



NOTICE TO MARINERS NO. 6/21

Small vessel passage planning and positional awareness in the Upper Severn Estuary

Further to LNtM No. 2/19, which remains in force, and describes the necessity for careful passage planning for small vessels, particularly those in the leisure sector, making inwards passage through the Gloucester Harbour Trustees area, further recent incidents have highlighted the need to reinforce this information for small commercial vessels not subject to compulsory pilotage.

Although the difference in the time of high water between the M4 Prince of Wales Bridge 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 therefore essential that the passage is conducted at a time and speed which ensures that sufficient depth is available for navigation in and adjacent to the main channel, and vessels do not proceed early or at a speed whereby they effectively outrun the tide.

Making passage up the River Severn too early can result in insufficient under keel clearance, if any, for safe navigation, particularly above the M48 motorway bridge. Significant tidal flows increase the risk of being pushed onto rock outcrops or sandbanks and can also potentially hamper manoeuvring off the entrance at Sharpness with little UKC. The same tidal flows should also be considered with respect to effect on speed over the ground when planning passages.

Prior and accurate passage planning is essential. All vessels should refer to BA Chart 1166 and note the tidal / datum information thereon (e.g., there are 16 different chart datums between Sudbrook and Sharpness), as well as other appropriate sources of information, including our own website listed below. The use of online/device based electronic tidal and navigational "apps" can be misleading unless the source data for the app has taken into account the specific tidal conditions for the upper estuary area, and their accuracy should be checked prior to making use of them.

If in any doubt about passage planning or local knowledge, the use of a Gloucester Pilot is advised.

Notices to Mariners may be viewed on the Trustees' website:
www.gloucesterharbourtrustees.org.uk

Owners, Agents and Charterers should ensure that the contents of this Notice are made known to the Masters or persons in charge of their vessels or craft.

S Henderson
Harbourmaster

22nd October 2021