

Towage Guidelines and requirements for the Gloucester Harbour.

I. Introduction.

The following guidelines and requirements relate to towage operations within the Gloucester harbour.

Towage operations may include the provision of assistance to an operational vessel, the movement of 'dead' vessels and the movement of barges and floating equipment and plant into, out of or within the harbour area.

The guidelines and requirements form part of the formal risk assessment process and are under continuous review. They are produced following consultation with the harbour authority, authorised pilots and a limited number of other persons having towage experience.

The guidelines and requirements are intended to assist ships masters, agents, pilots and the harbour authority in facilitating the safe and effective movement of vessels.

In all circumstances the master/pilot and tug master shall as part of the passage plan and risk assessment process agree how the operation will be conducted, what dangers are associated with towing in restricted visibility and what risk reduction measures should be applied. When completing this assessment the following should be considered:

1. Type of tug, propulsion method, towing from winch or hook and location of winch/hook
2. Proposed method of towing
3. Operational status of navigational aids and equipment
4. Minimum speed to maintain steerage of vessel to be assisted
5. Movement of other vessels in the area
6. Navigational characteristics of the particular area of the harbour
7. Contingency plan should visibility deteriorate after the tow has commenced and/or if the tug has to disengage at any stage of the operation

Additional discussion concerning towing operations may be necessary in view of prevailing weather and tidal conditions and any other special circumstances.

In ALL cases a towage plan (including minimum speed) must be submitted to the harbour authority a minimum of 24h in advance of the proposed time of commencement of the operation. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in delay.

2. Guidelines for tugs providing assistance to standard vessels for port entry

The following assumptions have been made in preparing these guidelines:

- Standard vessel, single screw with no bow/stern thrusters, no high efficiency rudder or other manoeuvring aids.
- Favourable weather conditions
- Tidal ranges within predicted limits
- No adverse local activity or conditions

Other vessels will be assessed on an individual basis.

Standard vessels of less than 90m loa will not normally require a tug

Standard vessels of between 90m and 120m loa may under certain circumstances (see Appendix 8 – Pre-arrival Planning) require a tug to assist in manoeuvring at Sharpness (inbound)

Standard vessels of 120m loa and above are more likely (see Appendix 8 – Pre-arrival Planning) to require tug assistance for manoeuvring at the estuarial entrance to Sharpness dock (inbound)

The final decision on the number of tugs required rests with the master of the vessel in consultation with the pilot. However, the harbour authority reserves the right to require a vessel to take a tug or comply with any special instruction which may be necessary according to the particular circumstances of the case.

3. Towage minimum bollard pull and number requirement

Vessels of up to 120m – 20t (one tug)

Vessels in excess of 120m – 20t (two tugs)

4. Underkeel clearance

The minimum acceptable underkeel clearance for all vessels navigating within the Gloucester harbour is 1.0m

5. Visibility

Restricted visibility procedures will be activated for all vessels other than those engaged in towing operations when visibility is expected, or reported to be less than 1 mile. These procedures are set out in Appendix 7 to the Safety Management Plan. Minimum visibility for all towage operations is 1 mile at any point within the harbour.

6. Towage operations in restricted visibility.

Towing in restricted visibility poses the most serious threat to the safety of the tug, its crew, and other harbour users.

Restricted visibility is any occasion where visibility is, or is expected to, reduce to a distance where the tugs normal ability to perform may be impaired. Such restrictions in visibility could be due to fog, mist, snow, rain, sleet or any other conditions which impair visibility.

The minimum visibility for all towage operations is 1 mile at any point within the harbour.

All towage operations in restricted visibility should be conducted with the assisted vessel maintaining minimum speed. A minimum speed of at least 4 knots is required.

The tug master should immediately inform the pilot/master or harbour authority of any concerns that he may have as to the safety of his tug and crew. The pilot and tug master should take immediate action to ensure the safety of both the tug and the assisted vessel. If necessary the operation should be aborted as soon as it is safe to do so.

7. Guidance for small commercial vessels engaged in towing operations, barge and non-powered vessel operations

(a) Within the Gloucester harbour, regular towing operations take place involving small vessels.

(b) When operations involving small vessels (e.g. coded vessels, non-coded vessels, barges or vessels without propulsion and/or crew) are proposed, other than in an emergency, a towage plan/method statement must be submitted to the harbour authority a minimum of 24h in advance of the proposed time of commencement of the operation. A checklist is provided for the assistance of operators. The towage plan/method statement must include the following detail:

1. Which port the barge/vessel is going to or coming from
2. Arrangements for recovery and streaming emergency towline
3. Communication method between barge and tug
4. Confirmation that the level of qualification and training of personnel manning the barge and tug is at least the minimum required for the class of vessel and area of operation, including any necessary local knowledge and towing endorsements
5. Dimensions of barge/vessel and tug including details of any cargo carried by the barge
6. Minimum speed of tow
7. Arrangements for lighting (to comply with Colregs)
8. Confirmation that a general health and safety risk assessment has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of The Merchant Shipping and Fishing Vessels (Health and Safety at Work) Regulations 1997

NB: The towage plan/method statement must be completed and submitted to the pilot or harbour authority before commencement of the operation.

- (c) For vessels coming from and going to sea the operator must declare that the vessel(s) is(are) coded/certified for the intended area of operation. Copies of the relevant certification for the towing and towed vessels must be provided. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in delay.

Such certification will include as a minimum SCV2 or other Certificate of Compliance, Loadline Exemption Certificate and confirmation of appropriate insurance.

- (d) For tows proceeding from inland waters to sea the operator must also declare that the towed vessel(s) are watertight, weathertight and will reach their destination safely with regard to the sea and weather conditions which are likely to be encountered en-route.
- (e) For vessels which are not certified to operate at sea (“non-coded” vessels) and which thus operate solely within categorised waters the operator must declare that the vessel is fit for purpose and confirm compliance with the relevant regulations for Class IX(A) vessels which relate to the carriage of Life Saving Appliances and fire fighting equipment. These can be found in:-
- The Merchant Shipping (LSA) Regulations 1999, and
 - The Merchant Shipping (Fire protection: Small Ships) Regulations 1988.
- (f) Owners and operators are reminded that pilotage directions may apply if the combined length of each of the towing and towed vessel(s) exceeds 30m, regardless of vessel configuration.

Application for towage operation (and small craft checklist) to be submitted to the harbour authority at least 24h prior to entering harbour limits

VESSEL AND CREW DETAILS	
Towing vessel:	Towed vessel(s):
Name:	Name / type:
Length overall (m):	Length overall (m):
Bollard Pull / hp:	Powered / unpowered*
	Manned / unmanned*
	Cargo:
Proposed date of tow:	Minimum speed of tow (kts):
From:	To:
Crew qualifications (e.g. STCW/MCA/RYA)	
Vessel certification (e.g. Coded/uncoded)	
Towage insurance details:	
TOWING EQUIPMENT	
Type of tow line: wire / synthetic / combination*	Max. length of tow line (m):
Is an emergency towline rigged and accessible:	Yes / no*
Is lighting fitted as required by COLREGS?	Yes / no*
Is a method of quick release provided?	Yes / no*
Has method statement been provided?	Yes / no* (Copy to be provided to harbour authority)
MANDATORY COMPLIANCE	
Life Saving Appliances	Yes / no*
Fire fighting equipment	Yes / no*
Risk Assessment (Health and Safety)	Yes / no* (Copy to be provided to harbour authority)
Loadline Exemption Certificate issued:	Yes / no* (Copy to be provided to harbour authority)
	* Delete as applicable