


## Advice to Recreational Craft

This leaflet is intended to help you enjoy the upper reaches of the Severn Estuary in safety and with due consideration to commercial vessels transiting to and from the Port of Sharpness. The merchant vessels that may be encountered carry a variety of cargoes, and commonly have lengths of up to 120m and draughts of up to 6.5m. The highly-dynamic tidal conditions of the estuary can be challenging and should not be under-estimated.

**Our aim is to help you enjoy the recreational opportunities of the estuary in safety. Please be aware that:**

- The main shipping channel is well marked by beacons, buoys lights and marks ashore. All these aids to navigation are clearly shown on the official Admiralty chart (no. 1166).
- The channel is narrow and in regular use by commercial vessels which may be unable to take avoiding action, so you should keep a good all round look out and be prepared to move out of the way.
- Large commercial vessels using the dock at Sharpness and the River Severn are confined to the main navigation channel. This is recognized as a narrow channel and skippers of small craft must act prudently and with due regard to the International Rules for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea (the "Colregs") to avoid hampering the movement of larger vessels. Rule 9 applies.
- Although the difference in the time of high water between Portishead and Sharpness is less than one hour, the significant rise in estuary bed level between the two has a huge impact upon the times and depths at which the sandbanks and rock outcrops are covered by the incoming tide and the depths available in the main channel. It is thus essential that the passage is not rushed but conducted at a speed which ensures that sufficient depth is available for navigation in and adjacent to the main channel.
- Flood and ebb flows in the estuary may exceed 4 knots and should thus be taken into account when assessing your speed over the ground. Flows at this rate can place significant strain on mooring equipment and may hamper recovery. For this reason reducing vessel speed, rather than anchoring, should be the preferred option if it becomes clear that entry to the port may be delayed. See below.
- Commercial vessels preparing to enter the Port of Sharpness will approach on the flood tide from the South and carry out a 180 degree turn to port in order to stem the tide and work slowly back towards the pier at the entrance to the Port. At no time should any other vessel attempt to pass between the ship and the pier.
- Commercial vessels departing the Port will do so before High water and make an immediate turn to port upon clearing the piers. At no time should any other vessel impede departure or attempt to pass between the ship and the pier.
- Further information, including byelaws and directions may be found on the Gloucester Harbour Trustees website - [www.gloucesterharbourtrustees.org.uk](http://www.gloucesterharbourtrustees.org.uk)



**Gloucester Harbour Trustees**  
Navigation House, The Docks, Sharpness, Berkeley, GL13 9UD  
**Tel: 01453 811913**  
[www.gloucesterharbourtrustees.org.uk](http://www.gloucesterharbourtrustees.org.uk)

- Keep your distance from over-wintering and breeding birds and other wildlife
- Keep noise to a minimum
- Don't dispose of rubbish overboard
- Don't allow fuel or oil to spill into the water
- Be careful where you anchor
- Use recognised landing places when going ashore

## Protecting the Environment

Gloucester Harbour Trustees works with other relevant authorities in the implementation of a scheme of management for the European Marine Site and is thus committed to ensuring that activities which are subject to regulation by the Trustees are carried out in a manner which does not detract from the protection and enhancement of the estuary environment.



The estuary has one of the highest tidal ranges in the world and supports a range of nationally and internationally important marine habitats, species, wildlife and features. The importance of the Severn Estuary is thus recognised through a number of national and international designations. As a European Marine Site the estuary is a designated Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds, a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) for certain habitats and migratory fish species, and under the Ramsar Convention it is recognised as a wetland of international importance. Domestic Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) citations also apply to the intertidal areas and some adjoining land features.

## Environment

## 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. The following Rules are of particular importance:

### Rule 5 – Look-out

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 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 of 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 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 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.

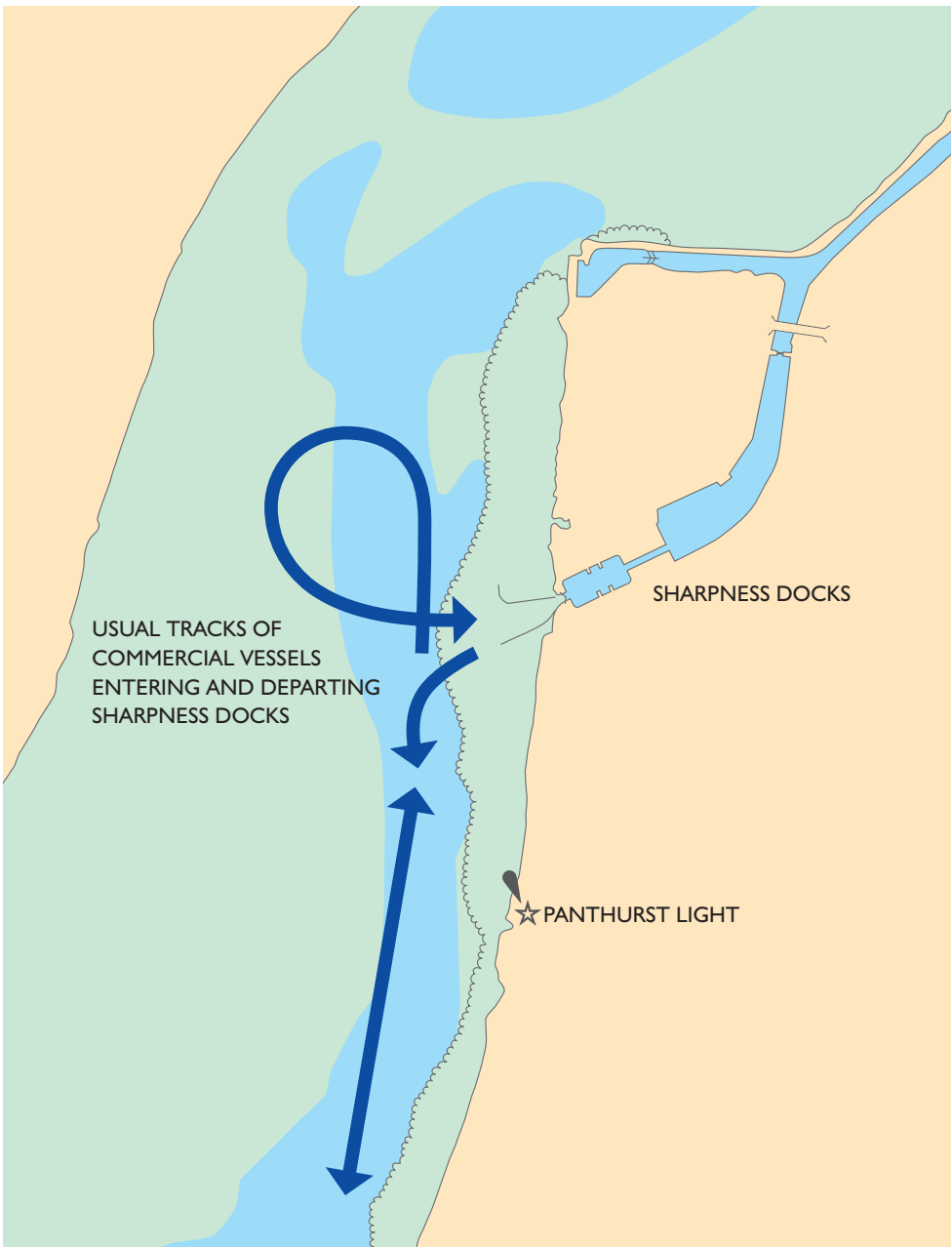
### Rule 34 – Manoeuvring and warning signals

- (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.**





## Likely tracks of commercial vessels arriving/departing Sharpness Dock



NOTE: NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION

## Communication

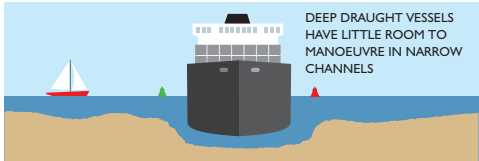
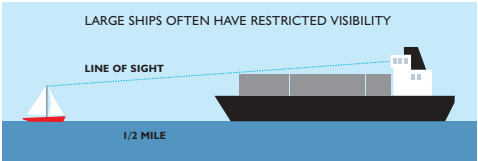
Maintain a listening watch on VHF channel 13 so that you may hear communications between other vessels and, if necessary, easily advise other vessels of your intentions.

If you wish to enter the Inland Waterway system through Sharpness Dock you must:

- Book your passage in advance (a minimum of 24 hours notice is required) by contacting Sharpness Pierhead on 01453 511968 or VHF Channel 13 (call "Sharpness Radio"). Sharpness Pierhead is manned according to operational need and callers should be prepared to leave a message. Booking and early communication is essential in order for the team at Sharpness to plan the tide to allow for all known movements and to liaise with all parties to ensure that movements are achieved safely and efficiently.
- **Establish communication either by telephone or VHF as early as possible with Sharpness when en-route (in practical terms that would normally be when passing the M48 motorway bridge). Be prepared to provide your anticipated time of arrival and an accurate indication of your position at the time of making the call.**
- Be aware that operational constraints may require that on occasions you may have to stem the tide in the estuary for a period prior to entering the dock. Canal & River Trust staff will be pleased to advise of any movements into or out of Sharpness Dock and the anticipated time at which the entrance will be clear (in order to enable you to calculate and adjust your speed accordingly).
- Sharpness Radio is NOT authorised to give navigational advice to vessels but may pass information relating to weather, tide heights, port facilities and vessel movements which may help you to make relevant decisions.
- Understand the significance of the port entry light signals displayed at the pierhead. <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/wales-and-south-west/sharpness-port>

## Useful telephone numbers and websites

Gloucester Harbour Trustees	<b>01453 811 913</b>	<a href="http://www.gloucesterharbourtrustees.org.uk">www.gloucesterharbourtrustees.org.uk</a>
Sharpness Pierhead	<b>01453 511 968</b>	<a href="http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk">www.canalrivertrust.org.uk</a>
Bristol VTS	<b>0117 980 2638</b>	<a href="http://www.bristolport.co.uk">www.bristolport.co.uk</a>
Portishead Quays Marina	<b>01275 841 941</b>	<a href="http://www.quaysmarinas.com">www.quaysmarinas.com</a>
Cardiff Barrage	<b>02920 700 234</b>	<a href="http://www.cardiffharbour.com">www.cardiffharbour.com</a>



## Passage Planning

Passage planning is essential in order to:

- **ensure that you arrive at your destination at an appropriate time.**
- **avoid unsustainable alterations in speed.**
- **avoid the need for unplanned stops or anchoring.**
- **ensure that you are able to identify your position relative to charted land and sea marks.**

## Lydney Dock

### Depths, Clearances and Tidal Levels

To find the depth of high water on the entrance sill deduct 1.2m from the depth of high water at Sharpness Dock. Due to weather conditions, both the time and height of high water can sometimes vary from published information. This should be taken in to consideration when planning a passage to or from Lydney.

Be aware that the sandbanks in the river over which vessels must pass in approaching or leaving Lydney Dock vary in height and may be as much as 1m higher than the level of the entrance sill.

The tide gauge (in metres) fitted to the Bull Beacon shows heights relative to Sharpness Dock sill. It may be used to good effect in determining whether depths over the sandbanks are sufficient to permit crossing to Lydney Dock.

### Notice of Arrival Time (Lydney Dock)

Vessels are required to give 6 hours notice before arrival or leaving on tides predicted to be 8.4m or over at Sharpness. On tides predicted to be less than 8.4m, 24 hours notice is required.

During office hours the Lydney Harbour Master may be contacted by telephone on **07768 861282**.

Out of office hours **03708 506 506**.

VHF channel 37 (marina channel M) during tide time (usually HW-1 1/2h to HW).

Vessels leaving Lydney should be ready to enter the lock 1 hour before high water. The dock is operational from one and a half hours before high water until high water.

## Weather

During periods of restricted visibility, the operators of recreational craft should consider whether they and their vessels are sufficiently experienced and properly-equipped to navigate safely in the prevailing conditions and when the proximity of large commercial vessels is likely.

Steep waves will develop in the area between and to the West of the Severn bridges when winds are strong, more so when the wind is against the tide. Such conditions may be dangerous for recreational craft.

## Sharpness Dock

Book your passage in advance (a minimum of 24 hours notice is required) by contacting Sharpness Pierhead on 01453 511968 or VHF Channel 13 (call "Sharpness Radio"). Sharpness Pierhead is manned according to operational need and callers should be prepared to leave a message. Booking and early communication is essential in order for the team at Sharpness to plan the tide to allow for all known movements and to liaise with all parties to ensure that movements are achieved safely and efficiently.

In general, and unless circumstances require otherwise, plan your passage to arrive off Sharpness no earlier than 1 hour before High Water and no later than High Water Sharpness.

### No earlier because:

Outbound traffic passes through the locks at Sharpness before inbound.

If you make the passage up the River Sever too early there will be very little water above the M48 motorway bridge, and there is the danger that you will touch the bottom at times. In severe cases craft can be literally rolled over and over on the sand banks between the road bridges and Sharpness. More often you will be "bumped" further and further onto the bank and you could well lose your propeller and/or rudder, endangering your craft and all aboard.

### No later than High Water because:

It is normal practice to close Sharpness entrance gates at high water.

There are times when for the safety of shipping in the system Sharpness gates must be closed at High Water.

The tidal rate should not be underestimated by small craft having limited power. On both flood and ebb tides there can be a strong flow across the entrance to Sharpness in excess of 4 knots. Between the piers a strong flow may remain, and adequate preparation and timely manoeuvring will be required to avoid being set up on to the piers.

