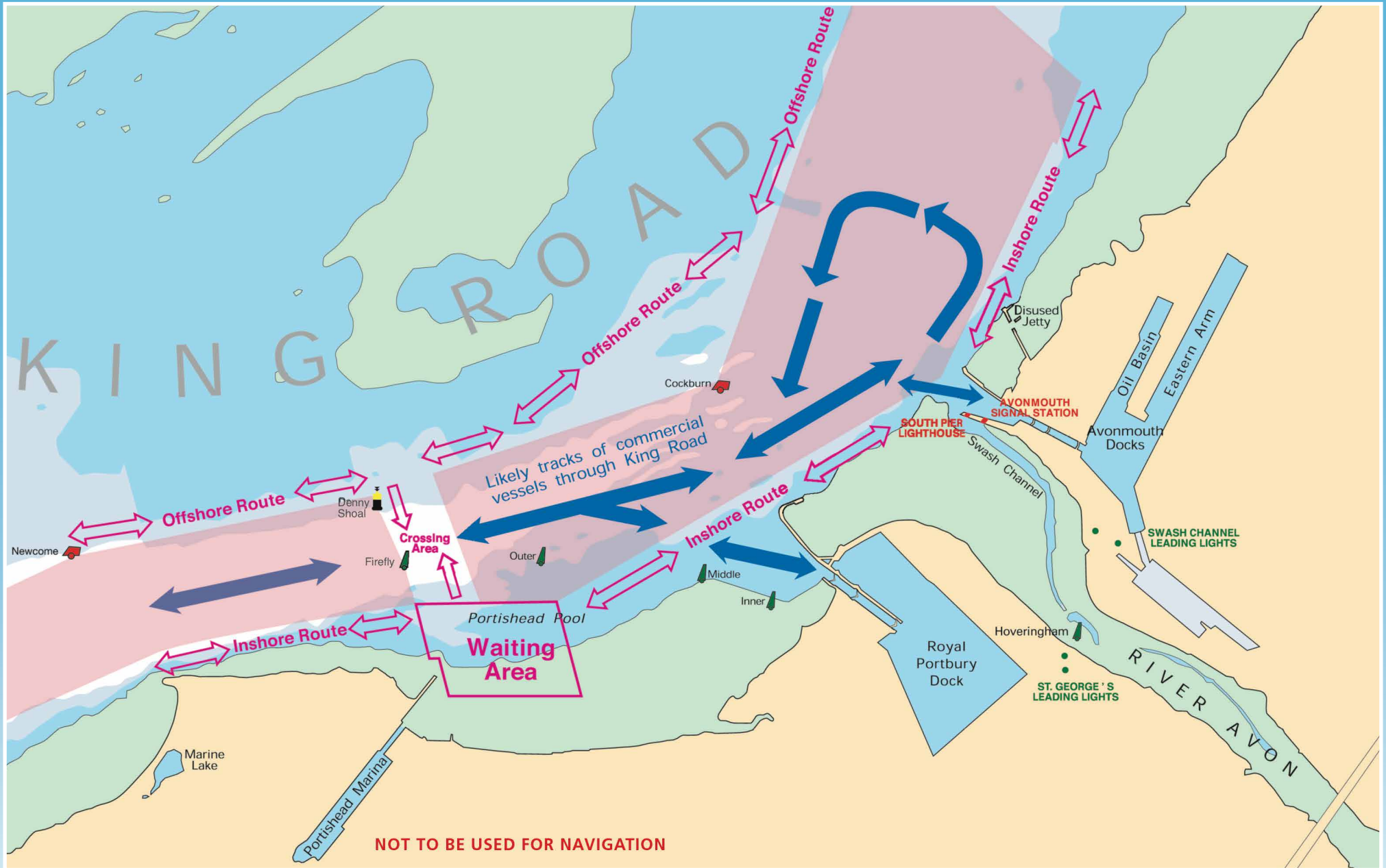
Bristol VTS	0117 980 2638	<a href="http://www.bristolport.co.uk">www.bristolport.co.uk</a>
Bristol City Docks	0117 903 1484	<a href="http://www.bristol.gov.uk">www.bristol.gov.uk</a>
Portishead Quays Marina	01275 841 941	<a href="http://www.quaymarinas.com">www.quaymarinas.com</a>
Gloucester Harbour Trustees	01453 811 913	<a href="http://www.gloucesterharbourtrustees.org.uk">www.gloucesterharbourtrustees.org.uk</a>

### LARGE SHIPS OFTEN HAVE RESTRICTED VISIBILITY



### DEEP DRAUGHT VESSELS HAVE LITTLE ROOM TO MANOEUVRE IN NARROW CHANNELS





NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION

## International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea

**A good knowledge of the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea must be held by users of the harbour area, particularly the following rules.**

### Rule 5 – Lookout

Every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper look-out by sight and 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.

### Rule 9 – 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.
- (c) A vessel engaged in fishing shall not impede the passage of any other vessel navigating 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.
- (e)
  - i. In a narrow channel or fairway when overtaking can take place only if the vessel to be overtaken has to take action to permit safe passing, the vessel intending to overtake shall indicate her intention by sounding the appropriate signal prescribed in Rule 34(c)(i). The vessel to be overtaken shall, if in agreement, sound the appropriate signal prescribed in Rule 34(c)(ii) and take steps to permit safe passing. If in doubt she may sound the signals prescribed in Rule 34(d).
  - ii. This Rule does not relieve the overtaking vessel of her obligation under Rule 13.
- (f) A vessel nearing a bend or an area of a narrow channel or fairway where other vessels may be obscured by an intervening obstruction shall navigate with particular alertness and caution and shall sound the appropriate signal prescribed in Rule 34(e).
- (g) Any vessel shall, if the circumstances of the case admit, avoid anchoring in a narrow channel.

### Rule 34 – Manoeuvring and warning signals

- (a) When vessels are in sight of one another, a power-driven vessel underway, when manoeuvring as authorised or required by these Rules, shall indicate that manoeuvre by the following signals on her whistle:
  - **one short blast** to mean *“I am altering my course to starboard”*
  - **two short blasts** to mean *“I am altering my course to port”*
  - **three short blasts** to mean *“I am operating astern propulsion”*
- (d) *When vessels in sight of one another are approaching each other and from any cause either vessel fails to understand the intentions or actions of the other, or is in doubt whether sufficient action is being taken by the other to avoid collision, the vessel in doubt shall immediately indicate such doubt by giving **at least five short and rapid blasts on the whistle.***

## Environment

The Severn Estuary is an important area for nature conservation, with a range of nationally and internationally important marine habitats and wildlife. The estuary has one of the highest tidal ranges in the world and its extensive intertidal flats and salt marshes support large numbers of migratory birds over the winter months.

In recognition of this, the Severn Estuary is designated as a European Marine Site, comprising a Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for marine and coastal habitats and certain migratory fish. The estuary is also a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

A management scheme for the European Marine Site has been developed to ensure that a wide range of activities continue to take place in a way that is sympathetic to the needs of wildlife. Bristol Port, as a statutory Harbour Authority, works with other relevant authorities to implement this management scheme and is committed to protecting and enhancing our local environment.

### You can help protect the Severn Estuary by:

- Avoiding disturbance to wildlife, particularly over-wintering or breeding birds, by keeping your distance and maintaining your noise to a minimum
- Never allowing rubbish to go overboard
- Preventing oil or fuel from spilling into the water
- Using onshore toilets or holding tanks where possible
- Choosing anchoring sites carefully and using recognised landing places when going ashore
- For further information and best practice advice for the boating community see [www.thegreenblue.org.uk](http://www.thegreenblue.org.uk)

Thank you for your continued help in enabling recreational boating, commercial shipping and wildlife to co-exist in harmony in the special environment of the Severn Estuary and River Avon.

### The Bristol Port Company

St. Andrew's House, St. Andrew's Road,  
Avonmouth, Bristol BS11 9DQ



Telephone: 0117 982 0000  
Email: [marine.admin@bristolport.co.uk](mailto:marine.admin@bristolport.co.uk)  
[www.bristolport.co.uk](http://www.bristolport.co.uk)



**THE BRISTOL PORT COMPANY**