Weymouth Harbour

MARINE SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM & OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

Dorset Council

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Marine Safety Management System

Introduction

Weymouth Harbour's Marine Safety Management System (MSMS) provides the overarching framework through which Dorset Council, as the Statutory and Competent Harbour Authority, ensures the safe, efficient and environmentally responsible management of marine operations within the harbour and its approaches. The MSMS sets out how the Harbour Authority meets the requirements of the Port and Marine Facilities Safety Code (PMSC) and associated Guide to Good Practice, translating national standards and statutory duties into local policy, governance, procedures and operational controls. It brings together the harbour's legal powers, risk-based processes, conservancy responsibilities, stakeholder engagement arrangements and assurance mechanisms so that marine activity is managed in a consistent, transparent and proportionate manner.

The purpose of this document is to describe clearly how marine safety is governed, implemented, monitored and continuously improved at Weymouth Harbour. It defines the responsibilities of the Duty Holder, Designated Person and Harbour Master; sets out the risk assessment and incident management processes; and explains the systems, policies and freestanding plans that support safe navigation, environmental protection and emergency preparedness. The MSMS provides a single, coherent reference for staff, stakeholders and regulators, ensuring that all aspects of marine safety, from statutory obligations and conservancy to enforcement, pilotage and competence, are aligned under one structured framework. It is reviewed and updated regularly to reflect evolving operations, legislation, and best practice.

1.0 Duty Holder

Dorset Council is the Statutory Harbour Authority (SHA) and Competent Harbour Authority (CHA) for Weymouth Harbour. The Council discharges its harbour functions through its governance arrangements, including the Harbours Advisory Committee.

The Duty Holder is the entity (board, committee, or individual office-holder) that is accountable for compliance with Ports and Marine Facilities Safety Code (PMSC, the Code). Every organisation must identify who its Duty Holder is, and make this information publicly available, including how to contact them. The Duty Holder's accountability cannot be delegated.

The Duty Holder for Weymouth Harbour is the Cabinet Member for Place Services, Councillor Jack Jeanes, who is individually and collectively accountable (along with Dorset Council) for ensuring compliance with the PMSC and for the safe and effective management of marine operations within Weymouth Harbour. The Harbours Advisory Committee advises the Duty Holder on operational issues relating to Dorset Council's harbour functions.

Weymouth Harbour publishes the identity and contact route for the Duty Holder on the harbour webpages and in its annual reporting against the MSMS. The Duty Holder maintains appropriate understanding of harbour operations and the MSMS through briefings and periodic operational visits.

1.1 Responsibilities

The Duty Holder is responsible for ensuring that Weymouth Harbour complies with the relevant parts of the Code. To be effective, the Duty Holder will:

- Maintain awareness of Dorset Council's statutory powers, duties and responsibilities for marine safety (including any local Acts/Orders and national legislation) and keep these under review.
- Ensure a proportionate, risk-based Marine Safety Management System (MSMS) is in place, founded on formal risk assessment and supported by clear policies, procedures and plans approved by the Duty Holder.
- Appoint a suitably qualified Designated Person (DP) with direct access to the Duty Holder to monitor, audit and report on the effectiveness of the MSMS and to provide independent advice on marine safety.
- Appoint and retain competent people (appropriately trained, qualified and experienced) to manage marine safety and execute marine services, and support continuing professional development.
- Make available the resources necessary to discharge marine safety obligations, including training, equipment and systems.
- Approve and publish a Marine Safety Plan showing how Code standards will be met, and report annually on performance against the plan and the MSMS (including incident/near-miss data and KPIs).
- Oversee regular review/audit of the MSMS and associated documents, consider lessons from MAIB reports, MCA Health Checks and sector good practice, and drive continuous improvement.
- Submit the required 3-yearly compliance statement to the MCA.

1.2 Reporting Compliance

The Duty Holder will report Weymouth Harbour's compliance with the Code to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency every three years, responding to the MCA's published process and timetable.

The compliance statement will:

- describe Weymouth Harbour's compliance with all relevant parts of the Code;

- identify any parts of the Code deemed not applicable, with reasons;
- set out any shortfalls where full compliance is not yet achieved, including an action plan with timescales to achieve compliance; and
- specify any other facilities covered by the statement where Dorset Council is responsible for Code compliance.

The MCA maintains and publishes a list of organisations that have indicated compliance with the Code; Dorset Council (for Weymouth Harbour) will ensure its submission enables listing.

Outside the 3-yearly submission, Dorset Council will continue to publish the Marine Safety Plan and annual performance reporting; the Designated Person will provide annual assurance to the Duty Holder on MSMS effectiveness and compliance, informing both local reporting and the next triennial self-statement.

2.0 Designated Person

All organisations subject to the PMSC must appoint a Designated Person (DP) to provide independent assurance to the Duty Holder that the Marine Safety Management System (MSMS) is operating effectively. The DP must have direct access to the Duty Holder and must be able to act independently from operational management.

Dorset Council has appointed James Hannon (ABPmer) as the Designated Person for all three Dorset Council harbours (Weymouth, Bridport (West Bay), and Lyme Regis). The DP delivers independent audits, attends Harbours Advisory Committee meetings, and liaises directly with the Duty Holder to report on compliance with the Code and the performance of the MSMS.

The Designated Person provides a formal, independent assurance function to demonstrate to the Duty Holder that:

- the MSMS is suitable, sufficient and correctly implemented;
- marine operations are being carried out in compliance with the Code;
- risks are being effectively managed through formal and dynamic risk assessments;
- continuous improvement processes, reviews and audits are being carried out appropriately; and any failures or deficiencies within the MSMS are identified and escalated promptly.

To perform this role effectively, the DP must have a thorough understanding of the Code, the Guide to Good Practice (GTGP), and relevant marine legislation.

The Designated Person must:

- operate independently of the operational harbour management structure;
- have unrestricted access to staff, documentation and facilities as required to assess compliance;
- report directly to the Duty Holder (Councillor Jack Jeanes) without filtering or alteration of findings; and present clear, objective assessments of MSMS performance, including areas for improvement.

Weymouth Harbour meets this requirement by using an external DP (ABPmer), ensuring impartiality and sector expertise.

In accordance with the Code, the Designated Person for Weymouth Harbour undertakes the following functions:

- Annual audit of the MSMS and harbour operations relevant to marine safety.
- Attendance at Harbours Advisory Committee meetings, providing direct updates and advice to the Duty Holder.
- Review of incident investigations and assurance that corrective actions are appropriate and completed.
- Assessment of compliance against the Port & Marine Facilities Safety Code and GTGP.
- Provision of advice on best practice, necessary improvements, and changes in national guidance or legislation.
- Give support to the 3-yearly PMSC compliance submission made by the Duty Holder to the MCA.

The DP will report:

- at least annually to the Duty Holder and Harbours Advisory Committee;
- formally through a written audit report;
- informally through regular liaison with the Harbour Master and senior officers;

- as required, if significant issues or non-compliance are identified that may require urgent action.

3.0 Legislation

Weymouth Harbour operates within a wide statutory framework that governs marine safety, environmental protection, navigation, and the duties and powers of harbour authorities. In accordance with the PMSC the Duty Holder must ensure Dorset Council (as SHA and CHA) remains fully aware of its legal responsibilities, powers and limitations, and keeps these under review to ensure safe and effective management of the harbour.

Weymouth Harbour's legal basis includes both national legislation that applies to all UK ports and local legislation specific to Weymouth, including Harbour Revision Orders. As the Statutory Harbour Authority, Dorset Council must ensure that all applicable legislation is reflected in the Marine Safety Management System and that the Harbour Master and staff act within the scope of these powers.

The PMSC emphasises that although it provides guidance on statutory responsibilities, it does not replace or supersede legislation. Harbour authorities must seek their own legal advice where required and take steps to obtain any additional powers necessary for effective and safe harbour management.

3.1 National Legislation

Weymouth Harbour's statutory functions are shaped by a number of national Acts that define duties, powers, and responsibilities relating to marine safety. The most relevant include:

- *Harbours Act 1964:* provides the principal framework for harbour powers, including powers of general direction (via Harbour Revision Orders) and duties relating to harbour conservancy.

- *Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847:* a foundational Act still incorporated into many harbour authorities' local legislation. It provides key operational powers for Harbour Masters, including:
    - powers of Special Direction (s.52);
    - powers relating to removal of obstructions/wrecks (ss.56–57);
    - powers to regulate activities within the harbour;
    - model byelaw-making provisions (s.83).

  These provisions remain embedded via Weymouth's local legislation and underpin many day-to-day safety and navigation controls.

- *Open Port Duty (s.33, Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847):* requires the harbour to remain open to all persons for the shipping/unshipping of goods and the embarking/landing of passengers, subject to payment of lawful dues and compliance with harbour regulations. Open Port Duty applies to most harbour authorities and is a fundamental obligation incorporated into Weymouth Harbour's local legislation.

- *Pilotage Act 1987:* defines the duties of Competent Harbour Authorities (CHAs), including assessing pilotage needs, issuing Pilotage Directions, and authorising pilots and PEC holders. Weymouth Harbour is a CHA under this Act.

- *Dangerous Vessels Act 1985:* grants powers to prohibit entry/movements of dangerous vessels that may pose an imminent threat to safety or navigation.

- *Merchant Shipping Act 1995:* covers a wide range of maritime safety provisions, including wreck removal duties (s.252), collision regulations, and emergency powers. These apply directly to Weymouth Harbour.

- *Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974:* imposes general duties to ensure the safety of employees and others affected by harbour operations, including marine and shore-side activities.

- Environmental legislation, including the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Environment Act 2021, and Habitats Regulations 2017, imposes duties relating to biodiversity and environmental protection when exercising harbour functions.

The application of these laws may vary depending on geography, type of activity, and whether the harbour authority acts as an SHA, CHA or both. Dorset Council, through Weymouth Harbour, ensures the MSMS incorporates all relevant national duties.

3.2 Local Acts and Orders

Weymouth Harbour also relies on several pieces of local legislation that set out its specific statutory powers and duties:

- The historic Weymouth Charters of 1571 and 1598, forming the origin of the port's constitution and ownership of the harbour bed.
- Harbour Revision Orders (HROs): notably those of 1993, 1996, 2021, and 2026, which update and consolidate the local legal framework. These HROs define harbour limits, modernise governance, enable lease arrangements (e.g., Premier Marina), and provide powers for Special Directions and General Directions.

Weymouth Harbour Byelaws 1976 and Seaside Pleasure Boats Byelaws 1966, which remain in force and regulate navigation, conduct, safety, and the use of pleasure craft.

Weymouth Harbour General Directions 2024, issued under the 2021 HRO, regulating vessel movements, navigation safety, protection of persons and property, and environmental safeguarding.

3.3 Review

Dorset Council, as Duty Holder, must keep its statutory powers and duties under continual review to ensure they remain adequate for modern harbour operations. The Code stresses that failure to maintain a correct understanding of one's powers can lead to ineffective or improper discharge of legal responsibilities.

This review process includes:

- Assessing whether powers under local legislation (e.g., HROs, Byelaws, General Directions) remain sufficient for safe and efficient harbour management.
- Monitoring changes in national legislation and ensuring that Weymouth Harbour's MSMS, policies and procedures are updated to reflect new or amended statutory requirements.
- Incorporating relevant MAIB findings, MCA guidance, and emerging good practice into the MSMS.
- Ensuring the Harbour Master and operational staff maintain awareness of the extent and limits of their delegated powers.

The harbour's 2021 HRO was introduced specifically to modernise powers and improve legal clarity; this approach will continue as part of regular legislative review cycles.

3.4 Revising Statutory Powers

Where a review or risk assessment shows that existing powers are no longer adequate—or that additional powers would materially improve the management of marine safety, the Duty Holder should consider revising Weymouth Harbour's statutory powers. The Code identifies three main mechanisms:

- *Harbour Empowerment Orders (HEOs):* used to create a new harbour authority or confer initial statutory powers.
- *Harbour Revision Orders (HROs):* used to amend, modernise or extend existing statutory powers, including governance restructuring, powers of direction, jurisdictional changes, or improvements to navigational control. Weymouth Harbour's 2021 HRO was obtained through this process.
- *Harbour Closure Orders:* used where statutory powers are no longer required due to the cessation of harbour activity.

Applications may require consultation, assessment of environmental and navigational impacts, and may involve a public inquiry. The Department for Transport, Marine Management Organisation (MMO), or devolved administrations provide procedural guidance.

Any future decision to revise powers will be based on formal risk assessment, stakeholder consultation and alignment with the requirements of the Code.

4.0 Duties and Powers

Weymouth Harbour's statutory and operational duties are derived from national legislation and local enabling Acts and Orders and are exercised through Dorset Council as the Statutory Harbour Authority and Competent Harbour Authority. The PMSC requires all harbour authorities to understand and effectively discharge their duties and powers to ensure the safe, efficient and environmentally responsible management of the harbour. Weymouth Harbour complies with the Code by applying its statutory powers through the Harbour Master, by maintaining a clear legal framework through its Harbour Revision Orders, and by embedding all duties within the Marine Safety Management System.

4.1 Safe and efficient marine operations

Weymouth Harbour complies with the PMSC requirement to ensure safe and efficient marine operations by maintaining a well-established operational control system supported by trained harbour staff, formalised risk assessments and practical procedures. Navigation safety is supported by VHF Channel 12 communications, harbour patrol vessels, and a dedicated system of unique traffic control signals located at the harbour entrance. These signals regulate the movement of vessels, particularly during large vessel manoeuvres, ensuring that smaller craft do not impede commercial or emergency traffic.

Operational practices include the stopping of all other movements when a large vessel is manoeuvring, the use of patrol boats to manage vessel conflicts, and close integration with Portland Port for shared areas of responsibility in Weymouth Bay. The Harbour Master is responsible for monitoring navigational activity, issuing directions when required, and ensuring that all marine operations follow the MSMS.

Formal risk assessment for navigation has been undertaken within the wider formalised risk assessment for marine operations considering the requirements of MGN401 amend 3. The results of which have determined that a local port service (LPS) is a sufficient mitigation control for navigation.

4.2 Open Port Duty

Weymouth is an open port, and Dorset Council fulfils its statutory open port duty by ensuring that the harbour remains accessible to all users, commercial, fishing, leisure and visiting vessels, provided that appropriate dues are paid and harbour regulations are followed. This principle is long-established in Weymouth's legal framework and is operationally reflected in its open access berths, visitor pontoons, marina facilities, and designated areas for fishing and charter vessels. Harbour operations are structured so that access is available except where safety or emergency control measures require temporary restriction.

4.3 Appointment of a Harbour Master

Dorset Council, as the Statutory Harbour Authority and Competent Harbour Authority for Weymouth, appoints a Harbour Master with full statutory authority to exercise the powers granted under national legislation and local Harbour Revision Orders. The current Harbour Master is Ed Carter, who also serves as Dorset Council's Harbours Manager. He is responsible for the safe and efficient management of navigation, marine operations and enforcement within Weymouth Harbour.

The Harbour Master exercises all powers granted by statute, including those relating to Special Directions, General Directions, byelaw enforcement, regulation of harbour operations, and safety management. He oversees the implementation of the MSMS and acts on behalf of the Harbours Advisory Committee in meeting the requirements of the PMSC. Authority may be delegated to the Assistant Harbour Master and Duty Berthing Officers to ensure full operational coverage and continuity of safe harbour management.

4.4 Byelaws

Weymouth Harbour continues to operate under long-standing byelaws, including the Weymouth Harbour Byelaws 1976 and Seaside Pleasure Boats Byelaws 1966. While these byelaws remain in force, their day-to-day application has largely been superseded by the Weymouth Harbour General Directions 2024, which now provide the primary regulatory framework for navigation, conduct, speed limits, and the safe operation of vessels within the harbour. The byelaws remain as an overarching statutory foundation and enforcement backstop where required. Harbour staff primarily rely on the General Directions to manage activities such as leisure operations, swimming areas, pontoon usage, and safe movement along quaysides. The Harbour Authority keeps both the byelaws and General Directions under review in line with PMSC guidance and will seek updates through appropriate statutory processes when necessary.

4.5 Special Directions

The Harbour Master exercises Special Directions under the powers incorporated from the Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847. These directions may be issued to individual vessels to regulate their entry, departure, movement, mooring, or conduct in circumstances requiring immediate control. Special Directions are used regularly during large vessel movements, emergency situations, and when vessels pose a navigational risk. Harbour staff ensure that masters understand and comply with any direction issued. This use of Special Directions provides an important tool for discharging the harbour's duty to maintain safe navigation.

4.6 General Directions

Dorset Council utilises General Directions, enabled through the Weymouth Harbour Revision Order 2021, to regulate navigation, safety and the use of harbour waters. The current Weymouth Harbour General Directions 2024 set out requirements covering vessel movement, speed limits, safe navigation in the entrance channel, equipment standards and environmental protection measures. These Directions apply to all harbour users and are routinely enforced by harbour staff during patrols, inspections and liaison with mariners. The Directions are reviewed periodically, with stakeholder consultation, to ensure they remain current and effective.

4.7 Harbour Directions

Although Dorset Council does not currently hold powers to issue Harbour Directions under the Harbours Act 1964, the 2021 Harbour Revision Order provides modernised powers that achieve the same functional outcomes through General Directions. The Harbour Authority keeps this position under review and will consider applying for Harbour Directions if required to enhance control of vessel movements or improve safety management, in line with PMSC guidance.

4.8 Dangerous Vessel Directions

The Harbour Master may act under the Dangerous Vessels Act 1985 to prohibit entry, require removal, or impose conditions on any vessel presenting a grave and imminent danger to safety, the harbour infrastructure or the environment. These powers are reflected in Weymouth's operational procedures and risk assessments, particularly in relation to unseaworthy vessels, vessels carrying dangerous goods, or those posing pollution risks. The Harbour Master assesses dangerous vessels on a case-by-case basis and may collaborate with HM Coastguard, MCA or emergency services as required.

4.9 Pilotage

Weymouth Harbour is a Competent Harbour Authority under the Pilotage Act 1987 and complies with its statutory duties by maintaining a defined compulsory pilotage regime. Pilotage is compulsory for vessels

over 80 metres, certain passenger vessels and ships carrying dangerous goods. The harbour maintains updated Pilotage Directions, originally issued in 2015 and reviewed in 2020, 2021, and 2025.

4.10 Towage

Towage within Weymouth Harbour is subject to assessment and approval by the Harbour Master. The harbour supports safe towage operations through agreed arrangements with Aquatic Towage and by utilising Portland-based tugs when required. Emergency towage arrangements are available from Portland with short notice periods. Towage of small vessels by clubs and training centres (e.g., Sea Cadets, Sailing Club, Outdoor Education Centre) is permitted where appropriate risk assessments and safety cases exist. This structured approach ensures compliance with the PMSC requirement for controlling towage operations and assessing non-routine tows.

4.11 Regulation of marine craft

Weymouth Harbour exercises powers to regulate marine craft through local byelaws, General Directions, licensing provisions and operational oversight. The harbour licenses a small number of commercial craft (e.g., cross-harbour rowing ferries) and oversees a significant charter boat fleet, including dive boats and angling vessels. A long-established permit system for personal watercraft and towed sports craft is used to educate users and enforce safe behaviour. The Harbour Authority also maintains oversight of training centres, Sea Cadet activities, and visiting vessels, ensuring that all marine craft operate safely and in accordance with agreed procedures and risk controls.

4.12 Environmental Duty

The Harbour Authority complies with its statutory environmental duties by integrating environmental protection into all harbour operations. This includes maintaining aids to navigation to required standards, monitoring environmental conditions, managing waste responsibly through the Port Waste Management Plan, and operating an MCA-approved Oil Spill Contingency Plan. The harbour also manages environmentally sensitive areas such as Weymouth Beach and its swimming zones, with seasonal buoyage, patrols and restrictions to reduce conflict between user groups. Dredging, hydrographic surveying and maintenance practices follow environmentally responsible procedures and are carried out in accordance with the Hydrographic Code of Practice.

4.13 Emergency preparedness and response

Weymouth Harbour complies with the PMSC requirement for emergency preparedness through its comprehensive Harbour Emergency Plan, which integrates with Dorset Council and Weymouth Town Council emergency response arrangements. The Harbour Master leads all marine incident responses within harbour limits and coordinates with HM Coastguard (Solent) for incidents in the approaches or wider bay. Regular exercises are conducted, including pollution response drills under the OPRC Plan, multi-agency exercises, and training in rescue and emergency procedures. The harbour maintains clear communication protocols for distress, urgency and safety messages, and ensures that access to berths and quays is maintained for emergency services.

4.14 Civil contingencies duties

As a Category 2 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Weymouth Harbour works closely with Dorset Council's emergency planning teams, local emergency services and the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). Information is shared appropriately, and the Harbour Master participates in regional civil protection arrangements. Harbour systems and emergency plans are designed to support wider civil contingency operations, ensuring that marine incidents can be managed effectively alongside multi-agency partners.

4.15 Collecting Dues

The Harbour Authority exercises its statutory powers to levy harbour dues, charges and pilotage fees in accordance with the Harbours Act 1964 and Pilotage Act 1987. These charges are set to ensure that the harbour can meet its statutory responsibilities, maintain navigation infrastructure, and provide safe harbour operations. Charges are published transparently, reviewed annually and approved through Dorset Council's governance processes. Income is used to support conservancy, staffing, training, hydrographic surveying, aids to navigation and maintenance of the harbour estate, demonstrating compliance with the PMSC requirement for resourcing safe marine operations.

5.0 Risk Assessment

The Marine Safety Management System is in place to ensure that all risks are controlled, the more severe ones must either be eliminated or kept ‘‘as low as reasonably practicable” (ALARP)”.

Weymouth Harbour also uses the safety and risk management system of its owner, Dorset Council. It defines risk management as “the culture, processes and structures that are directed towards effective management of potential opportunities and threats to the organisation achieving its objectives”.

At its highest level the Council’s risk management strategy requires that the wider implications of the port’s operations at a political, financial and social level should be built into the risk management system. Weymouth is a particularly open port, with homes, bars and restaurants, and shops along its very attractive waterfront. This means that the effects of its Safety Management System spread beyond the marine consequences of the PMSC’s definition of risk. Where specific hazards would have their own specific responses under the PMSC, with steps identified to eliminate or control them to ALARP levels, the broader vision of the Council’s approach also requires those much wider factors to be considered.

It is the function of the Safety Management System to reconcile these opposites. The Council and port’s staff have a wide range of stakeholders to whom they answer: the Council as the Statutory Harbour Authority and Duty Holder, the people of the area to whom the port is an important aspect of their lives, its many direct stakeholders and users whose livelihoods may depend on it, the many visitors and not least the professional staff whose job it is to run the port.

The Council’s approach to risk also requires that the financial consequences of the port’s operations are not put at risk while the PMSC requires that the port is properly maintained to be a safe port for all users. As an open port, available to all craft able to fit into it against the payment of proper dues, there is a direct legal requirement that it is fit to be used. Such maintenance costs money and the balance between finance and physical safety is constantly under review through the risk management system.

5.1 Formal Safety Assessments

A statutory requirement, and central to the management and control of risks from hazards, is the use of risk assessments. A risk assessment is a paperwork exercise to review any work situation that allows relevant risks to be identified, recorded, communicated and reduced where it is reasonable to do so. A duty exists for the Dorset Council to reduce risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level. This duty extends to ensuring that risk assessments are suitable and sufficient and identify measures to be taken that ensure work tasks are safely undertaken.

- ***Hazard***
  Something with a potential to cause harm. A situation that could occur which has the potential for human injury, damage to property, damage to the environment, or economic loss.
- ***Risk***
  An estimation of the likelihood and potential consequences of a defined hazard, risk expresses the likelihood that the harm from a particular hazard is realised. Risk therefore reflects both the likelihood that harm will occur and its severity.
- ***Risk Assessment***
  A paperwork exercise to review any work situation that allows relevant risks to be identified, recorded, communicated and reduced where it is reasonable to do so. Risk assessments should normally be completed using a template which can be sourced from the Council’s forms register. Workplace areas with higher risk, i.e. harbours, may determine that a different and more

comprehensive risk assessment template is more appropriate. The same principles of the risk assessment process will still apply.

Figure 1: Principles of Risk Assessment

Responsibilities

Service managers should ensure that risk assessments are completed for all staff under their control.

Line managers should ensure that members of staff who undertake risk assessments are competent to do so, have a good level of subject knowledge and are aware of the limitations of their expertise. Staff should be advised to seek further advice if needed.

Members of staff charged with undertaking risk assessments (Assessors) should be suitably trained in order that risk assessments undertaken are both suitable and sufficient and have the benefit of reducing risk. The Assessor is normally the immediate Line Manager of the person being assessed. Risk assessment training can be sourced through the Health, Safety and Welfare Officers.

Marine Risk Assessment Methodology

To assess marine risks, Dorset Council Harbours adopts a 5 x 5 risk matrix which assigns numerical values to both the severity and likelihood of identified hazards. The higher the severity and likelihood, the higher the numerical score assigned.

Multiplying the severity and likelihood scores together provides an overall risk rating, enabling hazards to be assessed consistently and prioritised according to risk.

The marine likelihood descriptors have been developed specifically for harbour operations and are intended to provide a practical assessment of how often a hazard may reasonably be expected to occur within the local operating environment.

Likelihood

1	2	3	4	5
Rare	**Unlikely**	**Occasional**	**Likely**	**Almost Certain**
Not known to have occurred locally and not expected.	Credible, but would be unusual.	May occur from time to time during normal operations.	Has occurred locally and may reasonably be expected to recur.	Occurs regularly or should be expected during normal operations.
Typically, less than once every 10 years.	Typically, once every 5 to 10 years.	Typically, once every 1 to 5 years.	Typically, at least annually.	Typically, several times per year.

Figure 2: Likelihood definitions

Severity

1	2	3	4	5
Trivial	**Slight**	**Substantial**	**High**	**Very High**
Minor injury requiring no treatment or first aid only.	Minor injury requiring basic medical treatment.	Injury requiring medical treatment, rehabilitation, or time away from normal duties.	Serious injury causing long-term incapacity or disability.	Fatality or life-changing injury.
Superficial damage requiring little or no repair.	Minor damage requiring repair but no operational impact.	Significant damage requiring repair and causing temporary operational disruption.	Major damage causing significant operational disruption.	Catastrophic damage, loss of vessel, major infrastructure failure, or prolonged loss of operations.

Figure 3: Severity definitions

Once numbers replace judgements, these can be multiplied together to give a risk rating:

Risk Rating Matrix

Likelihood					
5	5	10	15	20	25
4	4	8	12	16	20
3	3	6	9	12	15
2	2	4	6	8	10
1	1	2	3	4	5

	1	2	3	4	5

Severity

Figure 4: Risk Rating Matrix

Risk Assessment Frameworks

The Council maintains a corporate risk management framework for assessing strategic, financial, operational and organisational risks across all Council services. Harbour-related non-marine risks are assessed using the Dorset Council likelihood and impact matrices.

Marine risks falling within the scope of the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) are assessed using the marine risk assessment methodology described in this document. This methodology has been developed to reflect the operational nature of harbour activities and the practical assessment of navigational and marine safety hazards.

All identified marine hazards and associated control measures are recorded within the Port Risk Register and form part of the Harbour Authority's Marine Safety Management System.

	Likelihood	% Possibility
1	Rare	< 6%
2	Unlikely	6 – 20%
3	Possible	21 – 50%
4	Likely	51 – 80%
5	Almost certain	> 80%

Figure 5: Dorset Council Likelihood Matrix

Impact		Financial	Strategic Priorities & Opportunities	Health & Safety	Reputational	Criticality of Service (following Business Impact Assessment)
5	CATASTROPHIC	Over £300k	Complete failure to deliver on a strategic priority	Fatality, multiple permanent injuries	Receives national/international attention with potential for long term impact on public memory, Total loss of public confidence.	Critical Service Level One (ie: those that present a major risk to public health or safety
4	MAJOR	£100k - £300k	Major impact (positive or negative) on a strategic priority	Major injury or illness leading to long-term incapacity/disability, multiple significant injuries	Receives national/international attention with medium-term impact on public memory	Critical Service Level Two (ie: those that present a medium to major risk to reputation or finances
3	MODERATE	£50k - £100k	Moderate impact (positive or negative) on a strategic priority	Moderate injury or illness requiring professional intervention, RIDDOR reportable, multiple minor injuries	Receives local press attention but with medium-term impact on public memory	Critical Service Level Three (ie: those that present a medium risk to public health or safety)

2	MINOR	£10k - £50k	Minor impact (positive or negative) on a strategic priority	Minor injury or illness requiring minimal intervention or treatment	Receives local press attention but with likely short-term impact on public memory	Critical Service Level Four (ie: those that present a low to medium risk to reputation or finances
1	NEGLIGIBLE	Up to £10k	Negligible impact (positive or negative) on a strategic priority	None, or minimal injury or illness requiring no intervention or treatment	Minor complaints or rumours	Critical Service Level Five (ie: those that present a minor risk to public health or safety)

Figure 6: Dorset Council Impact Matrix

Generic Risk Assessments

A number of generic risk assessments against common hazards were provided by Dorset Councils Partnership as a framework for services to use and adapt. These were be adopted by the harbour to avoid unnecessary effort. The following are available to date:

Management of Health and Safety at Work	Risk Assessment
Accidents, Incidents and Disease	Asbestos
Confined Spaces	Construction (Design and Management) regulations 2008
Contractors	COSHH
Display Screen Equipment	Fire Risk Management
Health and Safety Training	Home Working
Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment	Management of Workplace Stress
Manual Handling	New and Expectant Mothers
Noise at Work	PAT Testing
PPE	Provision and Use of Work Equipment
Road Safety	Safety Signs
Slips and Trips	Travelling Officers and Lone Workers
Working at Heights	Young People

Figure 7: Generic Risk Assessments

5.2 Reviewing Risk Assessments

The harbour risk register and assessments will be reviewed:

- whenever a new activity is started
- at least on a minimum annual basis in accordance with Dorset Council policy
- whenever an accident or incident occurs
- when significant changes occur to work practices that may impact on health, safety and welfare.

The review will normally be led by the Harbour Master and will consult Harbour Staff, Dorset Council expertise and external assistance including the Harbour Consultative Group. The risk assessment methodology is demonstrated under the plan, do, check, and act philosophy:

Figure 8: Plan-Do-Check-Act

5.3 Dynamic Risk Assessments

Harbour staff must use Dynamic Risk Assessment as an essential tool to identify, assess, and control hazards in real-time while carrying out their duties. In accordance with the Port Marine Safety Code, staff should continuously evaluate changing conditions, such as weather, vessel movements, or operational constraints, and adjust their actions accordingly to maintain safety. Where new risks emerge that are not covered by existing procedures, staff must take immediate mitigating action, report the hazard, and escalate concerns as necessary to ensure compliance with the Safety Management System and legal requirements.

6.0 Marine Safety Management System

Weymouth Harbour operates a proportionate Marine Safety Management System that is approved by the Duty Holder and implemented by the Harbour Master and harbour team. The MSMS brings together policies, procedures, plans, standard forms and permissions, and is underpinned by formal risk assessment. It sets clear executive and operational responsibilities, defines how marine operations are controlled, and links to freestanding and second-tier plans (e.g., Oil Spill Contingency Plan, Port Waste Management Plan, Emergency Plan, Pilotage Directions, and Town Bridge operating manual). This approach fulfils the PMSC requirement to operate an effective, risk-based MSMS and to document the practical systems by which marine safety is delivered.

The MSMS is structured so that high-level policy in this document cascades to specific procedures and work instructions in the Harbour's risk register and operational files, with records and evaluation captured through incident logs, audits and KPI reporting. The harbour keeps the MSMS publicly available, aligning with the Code's expectations of transparency and accountability.

6.1 Implementation

Implementation is achieved through the day-to-day application of documented procedures, dynamic tasking, and supervisory control by the Harbour Master and Assistant Harbour Master. Core arrangements include:

- Control of vessel movements via VHF Channel 12, harbour patrols and the harbour entrance signal system, with traffic stopped during large vessel manoeuvres and coordinated with Portland where necessary.
- Stakeholder-agreed controls embedded through General Directions (2024), extant Byelaws and, where needed, Special Directions issued by the Harbour Master.
- Bridging and interoperability with adjoining organisations (e.g., pilot boat arrangements with Portland; beach patrol coordination with RNLI and Weymouth Town Council) to avoid gaps and duplication of control.
- Preparedness for emergencies through the Harbour Emergency Plan and MCA-approved Oil Spill Contingency Plan, exercised routinely and integrated with Dorset Council/Town Council arrangements.

These practical controls reflect the PMSC's implementation guidance and ensure the harbour can regulate arrivals, departures and movements, protect the public from marine activities, give special regard to environmental impact, and prevent acts or omissions that could cause harm.

6.2 Accountability for marine safety

Accountability is clear and documented. Dorset Council is the SHA/CHA, the Duty Holder is the Cabinet Member with portfolio responsibility (Cllr Jack Jeanes), and the Harbour Master (Ed Carter) holds day-to-day responsibility for navigation safety and marine operations, with delegated authority to named officers for continuity of control. This mirrors the PMSC model of governance in which the Duty Holder retains accountability, supported by a Harbour Master with operational authority and by a Designated Person (James Hannon, ABPmer) who provides independent assurance and direct access to the Duty Holder.

Roles and responsibilities extend to conservancy (hydrography, aids to navigation, Notices to Mariners), pilotage (as CHA), emergency planning, environmental duties and incident investigation, all of which are allocated and described in the Harbour's documentation set and Annex on roles.

6.3 Stakeholder engagement and consultation

Weymouth maintains regular, structured engagement with harbour users and partners to support safe operations and shared understanding of risks:

- The Harbour Consultative Group meets quarterly and feeds views to the Harbours Advisory Committee on matters affecting safety, charges and operational change.
- Consultation accompanies the introduction or revision of General Directions and significant operational policies; day-to-day engagement is supported by an open-door practice at the Harbour Office.
- Interface management is routine where activities overlap with other facilities (e.g., Portland Port pilot boat provision, RNLI lifeboat and beach lifeguard operations, Sea Cadets/Outdoor Education Centre training). Bridging arrangements and liaison ensure complementary systems and deconflict procedures, as recommended by the PMSC.

This sustained engagement demonstrates compliance with the Code's expectation that harbour authorities consult those who may be affected by their MSMS, while keeping ultimate responsibility with the Duty Holder.

6.4 Incident reporting and investigation

The MSMS provides clear routes for reporting, recording and investigating marine incidents, near misses and unsafe acts. Internally, staff use an incident form and maintain a database for trend analysis; pilots, harbour staff and users report navigational occurrences such as near misses, bottom contacts, difficult pilot transfers and berthing problems. Regular status reports (e.g., on AtoN, lifesaving equipment, harbour craft defects) are provided to the Harbour Master. Serious events trigger structured investigation, contemporaneous note-taking, photographs where possible, and prompt debrief, with findings used to update procedures and risk assessments.

Externally, the Harbour complies with statutory reporting to MAIB for reportable accidents, with HSE informed for applicable shore-side safety matters, and with any additional central government notifications as required. The MSMS also recognises that serious or complex cases may require robust, independent investigations, consistent with the PMSC's guidance on purpose and conduct of incident investigations.

6.5 Enforcement

Dorset Council Harbours apply a graduated, risk-based enforcement approach to secure compliance with local and national maritime legislation. The Marine Compliance & Enforcement Policy sets out the principles, tools and decision-making framework used across Weymouth, Bridport (West Bay) and Lyme Regis, aligned to the Council's General Statement of Enforcement Policy, the Regulators' Code (2014) and the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006. The policy emphasises consistency, openness, helpfulness, proportionality, targeting, accountability and transparency.

In practice, the harbour prioritises advice, education and informal resolution for minor contraventions; where necessary it escalates through verbal guidance, official written warnings, and, for serious or persistent breaches, prosecution in line with the Code for Crown Prosecutors (evidential sufficiency and public-interest tests). The Harbour Master's statutory powers include Special Directions (HDPC Act 1847), General Directions (Weymouth HRO 2021; implemented by General Directions 2024), and Dangerous Vessel Directions (Dangerous Vessels Act 1985). Charges are recoverable as a civil debt, and, where relevant, standard-scale fines and unlimited summary fines (for defined pollution offences) may apply through the courts.

Decisions are risk-based and proportionate: factors include the seriousness of the breach, environmental impact, financial gain, intent, obstruction, previous history, remedial action and wider deterrence. Outcomes and rationales are recorded, with annual reporting to the Harbours Advisory Committee to support transparency and continuous improvement. For Weymouth specifically, the 2021 HRO modernises enforcement powers and the General Directions 2024 provide the day-to-day regulatory baseline; Harbour users must comply with Directions, Special Directions and applicable Byelaws.

7.0 Review and Audit

Weymouth Harbour operates a structured and continuous programme of review and audit to ensure that its MSMS remains fit for purpose, compliant with the PMSC, and aligned with best practice. The PMSC requires harbour authorities to have regular, systematic processes to review and audit all aspects of marine safety, and Weymouth Harbour fulfils this requirement through a combination of internal monitoring, independent assurance from the Designated Person, and formal periodic audits.

The review and audit regime encompasses policies, procedures, MSMS documentation, risk assessments, plans, operational practices, and the performance of marine functions. This ensures that information from incidents, user feedback, operational experience, and external recommendations is captured, analysed and used to improve the system.

The system also reflects Dorset Council's wider governance, enforcement, and accountability requirements, reinforcing transparency and demonstrating compliance to the Duty Holder.

Internal Review and Continuous Assessment

The Harbour Master monitors the effectiveness of the MSMS on a continual basis, reviewing risks, operational practices, incident trends and staff feedback. This ensures that day-to-day learning is incorporated into the safe operation of the harbour.

Internal reviews are supported by:

- Daily operational oversight including harbour patrols, vessel movement management, equipment checks, and ongoing user engagement.
- Incident and near-miss analysis, with immediate review of issues that may indicate procedural or systemic change is required.
- Regular staff consultation, including briefings and opportunities for staff to raise safety concerns or propose improvements.

The Harbour Master maintains responsibility for ensuring that any emerging concerns are addressed promptly and that the MSMS is continually updated to reflect operational reality, experience, and risk.

Structured Periodic Review

In addition to continuous assessment, Weymouth Harbour conducts structured reviews at defined intervals. These formal internal reviews examine:

- the harbour's legal and regulatory framework, including local byelaws, powers and Directions;
- the MSMS policies, procedures, operational plans and freestanding documents;
- performance against key safety responsibilities and PMSC expectations;
- compliance with statutory requirements, surveys, inspections and applicable regulations;
- changes to harbour operations, user behaviour, vessel traffic patterns and infrastructure;
- lessons from incidents, exercises, user feedback and national reports.

These formal reviews allow for methodical evaluation and improvement of the MSMS and associated systems, in line with PMSC guidance.

Formal Audit by the Designated Person

An essential part of the PMSC framework is independent audit by the Designated Person. For Weymouth Harbour, this function is provided by James Hannon of ABPmer, who has direct access to the Duty Holder and conducts:

- annual formal audits of the harbour's compliance with the PMSC and MSMS;
- attendance at Harbours Advisory Committee meetings to provide independent updates;
- liaison with the Harbour Master throughout the year to monitor progress and identify emerging issues.

The Designated Person's audit reviews:

- the structure and content of the MSMS;
- risk assessments and how they are applied in practice;
- implementation of policies and procedures;
- adequacy of controls for navigation safety, pilotage, towage, conservancy and emergency response;
- enforcement processes and records;
- incident investigation quality and closure of corrective actions.

Findings are reported to the Duty Holder and Harbours Advisory Committee, ensuring transparency and accountability in line with the PMSC.

External Audit, Health Checks and Benchmarking

Weymouth Harbour also engages with external assurance mechanisms, which provide additional confidence to the Duty Holder and stakeholders. These include:

- MCA Port Marine Safety Code Health Checks, carried out periodically, which benchmark compliance, highlight best practice and identify opportunities for improvement.
- Comparisons with other Dorset Council harbours (Bridport and Lyme Regis) to ensure consistency of approach across the authority.
- Engagement with external agencies, such as the RNLI, HM Coastguard, and Portland Port, which provide further insights into operational safety practices and inter-agency working.

The harbour also gives full regard to national guidance, MAIB findings and sector best practice when updating the MSMS.

Plan–Do–Check–Act Approach

Weymouth Harbour applies the PDCA cycle in its review and audit processes. This method, illustrated in earlier MSMS documents and maintained in current practice, ensures that:

- Plan – policies, procedures and risk controls are developed based on assessment;
- Do – systems are implemented in day-to-day operations;
- Check – monitoring, audits and reviews capture performance and identify gaps;
- Act – improvements, updates and corrective actions are implemented.

This recognised iterative cycle ensures continuous improvement and aligns with both the PMSC and Dorset Council's enforcement and regulatory framework.

Reporting of Review and Audit Outcomes

The outcomes of reviews and audits are recorded and communicated through:

- annual reporting to the Duty Holder and Harbours Advisory Committee;
- updated editions of the MSMS, Safety Plans and operational procedures;
- committee papers and public documentation published by Dorset Council;
- updates to the risk register, including new risk controls;
- internal staff briefings and training sessions.

This ensures transparency, demonstrates accountability and clearly evidences compliance with the PMSC.

3-yearly PMSC Compliance Statement

In accordance with the PMSC, Dorset Council, on behalf of Weymouth Harbour, submits a 3-yearly compliance statement to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. This statement describes:

- the harbour's compliance with all relevant parts of the Code;
- any non-applicable sections and why;
- any outstanding compliance gaps and planned timelines for closure;
- other facilities covered by the declaration.

This formal process ensures national visibility of Dorset Council's compliance and reinforces the Duty Holder's accountability.

8.0 Competence

Weymouth Harbour ensures that all personnel involved in the management and execution of marine operations are trained, qualified and competent, in full alignment with the Port Marine Safety Code. The PMSC requires harbour authorities to use people with appropriate professional qualifications, relevant experience and defined competence for the roles they undertake, and to regularly review and maintain those competencies. Weymouth Harbour achieves this through structured recruitment, training, supervision and ongoing development, supported by Dorset Council's governance and HR frameworks.

The competence of harbour personnel is a fundamental element of the Marine Safety Management System (MSMS). The harbour's organisational structure, shown below, ensures that clear lines of accountability and supervision support safe and effective operations. The Harbour Master (Ed Carter) has day-to-day responsibility for technical competence within the service, supported by the Assistant Harbour Master, Duty Berthing Officers and seasonal staff, each trained for their specific roles.

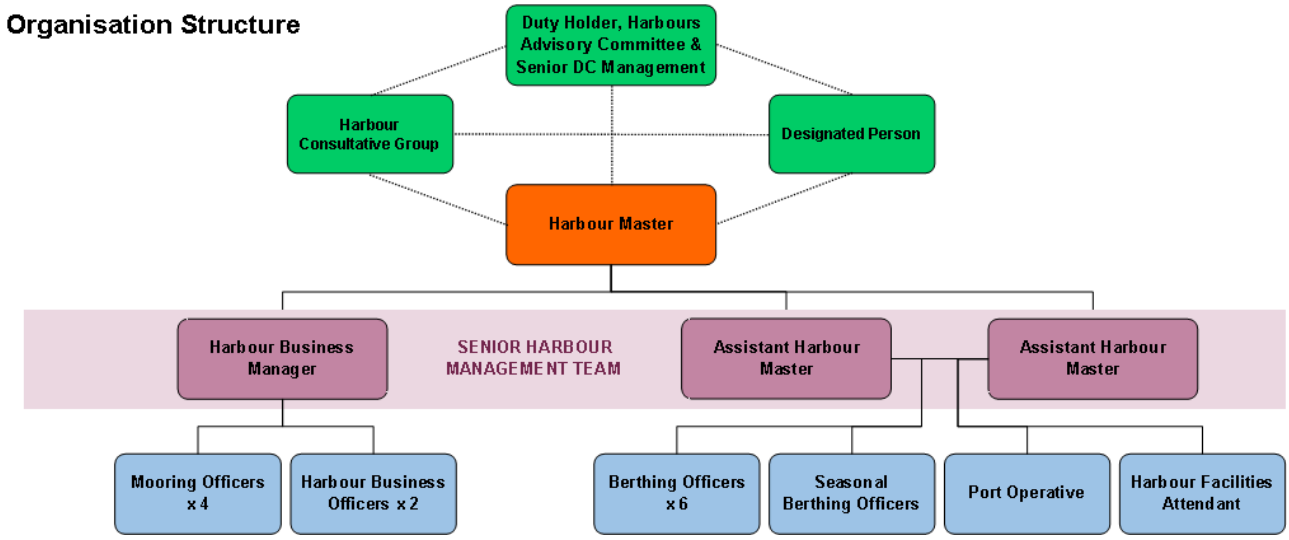


Figure 9: Organisation Structure

Training Standards and Qualifications

The harbour complies with the PMSC requirement to use recognised national occupational standards and professional qualifications as the basis for competence. Dorset Council requires:

- that senior marine officers hold the appropriate maritime qualifications or equivalent experience;
- that all new staff undertake role-appropriate training on appointment;
- that specialist qualifications (e.g., VHF operation, first aid, boat handling, oil spill response, manual handling) are kept current;
- that continuing professional development (CPD) is supported for all roles.

Training for members of the Harbours Advisory Committee is provided to ensure the Duty Holder and Committee members understand their statutory responsibilities, particularly those under the PMSC. Professional staff undertake mandatory maritime training, with records held and maintained by the Harbour Office. The policy of updating knowledge and renewing qualifications when required is well-established and forms part of the harbour's competence assurance.

Organisation Structure and Role-Based Competence

The organisation structure supports clear role definition and supervisory layers, ensuring competence is inherent in operational decision-making:

- *Harbour Master:* responsible for overall marine safety, navigation control, emergency response and MSMS implementation; holds statutory authority and relevant maritime qualifications.
- *Assistant Harbour Masters:* support operational leadership, enforces General Directions, manages team competence and deputises for the Harbour Master.
- *Harbour Business Manager:* responsible for harbour administration, finance, reporting and business operations, ensuring that commercial, governance and performance processes support safe and compliant harbour management.
- *Berthing Officers:* act as the Harbour Master's representatives on shift, controlling day-to-day harbour operations, mooring, berth management and vessel movement oversight.
- *Moorings Officers, Harbour Business Officers and seasonal staff:* trained in customer service, daily operational tasks, safety procedures and emergency response roles during peak periods.

This staffing model ensures that those exercising statutory or safety-critical functions have the appropriate qualifications, experience and delegated authority, as required by the PMSC. [dorsetcouncil.gov.uk]

Review and Maintenance of Competence

Competence is monitored through:

- supervision and on-the-job assessment by senior officers;
- review of training records and qualifications;
- feedback from incidents, near misses and audits;
- Designated Person oversight of competence-related findings;
- performance monitoring through KPIs (e.g., pilotage, navigation, AtoN reliability, emergency exercises).

The Harbour Master reviews the competence of all staff annually as part of Dorset Council's performance and development processes. Any training needs identified during incident reviews, operational observations or audits are incorporated into future training plans.

Competence of External Operators

The harbour maintains oversight of competence for external operators whose activities impact navigation safety, including:

- charter boat operators and licensed ferries;
- training organisations such as the Sea Cadets, Weymouth Outdoor Education Centre and Sailing Club;
- towage providers and contractors.

This oversight is delivered through liaison, permit/licence conditions, risk assessments, contractor checks, and the application of General Directions and byelaws.

Commitment to Continuous Professional Development

Weymouth Harbour is committed to maintaining a highly trained professional workforce. This commitment is demonstrated through:

- ongoing CPD opportunities for marine staff;
- regular attendance at professional forums, workshops and industry briefings;
- continuous engagement with the Designated Person, MCA guidance and MAIB recommendations;
- investment in new systems, technology and training resources to enhance harbour operations.

This ensures the harbour continuously improves and adapts its competence framework in line with evolving best practice.

9.0 Plan

Weymouth Harbour meets the Port & Marine Facilities Safety Code requirement to publish a Marine Safety Plan by operating under the Dorset Council Harbours Marine Safety Plan 2026–2029 (the Plan), which applies to Bridport (West Bay), Lyme Regis and Weymouth. The Plan sets the safety policy, governance, objectives and improvement actions that the Duty Holder adopts across the three statutory harbours and confirms that Dorset Council operates a risk-based MSMS, reviewed regularly and aligned to the PMSC and Guide to Good Practice.

The Plan confirms governance and accountability arrangements (Duty Holder: Cllr Jack Jeanes; Designated Person: James Hannon, ABPmer; oversight via the Harbours Advisory Committee and Harbour Consultative Groups). For Weymouth, this provides a clear line from strategy to operations, linking the Plan's cross-harbour commitments to Weymouth's MSMS procedures, local risk assessments, Directions/Byelaws, and freestanding plans (e.g., Emergency and OPRC plans).

9.1 Publication

The Marine Safety Plan is owned by the Duty Holder, supported by the Designated Person, and advised on by the Harbours Advisory Committee. It is published and accessible, reviewed annually, and republished on a three-year cycle in line with PMSC compliance reporting. For the current cycle, the Plan covers 2026–2029 and expressly states that a full review, republication and Duty Holder notification of compliance accompany the PMSC triennial submission. Weymouth aligns its local MSMS publication and updates to this same cycle for consistency and transparency.

9.2 Format

The Plan provides a concise, PMSC-compliant structure covering:

- Introduction & Governance (Duty Holder, DP, HAC, Harbour Consultative Groups; annual review and 3-year republication);
- Policy (safe, effective, environmentally responsible operations; integration with the MSMS and Guide to Good Practice; commitment to consultation and financial resilience);
- Standing Objectives & Improvement Plan, presented through a RACI-based action table with defined outcomes and roles (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed).

This format makes the link between policy and delivery explicit and gives the Duty Holder a practical mechanism to monitor progress across emergency preparedness, conservancy, training/competence, resilience, incident reporting, PMSC audit/review, stakeholder engagement, legislative powers and enforcement. Weymouth's MSMS references these objectives and aligns local procedures and KPIs to the Plan's actions.

9.3 Review

Performance against the Plan is reviewed annually and reported to the Harbours Advisory Committee and Duty Holder, drawing on MSMS audits, Designated Person findings, KPIs, incident data, hydrographic/AtoN results, user feedback and lessons learned. The Plan specifies (among other items):

- maintaining incident systems, investigating incidents within 30 days, and reporting major incidents to the Duty Holder within 24 hours;
- monitoring incident trends and updating the MSMS accordingly;
- conducting annual external audits of the MSMS;
- reviewing Emergency Plans annually, risk assessments annually, and the Marine Safety Plan every three years.

Weymouth embeds these review commitments in its routine internal monitoring and formal DP audit schedule, ensuring that the Plan remains current and that local changes (e.g., in trade, infrastructure, Directions or environmental conditions) are captured promptly.

9.4 Timing

The Plan confirms the three-year publication cycle (2026–2029), aligned to the PMSC 3-yearly compliance statement, with annual progress reporting to the Harbours Advisory Committee/Duty Holder and interim updates as needed following audits, exercises, legislative changes or significant operational developments. This timing mirrors the PMSC (publish at least every three years; review and report performance regularly) and fits Weymouth's established practice of continuous assessment supplemented by scheduled formal reviews.

10.0 Conservancy Duty

Weymouth Harbour fulfils the PMSC conservancy duty by maintaining a harbour that is fit for safe use at all times, supported by systematic hydrography, Aids to Navigation (AtoN) management, seabed maintenance, and timely provision of navigational information. As SHA, Dorset Council ensures that channels are conserved, dangers are marked, seabed change is monitored, and users receive accurate and current information. This framework underpins Weymouth's MSMS and is delivered through established local arrangements described below.

- Annual hydrographic survey by professional contractors, publication of results, and notification to UKHO for charting updates, with interim surveys where operationally necessary.
- AtoN maintenance to at least IALA availability standards (with a working target of 100% reliability and a minimum fallback to IALA) and compliance with Trinity House inspection/return requirements.
- Local Notices to Mariners (LNtM) to promulgate hazards, works and changes.
- Practical seabed management, including routine plough dredging at the harbour entrance to manage sand accretion that spills around/through the Pleasure Pier, plus maintenance dredging where required.
- Traffic control and leading marks at the entrance to ensure safe alignment and movement during periods of high activity or restricted visibility.

These measures reflect the PMSC Chapter 10 duties and are embedded within Weymouth's documented conservancy scheme and annual work programme.

10.1 Harbour Authorities

As the harbour authority, Dorset Council delivers conservancy through the Harbour Master and team, with clear accountabilities set by the MSMS and Marine Safety Plan. Conservancy tasks include: surveying, finding and marking the best navigable channels, placing and maintaining navigation marks, keeping proper hydrographic/hydrological records, and supplying information promptly to users and the UKHO. Weymouth's practice aligns directly with the Code: surveys are undertaken annually, the results are monitored and shared, and Aids to Navigation (AtoN) are checked routinely and inspected annually by Trinity House. Where change is detected (e.g., post-storm shoaling, movement of beach material), the harbour takes prompt corrective action and issues LNtM.

The MSMS also integrates conservancy with operational traffic control. During large vessel movements, Weymouth implements its entrance signal system and deploys patrol vessels to suspend/confine other movements as necessary, reducing collision/interaction risk and keeping channels clear. Conservancy performance (e.g., AtoN availability, survey currency, LNtM timeliness) is captured in KPIs and reported through governance routes (Harbour Consultative Group, Harbours Advisory Committee, Duty Holder) as set out in the Marine Safety Plan 2026–2029.

10.2 Aids to Navigation

Weymouth's AtoN are managed to IALA standards and inspected by Trinity House under the local lighthouse authority regime. The harbour aims for 100% reliability, with a minimum standard of IALA availability; defects are notified to Trinity House and rectified promptly, with information promulgated to mariners via LNTM. The current scheme includes:

- Entrance/leading marks on the Nothe (fixed red leading lights/diamond day marks giving a 239° 38' leading line);
- South (Stone) Pier quick-flash white and North Pier vertical fixed greens to frame the entrance;

- Movement control signals at the South Pier ("Stone Pier") to manage periods of restricted movement associated with larger vessels.

These systems have been upgraded to LED and are checked routinely, with an annual Trinity House inspection regime and formal returns submitted through the recognised reporting system. This meets PMSC expectations that AtoN be optimally positioned, maintained to required availability, and subject to periodic review.

Operationally, Weymouth integrates AtoN with VHF Channel 12 procedures, patrol presence, and the publication of LNtM so that any temporary changes (e.g., defects, works, events, emergent hazards) are communicated quickly. The Marine Safety Plan's Conservancy objectives reinforce this by requiring ongoing AtoN maintenance to IALA standards and annual reporting to the Duty Holder and Harbours Advisory Committee.

10.3 Wrecks and Abandoned Vessels

Weymouth applies the statutory wreck and obstruction powers within the MSMS to ensure the harbour remains safe for navigation:

- Under the Merchant Shipping Act 1995, s.252, the harbour authority may take possession of, raise, remove or destroy a wreck that is, or is likely to become, a danger or obstruction to navigation (and may light/buoy it until removed).
- Under the Harbours, Docks & Piers Clauses Act 1847, s.56, the Harbour Master may remove obstructions within the harbour/approaches and recover costs from the owner (including detention/sale to secure expenses).
- If a vessel's condition or contents present a grave and imminent danger, the Harbour Master may issue a Dangerous Vessel Direction (Dangerous Vessels Act 1985) to prohibit entry or require removal.

The PMSC anticipates use of these powers to keep waterways safe; Weymouth's MSMS sets out how concerns are assessed, how owners are engaged, and how directions or removals are actioned case-by-case.

Practically, the harbour monitors for wreck hazards via patrols, user reports and hydrographic surveys. There are no charted wrecks affecting the navigable channel; however, a known dangerous wreck SSE of Redcliffe Point lies outside the harbour limits and does not affect routine navigation into/out of Weymouth. If a wreck or abandoned vessel threatens navigation within the limits, the Harbour Master will:

- assess risk and promulgate warnings (VHF/LNTM);
- mark/guard as required;
- serve directions on the owner to remove; and if necessary, exercise statutory powers to remove/destroy or issue a Dangerous Vessel Direction.

All actions are coordinated with HM Coastguard/MCA and, where appropriate, Trinity House and the police, ensuring the harbour meets the PMSC standard for decisive, proportionate management of dangers to navigation.

10.4 Role of SOSREP

The Secretary of State's Representative for Maritime Salvage and Intervention (SOSREP) is the UK Government's empowered authority responsible for directing and overseeing the response to significant maritime incidents, including those involving wrecks and abandoned vessels. SOSREP holds delegated powers of the Secretary of State to make urgent, time-critical decisions in the overriding public interest

where there is a risk to life, the environment, property or navigation. SOSREP provides strategic oversight of salvage, pollution prevention and wreck removal operations, and may intervene directly to ensure that shipowners, salvors and other commercial parties discharge their responsibilities effectively. Where a wreck presents a risk of pollution or navigational danger, SOSREP is authorised to take control of the operation, issue directions, and coordinate the actions of harbour authorities, emergency services, contractors and government agencies until the danger is removed.

Operational Information

Introduction

The Operational Information section provides the practical detail that supports the day-to-day management of Weymouth Harbour, complementing the policy, governance and safety framework established in the Marine Safety Management System. It translates the MSMS principles into operational practice by describing the harbour's physical characteristics, navigational environment, local controls, user activities, facilities, and routine procedures that together enable safe and efficient marine operations. While the MSMS sets out what must be achieved to comply with the Port Marine Safety Code, this part of the document focuses on how those requirements are delivered on the water, at the quayside and across the wider harbour estate.

This section consolidates the operational knowledge necessary for staff, stakeholders, and harbour users to understand how the port functions in real terms. It outlines local navigational arrangements, vessel movement controls, beach-area management, port services, leisure and commercial activity, conservancy responsibilities, and the interface with emergency and specialist plans. By drawing together these operational practices in a structured, accessible format, the document ensures that all harbour activities are coordinated, clearly understood, and consistent with the risk-based systems set out in the MSMS. It is updated routinely to reflect changes in infrastructure, activity patterns, legislation and best practice, ensuring that operational delivery remains safe, coherent, and responsive to a dynamic marine environment.

1.0 The Port of Weymouth

1.1 General Description

Weymouth is situated around the mouth of the River Wey in Dorset, facing into Weymouth Bay and the English Channel. There has been continuous port activity since Roman times. The modern harbour is divided into inner and outer parts, separated by the Town Bridge of bascule lifting type. Commercial activity is concentrated in the outer harbour and especially close to the harbour mouth. Apart from some charter boat activity, the inner harbour is entirely given over to three large marinas.

The entrance is open and of easy access, in a sheltered position and with slight (maximum 1 knot) tidal currents across the entrance. Currents within the port are not strong except through the Town Bridge, where up to 2 knots may be experienced on the ebb at spring tides. The harbour bed throughout the port is silt over clay. Unusually, the Council as Harbour Authority owns the bed of the harbour, this having been made over in the original charters of 1571 and 1598.

Within the harbour area both banks are lined by wharves which lie low to the water. The wharves can be prone to flooding on exceptional spring tides, but this does not affect navigation, and extra defences have been installed. Virtually all the quay walls are lined with floating pontoons to which the port's myriad small craft can moor. The harbour limits extend to seaward, and take in much of Weymouth Bay, as well as the harbour itself as shown below.

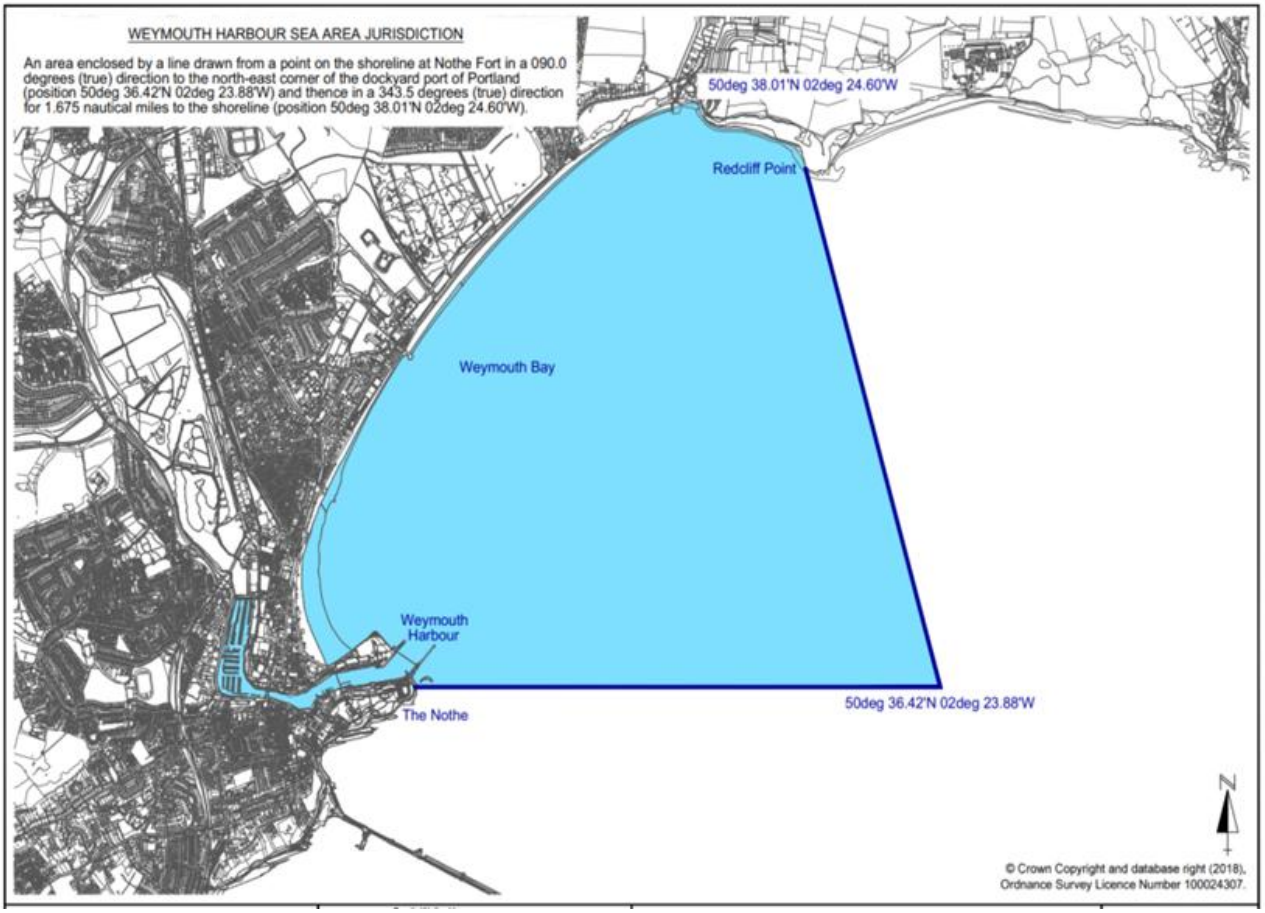


Figure 10: Harbour Limits

1.2 Tidal range

Weymouth has one of the smallest tidal ranges in the UK, being up to 2.5M on spring tides, but this can be significantly affected by winds and pressure. Weymouth experiences a double low at low water. A UK National Tide Gauge is located in the outer harbour.

1.3 Anchorages

Anchorages are designated in open water in Weymouth Bay.

1.4 Ship parameters

Ships can be taken up to 130M length overall and maximum draft of 5.0M. There is no specific beam restriction unless going through Town Bridge, where the maximum width is 24.4M.

1.5 Meteorology

Weymouth lies in a sheltered bay well protected from the weather and most vulnerable to winds between NE and SE. In strong winds from this quadrant, it can be an uncomfortable entrance, but it is a rare event for it to be severely affected. There is a funnelling effect within the harbour which means that the wind tends to blow straight up or down it, which is a minor problem for ship handling but does not pose any serious difficulty under normal circumstances.

The port has not had to be closed on account of weather for many years.

Figure 11: General view of the Outer Harbour

2.0 Port Activities

2.1 Activities of, and affecting, the general public

Weymouth is a very popular destination for visitors, both holidaymakers and day trippers. The long beach sees a constant demand throughout the season and its quay edges frequently mix general public and marine activities in potentially hazardous ways. These are not so much specific and physical hazards as the mixing of unsuspecting and uncomprehending people with the activities typical of any port. The Council's risk matrices provide a framework for addressing these issues. The wish to make the harbour an attractive place in which the public will want to visit, balanced against third party liabilities and damage to the port's reputation if an accident should happen, requires careful management without it appearing to the public that there is any controlling management or regimentation at all.

2.2 The Beach Area

Weymouth has an extensive beach that is very popular with holidaymakers. It lies entirely within the harbour limits (see Figure 12 for a general plan) and hence safety on the water is a matter for the Harbour Authority.

Due to the conflicting pressures on it from different users it has been found necessary to divide up the water area off the beach into a series of sectors. The latest map of these is shown at Figure 12; the sectors are marked by buoys and larger, flagged markers. The information is promulgated by Local Notices to Mariners. Experience has led to the amendment of the boundaries of the sectors, which no longer conform to those laid down in the byelaws. However, the changes are extensively promulgated including a formal notice of deviation from the byelaws. The buoys are in place from 1st April until 30th September and the division of water only applies when the buoys are in situ. In the swimming areas, a speed limit of 4 knots is enforced on all craft and only power-driven vessels with a prop guard may enter. Throughout the summer season. The beach water area is patrolled by the Harbour Authority, partly as a general rescue craft and partly to enforce the sector arrangements. The RNLI also patrol the main beach area and adjacent water.

A particular problem arises with swimming rafts which have traditionally been moored off the beach. These provide a target and a halfway resting place for swimmers who go out to them but Weymouth Beach only shelves very gradually and for the rafts to be accessible they are moored in what is still fairly shallow water. This has tended to pose a risk to anyone diving from them, so these rafts have been moved to a safer point off the beach; they are now only put out for the months of July and August when the RNLI lifeguards are on station at Greenhill.

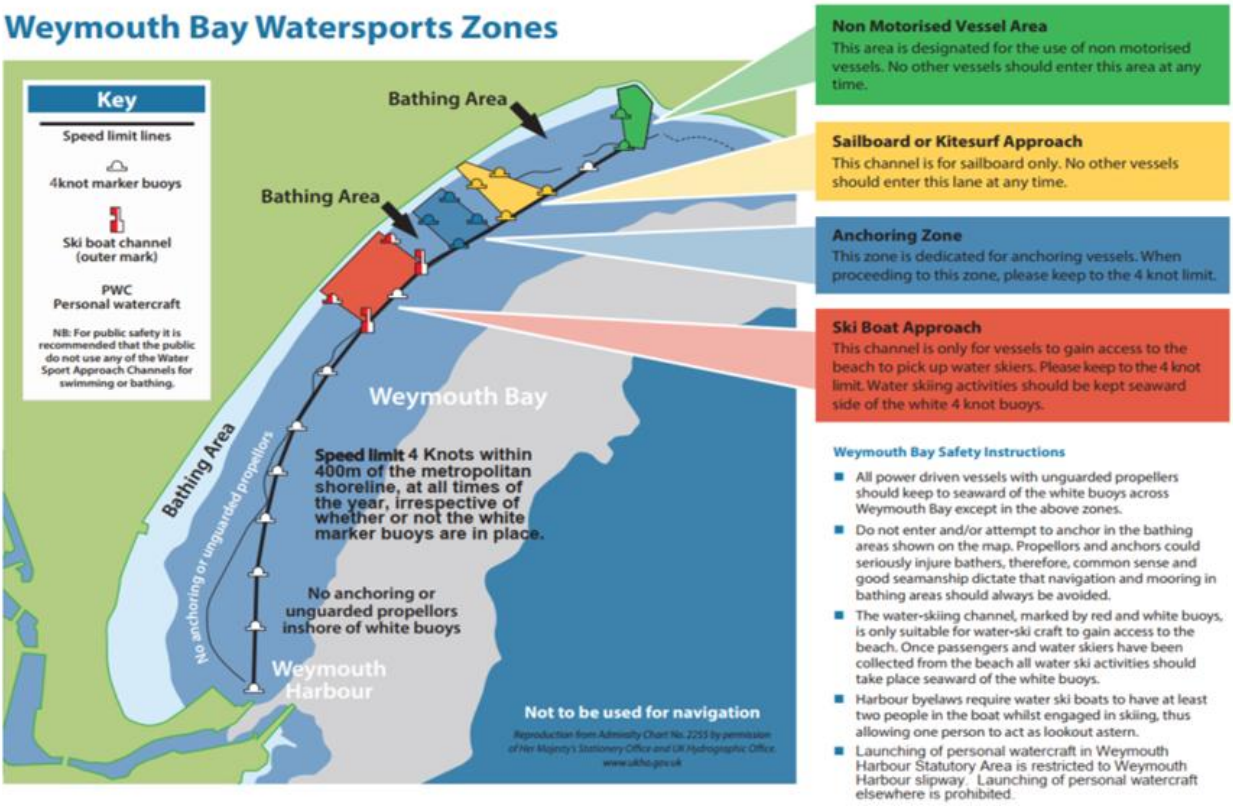


Figure 12: Plan of Weymouth Bay

The main concern is to keep the different user types apart: swimmers, windsurfers, kite sailors, kayaks, personal watercraft, and other small boats; each has their own regulated section, marked by buoys and large outer markers. The many racing yachts based at Weymouth use the whole scope of the Bay and unlit racing marks are placed and lifted frequently, to take best account of wind and weather conditions.

The Pedalo operation on the beach is subject to a lease agreement with Weymouth Town Council and an operating licence from Dorset Council via the Harbour Authority.

2.3 The Town Bridge

The Town Bridge is opened at regular intervals throughout the day to a pre-published schedule. A ‘one way at a time’ movement control is in place for vessels and traffic signals to control their passage through the bridge cut with priority direction declared at each lift.

Figure 13: Town Bridge closed

Figure 14: Town Bridge fully opened

2.4 Marine type operations on the shore

As with any busy harbour, Weymouth's quays see a lot of activity between vessels and shore. These activities are kept safe and under control by a mixture of seamanship and specific controls. The port's many commercial operators all have their demands, and the other primary generator of shore-side marine operations is the multitude of leisure yachts and motorboats which use the port.

2.5 Freight activities

Any freight traffic which was offered would be concentrated on Berth No 1, the furthest to seaward of the merchant ship working berths. It is 100M long and can accommodate vessels up to 115M by overhanging the short No 2 Berth. There is a least depth of 5.0M of water alongside.

Safety requirements would dictate that any freight movements which did come would require the general public to be kept back from the work area. Specific risk assessments are recorded into Document 2.

2.6 Hazardous goods

No hazardous goods are routinely handled at Weymouth. The port retains an ability to deal with them as a part of its retained capacity to handle freight movement should any be presented for shipment.

2.7 Fishing boats

The fishing fleet is the largest commercial user of Weymouth Harbour.

There is an active fleet of smaller fishing boats, their numbers average 60 boats. There are about ten further boats that visit in season. Of these, 20 operate full-time and the rest are part-time. Activity varies with season, but the fleet can be categorised as 2 trawlers, 5 scallopers, and the rest crabbers. In season some vessels Bassline, which requires them to operate in Portland Race and Fiddler's Race. All bar one of the boats operates on a day trip basis.

There are two associations representing the Weymouth and Portland fishermen and charter boats. The fishing boats have their own designated landing area on the North side of the harbour at Weymouth Quay, adjacent to the Pavilion Theatre. This has two modern powered cranes, ice-making facilities, and cold stores for landed catch and bait.

There are also lay-by berths further up the harbour above and below the harbour bridge. Pontoons line the landing and lay-by areas, and the boats tend to land their catches, their equipment and their supplies onto the pontoons. This has the potential to create problems when gear is not cleared from the pontoons as it can become completely blocked off by the equipment left lying around and needs to be prevented.

2.8 Charter Boats

Weymouth has a large concentration of charter boats; dive boats, angling craft and 'trips round the Bay' excursion boats. These boats are further divided into craft with the Professional Boatowners' Association (PBA) and the Licensed Skippers' Association which are largely certificated by the MCA. A very small number of boats continue to be licensed by the Harbour Authority. This licensing by the Harbour Authority was last reviewed and updated in 2023. The main boats now being licensed by the Harbour Authority are the cross-harbour rowing ferry boats.

Portland and Weymouth have a dispensation from the MCA for category D waters within certain criteria. Merchant Shipping Notice 1776 (M) gives specific authority for some vessels to operate between Weymouth and Portland Harbours throughout the year, and in summer further out to a line from Redcliffe Point to Grove Point. This allows the boats more waters in which to operate.

All these craft are operated to professional standards by experienced boatmen and have a good safety record. Over-familiarity is the only likely navigational problem within the harbour limits.

Application of the Council's risk system to these commercial, marine-based, activities rests with ensuring that the narrow individual risk assessments each is subject to, is fitted into the wider considerations of the risk matrices of the Council.

2.9 RNLI Lifeboats

There has been a RNLI lifeboat stationed at Weymouth since 1869, and it remains a major station for the service. It is presently served by a Severn type which operates out to mid-English Channel and to 3 degrees West. The boat lies on dedicated pontoon adjacent to the Lifeboat Station. Since 2022 the station has also had an Atlantis 85 RIB located in a boatshed within Weymouth Sailing Club's yard. Following the RNLI's assumption of such duties nationally, since 2004 it has also provided beach patrols throughout the season now under Weymouth Town Council management.

In general, the operation of the large lifeboat has not encountered any problems over the years. There is an outside possibility of encountering a larger vessel in the harbour mouth if one happened to be moving when the lifeboat was called out or returning in a hurry with casualties, but usually there would be room for both. As all parties work VHF Channel 12, it should be possible to arrange matters in advance to avoid any conflict of movements.

During daylight hours harbourmasters' boats may be operating in the entrance and can control any other traffic likely to impede the lifeboat's movements. In addition, it is suggested that if other large craft see the lifeboat getting under way, they should refrain from moving until the lifeboat has cleared the harbour. An audio warning system is activated to warn shore and boat users of the lifeboat activation, replacing the traditional maroons. It normally takes about ten minutes to scramble the boat from the emergency call going out.

2.10 Leisure activities

Weymouth is a major port for leisure activities. Its three marinas have around 1,000 berths, virtually all allocated, and there are around 5,000 leisure vessels visitor nights each year in the outer harbour. This traffic is mainly bunched into the sailing season from Spring to Autumn and can be intensely busy in the high summer period. Shore activities in the marinas are largely those of servicing and storing the yachts, with personnel coming and going all the time.

In the harbour's three marinas comprehensive risk assessments should be carried out with respect to individual hazards. As well as the marinas, visiting yachts frequently use the pontoons lining both sides of the outer harbour which allows them to be readily accessible to the port's many facilities, both technical and leisure. The risks associated with this easy access are balanced against the popularity it brings to yachtsmen planning their passages.

2.11 Events

The Councils (Dorset and Weymouth Town) have an established system for all events within its jurisdiction, whether on land or on water. Event management is laid down in its own manuals, according to the Council standard system. This requires risk assessments, operational plans, information management and insurance to be considered.

Weymouth stages events regularly through the year and a good number of these events take place both on the shore and on the water so do not categorise easily. Among the events are gig racing, Weymouth yacht and dinghy regattas and the Seafood Festival. On Christmas Day there is a cross-harbour swim. All events

are coordinated with the Councils' Events Teams and their policies. They must be carefully regulated and monitored for safety.

The PMSC Guide to Good Practice discusses event management from the port's point of view. For activities on the water, its precepts should be followed and blended with the Council's own defined system.

There is a constant review of the arrangements for holding events. It is up to the organisers of each event to carry out the risk assessment of their event. The Harbour Authority 'notes' each risk assessment presented by the organisers of events and as necessary, approves events to proceed. It is normal for events to be insured by the organiser and, if the insurers are willing to accept and underwrite the event, it instils more confidence for the Harbour Authority.

2.12 Activities on the water

The water traffic in Weymouth Harbour is substantial but mostly consists of smaller, more manoeuvrable craft. When any large vessel is on the move within the harbour, other water-borne movement may be stopped. This has always had particular force with the ferry movements but applies to other large vessels as well.

On the water, the requirements of the Port Marine Safety Code also come to bear, and this gives an extra layer of control requirements. Mostly, the equipment, operations plan, and general provisions keep the port functioning safely. But the mix of commercial and leisure use and widely varying standards of skill, always carry the potential for problems and harbour staff are vigilant in attending to this mix.

2.13 Overview of port movement control

Weymouth has a short and clear entrance, direct from its Bay. Therefore, the Operations Plan can be simple and aimed primarily at three areas: traffic control around the entrance; regulating movement within the port area; and control of leisure uses off Weymouth Beach.

Vessels approaching Weymouth work on VHF Channel 12 and all ship movements are controlled by VHF radio. It is standard practice to stop all other movements through the harbour entrance when a large vessel is manoeuvring, and a set of traffic regulating signals are placed on the South pier end, known as the 'Stone Pier'. These lights do not follow standard convention and so mariners need to research the unique configuration in almanacs or other local guidance. Apart from this, small craft are free to come and go as they please. The port's professional users often only call on VHF if there is uncertainty about movements around the harbour. All visiting vessels are encouraged to call on VHF Channel 12 for directions and berthing.

It is usual in the port's operation that other large vessel movement ceases when three red lights or three green lights are shown, backed up by radio broadcasts and (in the summer season) by a harbour boat attending in the harbour mouth while the large vessel is manoeuvring. Small craft may still enter, and leave provided they do not interfere with the passage and manoeuvring of the larger vessel. These lights were replaced by more powerful versions in 2008 with a view to making them more visible. While some minor problems are still reported by small craft in seeing the lights against the backdrop of the town's general lighting, overall these lights are an improvement.

Figure 15: Movement control signal tower on South Pier end

Figure 16: Movement control signals

2.14 Pilotage

Weymouth Harbour is a Competent Harbour Authority. After a review in 2025, Pilotage is re-affirmed as being compulsory for all vessels over 80m in length. The service is available to any other vessel that requests it, on due notice. The direction is included in the list of freestanding documents in this overview of the port's Safety Management System.

The pilotage area is shared with the nearby Port of Portland and the two ports have common borders.

With the cessation of Condor Ferries' services in March 2015, demand for pilotage has dropped to virtually zero and will remain so unless a new service or other trade comes to fruition. The lack of currency for pilotage operations is covered in Pilotage Directions.

Pilot boarding & landing

The pilotage area and the boarding and landing point for the Port of Weymouth is defined in Figure 15.0 below. The pilot boat is provided by the Port of Portland through an agreement with Weymouth Harbour. The station is in a sheltered spot in Weymouth Bay and there is no record of problems for pilots getting on or off vessels. Many aspects of the pilotage are shared in common with the Port of Portland. These include agreement on contiguous pilotage areas, arrangements to use each other's pilot boats when their own is unavailable and a common traffic control system in the approaches to Weymouth Bay managed by Portland Port.

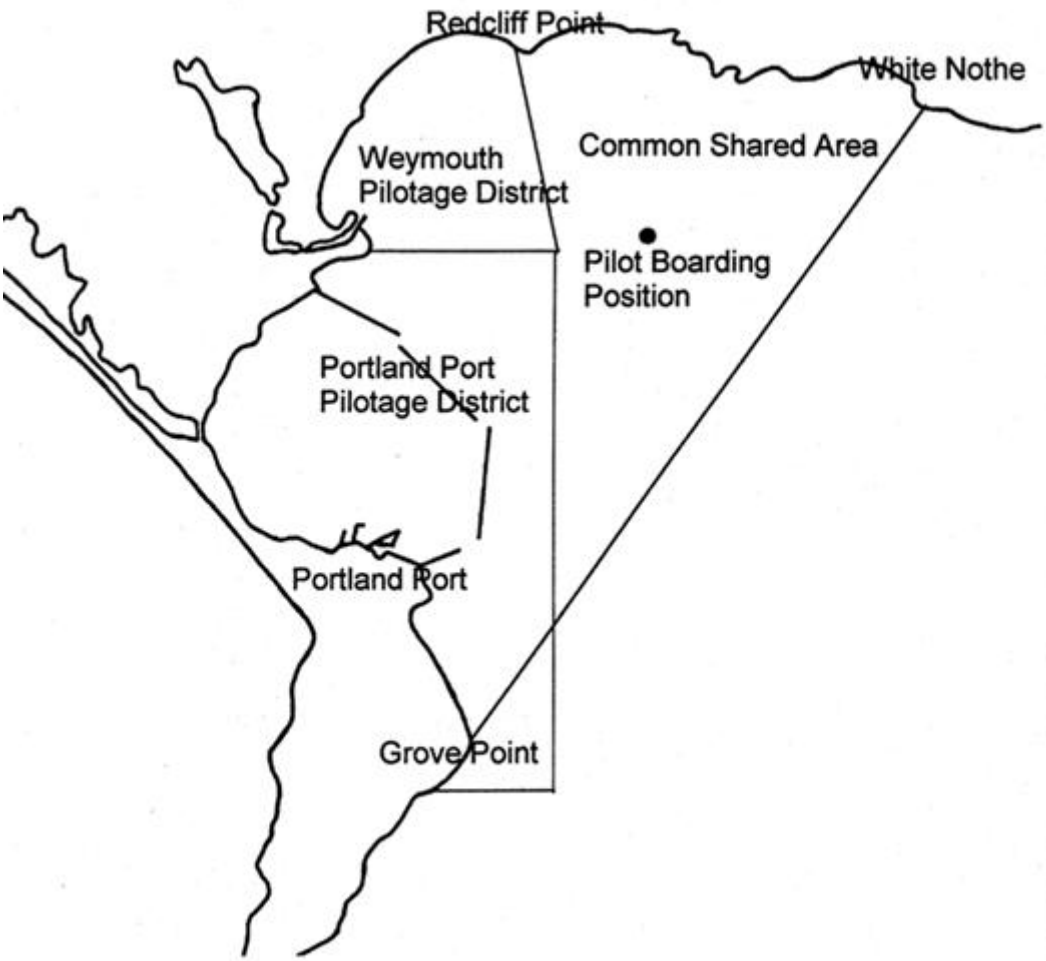


Figure 17: Pilot boarding position

Pilotage Exemption Certificates

The pilotage direction makes provision for exemptions to be granted to any suitably qualified officer who makes eight pilotage acts (four trips in and four trips out) or more each year and after passing the pilotage exam which has been subject to a review and update. The pilotage direction provides full details of the requirements for issuing Pilotage Exemption Certificates.

Tugs

Aquatic Towage is based at Weymouth Harbour and can be utilised, however their vessels are often away working, and cannot guarantee to be available at short notice. Tugs are also based at Portland, and available on about half an hour's notice in the daytime, 4 hours' notice at night. Due to their size there may be difficulties for them operating in the Outer Harbour.

Collision Regulations

Vessel movements in the port are carried out in conformity with the provisions of the International Regulations to Prevent Collision at Sea 1972, as amended. Within the port environs, however, all craft are encouraged to be prepared to give way and the requirement to stand on is lessened.

Particular care needs to be taken in the vicinity of the cross-harbour rowing ferry, which has right of way at all times.

Passage plan

The passage plan is given and explained to the captain when the pilot boards, exchanging it with the ship information card.

2.15 Communications

- Communications within the port are by VHF radio, using channel 12.
- Communication with Portland Harbour is on Channel 74.
- Lulworth Firing Range Safety is Channel 8.
- Coastwatch based at Portland Bill are Channel 65.
- Vessel Traffic Service: There is no VTS service. When necessary, Weymouth and Portland co-ordinate movements on an ad-hoc basis.

2.16 Passenger ships

Cross-Channel Ferries

There have been ferries running from Weymouth to the Channel Islands for about 150 years, these have now ceased.

P/S Waverley

The Pleasure Pier, the seaward extension of the North side piers, is no longer used by the paddle steamer Waverley, which is certified for 1500-day excursion passengers, to pick up passengers. Large passenger carrying vessels calling at Weymouth now generally lie on No. 1 Berth, the outermost berth on the North bank of the harbour where entry and exit are easiest. It is normal practise for such vessels to berth head in and back out of the harbour, turning in the open waters of the Bay.

2.17 Leisure uses

Weymouth has a major fleet of pleasure craft. Around 1,000 yachts are based here, mainly in the three marinas, but there are important moorings on the South side of the outer harbour, mainly dedicated to

Weymouth Sailing Club. The latter has extensive facilities at the Nothe, on the South side of the outer harbour. The Sea Cadets National Training Centre boat park, Weymouth Outdoor Education Centre's Sailing Centre and the Weymouth Gig Rowing Club are also located on the South side of the outer harbour.

In the inner harbour two marinas (North Quay and Westwey Road) are owned by the Harbour Authority. The third is privately operated; it is in a leased upper section of the inner harbour and run by the marina specialists Premier Marinas, who also operate Portland Marina.

There is also a small marina owned by Mr. Barry Curtis, known as the Nelson Wharf Marina, on the East side of the harbour between the public slipway and the Premier marina. It accommodates about 10 craft. Mr Curtis has riparian rights.

The port is also popular with visiting yachts, and on average just over 5,000 leisure vessels' visitor nights were recorded. Visitors' berths are mainly provided alongside the pontoons on the North side of the outer harbour.

Weymouth beach lies within the harbour limits and harbour staff are actively involved in its management on the water. Due to the many, conflicting uses, to which the beach area is subject to, it has been found necessary to divide it into sections for different purposes. These sections are shown at Figure 10.0 in the section considering beach safety. The Harbour Authority's responsibilities are only on the water; RNLI lifeguards under Weymouth Town Council's beach management staff patrol the beaches and the water's edge.

2.18 Visiting leisure vessels

As has been noted, Weymouth is one of the leading leisure ports on the English Channel, having around 1,000 permanent moorings and a further 5,000 leisure vessels' visitor nights yearly. The annual berth-holders are mainly berthed in the marinas of the inner harbour, but Weymouth Sailing Club has chain and sinker moorings, some pontoons and extensive facilities on the South side of the outer harbour.

This intensive, if seasonal, traffic is a dominant feature of the port. Standards vary from highly experienced local yachtsmen with thorough knowledge of the port, to occasional visitors with limited marine knowledge who can find navigation difficult in such a busy environment. A significant part of this traffic moors in the inner harbour and it creates a relentless demand for passage through the Town Bridge throughout the summer season. The Town Bridge is operated by Weymouth Harbour staff.

There is an active yacht racing fleet based at Weymouth with frequent competitions in the Bay. Starts and finishes are often close to the harbour entrance and this creates conflicting traffic movements from time to time. Large commercial vessels, however, retain right of way at all times.

The general policy is that this yachting traffic should be allowed to move as freely as safety permits. Weymouth offers simple navigation with only a few minor hazards, so it is possible to allow a high degree of freedom from regulation without undue risk. Such controls as are necessary, for traffic regulation in the entrance, and through the Town Bridge, are well established and examined in detail in the formal risk assessments.

2.19 Jet skis, personal watercraft and towed aquaplaning water sports craft

In 2003 a permit system was introduced for these craft and activities. This provides for licenses to be issued for any period from a day to a year and remains in force.

The funds raised by the controlling Council pay for law enforcement on the water, but the system allows the Harbour Authorities to control such crafts' activities by educating when permits are issued and withdrawing their license if they transgress.

After a good deal of legal debate and rulings, personal watercraft were proclaimed to be sea-going craft like any other and subject to the International Collision Regulations. This regularised their position and in crowded waters they behave like any other vessel. The permit system has been used to control such craft.

2.20 Chain and sinker moorings

Both inner and outer harbours have several chain and sinker moorings in them, generally controlled by the Harbour Master. In the inner harbour, yacht moorings for the long-term local residents are provided by bow sinkers and stern lines to the shore along the West side of the harbour. These were provided as substitutes when marinas were built over the area formerly occupied by local users.

In the outer harbour the South side is lined along its length by yacht moorings, again mostly chain and sinkers. The RNLI lifeboat is moored in the same area. Many of these moorings are associated with Weymouth Sailing Club which has landing facilities and premises on the bank alongside the moorings and are controlled by the club. These moorings can be affected by wake from passing craft, but there is no record of serious problems arising from this cause.

At the outer end are moorings given over to the Sea Cadets Training Centre, a national boat training establishment at Weymouth and some belonging to Weymouth Outdoor Education Centre. Sea Cadets control and look after their own moorings, which are opposite the ferry terminal. While there is the possibility of risk arising when larger vessels manoeuvre close to the Sea Cadet moorings, the requirement that all other activity must cease while the larger vessels are on the move provides a level of safety against the risks involved.

2.21 Works licensing

All works in the port are controlled by the Harbour Master. It is rare for such works to affect navigation, other than dredging.

2.22 Diving

All diving for favour or reward (i.e. “at work”) is subject to the Diving at Work Regulations 1997 (DWR 97) and the associated Approved Codes of Practice (ACOP). Diving at work may only be carried out by a diving contractor who has notified the Health and Safety Executive in compliance with the provisions in DWR 97 and dives may only be carried out in accordance with the legal requirements. Additionally, Weymouth Harbour requires that divers at work apply for prior consent from the Harbour Authority before undertaking a dive.

Weymouth Harbour strongly recommends that all diving (whether the diver is at work or not) should meet all the above requirements.

2.23 Towing

Towing in the outer and inner harbours is subject to approval from the Harbour Master. Permission for planned tows should be requested in advance. The following are standard given approvals:

- The towing of vessels by the RNLI lifeboats.
- The towing of dinghies and sailing boats by the Sea Cadet Training Centre, Weymouth Outdoor Education Centre and Weymouth Sailing Club subject to each organisations’ risk assessments and safety cases.
- The towing of dedicated Premier Marinas recovery vessel subject to the organisations risk assessments.
- The towing of a vessel in immediate danger.

2.24 Local Notices to Mariners

Weymouth Harbour maintains a system of Local Notices to Mariners (LNtM) in accordance with industry expectations and the PMSC GGP. LNtM are used to promulgate relevant information for the safety of navigation to harbour users and maritime stakeholders. Distribution is via email (subscriber list), with current and recent LNtM being displayed on the website and in the Harbour Office reception.

3.0 Conservancy

The conservancy scheme for Weymouth is contained within the harbour, there being no navigational obstructions or channels to mark beyond the harbour mouth.

3.1 General description

On the North pier end there are two vertical fixed green lights visible six miles. On the South (Stone Pier) end, there is a quick flash white light visible nine miles.

On the Nothe, two fixed red leading lights, or two diamond shape marks by day, provide a leading light bearing 239° 38’ to mark the entrance line into the harbour mouth.

Both of these sets were upgraded with LED lights in 2008.

The traffic signals previously described control movement through the entrance area whenever larger vessels are moving. The Town Bridge cut is also controlled by red and green lights which show to control the movement of craft through the cut. The priority for traffic will be given on each lift depending on the number of vessels expected.

3.2 Standards for Aids to Navigation

The Port of Weymouth aims for 100% reliability from its Aids to Navigation, with a minimum fallback to IALA standards. reports are made to Trinity House (through LARS) in the event of defects, ensuring the obligations as a Local lighthouse Authority are maintained.

3.3 Inspection of Aids to Navigation

Weymouth is a local light authority, and its aids are subject to an annual inspection by Trinity House. The regular routine regime for inspection and maintenance is shown with the freestanding plans.

3.4 Dredging, hydrographic survey and Admiralty charts

The beds of Weymouth Harbour and Bay are not subject to great change, other than a tendency for sand from the beach to build up, spilling around and through the Pleasure Pier into the harbour mouth. This sand accumulation has to be dredged by plough dredging from time to time.

As part of the preparations for installing the new marina in the inner harbour it was extensively dredged in 1996, for the first time in 20 years. A least depth of 2.2M was created in the navigable area and this has remained stable.

A detailed hydrographic survey is carried out every year by a contract hydrographic firm and depths are carefully monitored. The results of each hydrographic survey are notified to the Admiralty Hydrographic Office in full. The Hydrographic Code of Practice is followed.

3.5 Wrecks

There are no wrecks in any position close to the navigable channel. The only dangerous wreck noted in the pilot book lies 5 cables SSE of Redcliffe Point, but it is not a hazard to navigation in and out of the harbour (and is outside the harbour limits).

4.0 Freestanding and Second Tier plans

There are 11 plans adopted; key plans can be found on the Weymouth Harbour website.

4.1 The Weymouth Oil Spill Contingency Plan

This plan has been fully developed and approved by MCA. This is held separately by the Harbour Master but is considered to be an integral part of the emergency response system.

4.2 The Port Waste Management Plan

This plan is fully developed. It is adopted into the Operations Plan and Safety Management System and is approved by the MCA.

4.3 Pilotage review and directions

Weymouth's pilotage requirements were subject to comprehensive review in 2025. This report and the associated pilotage directions are incorporated in the roster of separate plans attached to the Safety Management System.

4.4 Dorset Council – Emergency Response Plan

These plans lay out the systems to be used for any emergency in the region. Should any incident in the harbour area have consequences reaching beyond its confines, it is the Emergency Response Plan which will be brought to bear. There are both Weymouth Town Council and Dorset Council plans.

4.5 Former Ferry Terminal Emergency Plan

This plan provides the systems for any emergency occurring on the shore side of the ferry terminal. Vessels alongside the terminal are considered to be within the scope of the terminal's provisions.

4.6 Commercial Area Linkspan

The operation of the linkspan has its own manual.

4.7 Port Facilities Security Plan

Weymouth had a full ISPS Port Facilities Security Plan in place and was fully compliant with its requirements until 2015. Since then it has been suspended following the end of Condor sailings, but the plan remains available for revival if another ferry operator comes to the port. It would need to be modified for any new operation to reflect any necessary modifications to the infrastructure.

4.8 The Town Bridge

Has its own operating manual included in the roster of separate plans attached to the Safety Management System.

4.9 Conservancy Inspection Regime

Forms for this are now part of the risk register and management control system. Defects are reported by PANAR to Trinity House.

4.10 MSN 1832 (M) Amendment 1

This Merchant Shipping Notice updates the UK's guidance on how Port State Control is carried out under the Merchant Shipping (Port State Control) Regulations 2011. It explains how foreign-flagged ships visiting UK ports are inspected based on their risk profile, with older or higher-risk vessels receiving more thorough checks. Ships that qualify for these expanded inspections must give 72 hours' notice before arrival, allow enough time in their schedule for the inspection, and remain in port until it has been completed.

The amendment also reinforces reporting duties for pilots and port authorities, requiring them to alert the MCA to any safety or environmental concerns and to provide accurate arrival and departure times for all visiting ships. It introduces tougher consequences for vessels that repeatedly fail inspections, including the possibility of being banned from UK and other member state ports. In essence, the amendment strengthens the UK's alignment with the Paris MoU inspection regime and ensures consistent, risk-based oversight of visiting ships.

5.0 Emergency Response Plan

5.1 Assigned areas of responsibility

The Port Marine Safety Code states that the Safety Management System should include preparations for emergencies and that these should be identified as far as practical from the formal risk assessment.

If an incident should occur, we will require robust, reliable and resilient plans and resources to manage the incident and to achieve the best possible outcome in a potentially hostile and hazardous environment.

The WHA Harbour Emergency Plan details responses to emergency situations within harbour limits and approaches. This plan will work alongside the Regional Emergency Plan to enable an appropriate response to incidents in or affecting the Harbour.

Training, exercises and drills will be programmed and completed to test emergency procedures. Records will be maintained by the HPCHA and the contractor, procedures will be updated as required following lessons learnt.

All incidents, emergencies and near misses within the Harbour or Approaches should be reported to the Harbour Master at the earliest possible opportunity. This should not detract for the Master's responsibility to react and respond to emergencies etc. on board their vessel.

HM Coastguard is responsible on behalf of the Department for Transport for the co-ordination of Civil Maritime Search and Rescue within the United Kingdom Search and Rescue Region. When alerted or notified by a Harbour Authority or in the event of being the first recipient of an alert or notification HM Coastguard will, after consulting with the Harbour Authority, assist the Harbour Authority by co-ordinating the "Search and Rescue" phase of any Distress incident within the harbour limits. A Distress incident is defined in IAMSAR Manual (Vol. 1) as being a situation wherein there is a reasonable certainty that a vessel or other craft, including an aircraft or a person, is threatened by grave and imminent danger and requires immediate assistance. The Harbour Authority will remain responsible for managing the overall response to any incident within the port limits.

Objectives

The objectives of this plan include:

- Use our best endeavours to reduce the vulnerability to and resultant effect of a major emergency.
- Comply with relevant international conventions, legislation, regulation, guidance and industry best practise.
- The plan will define the Harbour Authority's overall emergency management structure and departmental responsibilities, and to define the role of support organisations.
- Ensure that there are adequate resources available to respond to reasonably foreseeable emergencies.
- To reduce Risk to As Low As Reasonably Practicable as required by the Port Marine Safety Code.

Scope

The Plan applies within the statutory jurisdiction of the Weymouth Harbour Authority limits and approaches.

The Harbour Master is responsible for the implementation of this Plan, and for ensuring stakeholders meets the obligations described in the Plan.

5.2 Coordination of incidents inside the harbour (from the pier ends inwards)

The Harbour Master has overall responsibility for co-ordination and co-operation with other emergency services for any incidents within port limits.

Commercial shipping

HM Coastguard Solent is the co-ordinating authority for any incident to a merchant vessel unless it is lying alongside a berth.

All vessels in the harbour approaches or Weymouth Bay

H M Coastguard is the co-ordinating authority for any incident in these areas, in close co-ordination with the Harbour Master, and will call in other services as necessary.

Craft in the harbour and inner harbour

The Harbour Master has a primary authority for dealing with incidents to vessels on the move farther into the harbour, calling in other services as necessary.

Former Ferry Terminal

A thorough emergency plan exists for this already, which should be referred to for detailed advice. A vessel alongside Berth 3 or 4, at the terminal, is considered to be integrated into the terminal emergency plan.

All craft alongside other parts of the harbour

Craft alongside a berth come under general shore emergency provisions, which mean that the emergency services have the controlling responsibility, in co-operation with the Harbour Master as appropriate.

On board ship

For incidents arising on board ships, the vessel's Master is in charge of on-board action, in close co-ordination with the Harbour Master and emergency services.

6.0 The Plan

6.1 General

For all marine incidents, the Port of Weymouth emergency response is under the overall command of the Harbour Master, reporting to the CHA Duty Holder.

The Port of Weymouth only has the capacity to deal with minor marine incidents from its own resources. An incident at port level would require additional expertise and resources. Whilst a major marine incident carries a fairly low probability, it would call for significant resources and expertise from external services. This emergency response would be used in conjunction with the Former Ferry Terminal plan when appropriate, and/or the Weymouth Town Council and Dorset Council Emergency Plans which define all emergency services on the shore side of the harbour and in the region.

6.2 Pollution: Weymouth Harbour Oil Spill Contingency Plan

The oil spill plan is a freestanding plan which was audited and approved by MCA in July 2024. Its provisions run in harmony with the overall emergency response plans and should be used for all pollution matters.

Copies are held by the Harbour Master.

6.3 Movements within the harbour during an emergency

In any emergency occurring within the harbour, movement of other vessels must be controlled and if necessary, stopped while the emergency is dealt with. In extreme circumstances closure of the port may have to be considered. Any decision to control vessel movements or close the port rests with the Harbour Master, in close co-ordination with emergency controllers and the emergency services.

6.4 Accessibility

The berths of Weymouth Harbour are unusual in that the vast majority are alongside open public streets. Apart from the massed ranks of parked cars, this makes emergency access exceptionally easy and much the greater part of the port's berths can be reached without difficulty.

On the water, the upper parts of the harbour are narrow and even if a craft got into severe difficulties rescue of personnel at least should be simple. Apart from through the Town Bridge cut, tidal streams are weak and there is no great danger of persons in the water being swept away.

In the more open waters around the harbour mouth direct support from the shore will be less easy. It is probable that marine rescue services, be it lifeboat, harbour service vessel or tug will be called for.

In the Premier Marina in the inner harbour, a particular access problem arises. Although open quay space is close around it, its layout of long finger pontoons means that some boats are in relatively inaccessible positions for support from shoreside facilities. This access should be studied in more detail, with co-operative exercises between the operating company, the Harbour Authorities and the emergency services.

Should it be appropriate to consider berthing a vessel to effect emergency evacuation, as much information as possible should be obtained from the master about the condition of his ship, crew, passengers and cargo with special reference to any hazardous materials on board. Any need for outside assistance should be ascertained and organised. It is the Harbour Master's responsibility to allocate a berth for any such vessel taken in and ensure all appropriate services are closed up.

6.5 Tug and salvage equipment availability

Aquatic Towage is based at Weymouth Harbour and can be utilised. Tugs are also based at Portland, just five miles away and available on about half an hour's notice in the daytime, 4 hours' notice at night. Due to their size there may be difficulties for them operating in the Outer Harbour.

There is some limited salvage capacity at Portland which could be mobilised rapidly and extensive salvage equipment available from the Solent, about four hours steaming to Weymouth.

The Port of Portland listens 24 hours to VHF Channel 74 for emergency response.

6.6 HM Coastguard

The area Rescue Co-ordination Centre (RCC) is at the Fareham HQ, but a district 'mobile unit' is also based at Weymouth. The district Coastguard holds access equipment and shore support gear.

Solent Coastguard can be contacted by:

- Telephone 02392 552100 or 999 for an emergency
- VHF Channel 16 or 67

6.7 Vessel Master

The vessel Master presides over and has total responsibility for the ship and those who sail on her. The Master runs the ship and has authority over all those on board. The Master is responsible for safe navigation in the broadest sense of the word and ensures that the crews are ready at all times to carry out on board duties as necessary.

The Master will organise duties in such a manner, as to ensure that he/she and their crew can benefit from the legally required amount of rest as stated by The Merchant Shipping (Maritime Labour Convention) (Hours of Work) Regulations 2018 & the Maritime Labour Convention 2006. The Master has the overriding authority and responsibility to make decisions about carrying out those actions the Master deems necessary in order to contribute to the interests of those on board, the ship, safety, health and environment, and to prevent pollution and to request the Company's assistance.

The Master will ensure that legislative and regulatory measures and the operation of the management system are enforced. He/ she implements the environmental and safety policy as described in the ships ISM Compliant Safety Management System. During an incident the Master remains responsible and in command of decisions made onboard his vessel, but will ultimately liaise with the Harbour Master, the Emergency Services, MCA and SOSREP (Secretary of State's Representative) on the actions required to safeguard the safety of life, environment and property. The decision to abandon ship (or evacuate) will always be made by the vessels Masters (or senior surviving officer).

6.8 Fire

The local Fire Brigade will attend any ship fire within the port.

Action:

If alongside within the harbour, call Dorset Fire Brigade Tel. 999

If in the bay, call Solent Coastguard VHF Channel 16 or 67 and notify:

- Position
- Whether able to reach an access point and if so which one
- ETA at access point

- Scale of problem
- Number of persons on board
- Type of fire
- Type of cargo
- Type and nature of assistance required

Call Weymouth Harbour Office (VHF Ch. 12 or 01305 838423).

6.9 Persons in the water

For persons in the water within the harbour, or close to the beaches in Weymouth Bay where Harbour Master's vessels patrol, direct and immediate action should be taken by such craft to conduct a rescue, notifying Coastguard of their actions.

For persons in the water outside the confines of the area patrolled by Harbour Master's craft, or if they are not available, action should be taken as follows:

Notify Solent Coastguard VHF Channel 16 or 67, dial 999 and notify:

- Ship name
- Inbound/outbound
- State of tide
- Speed of current
- Location
- Number of persons in the water
- Whether local assistance available

Solent Coastguard will decide appropriate response and if necessary will call RNLI, their shore team or other appropriate service.

6.10 Initial Communications

In the event of an emergency or incident within the harbour limits mariners should utilise the international distress, urgency or safety messages and procedures to ensure that the most appropriate assistance is provided in a timely manner. HM Coastguard can be contacted via VHF channel 16, or by dialling 999.

A MAYDAY or MAYDAY RELAY message will be utilised by vessels when a vessel or person is threatened by grave and imminent danger and requires immediate assistance. A PAN PAN message will be utilised by vessels when the safety of a vessel, or of someone on board or within sight is threatened, but which does not require immediate assistance.

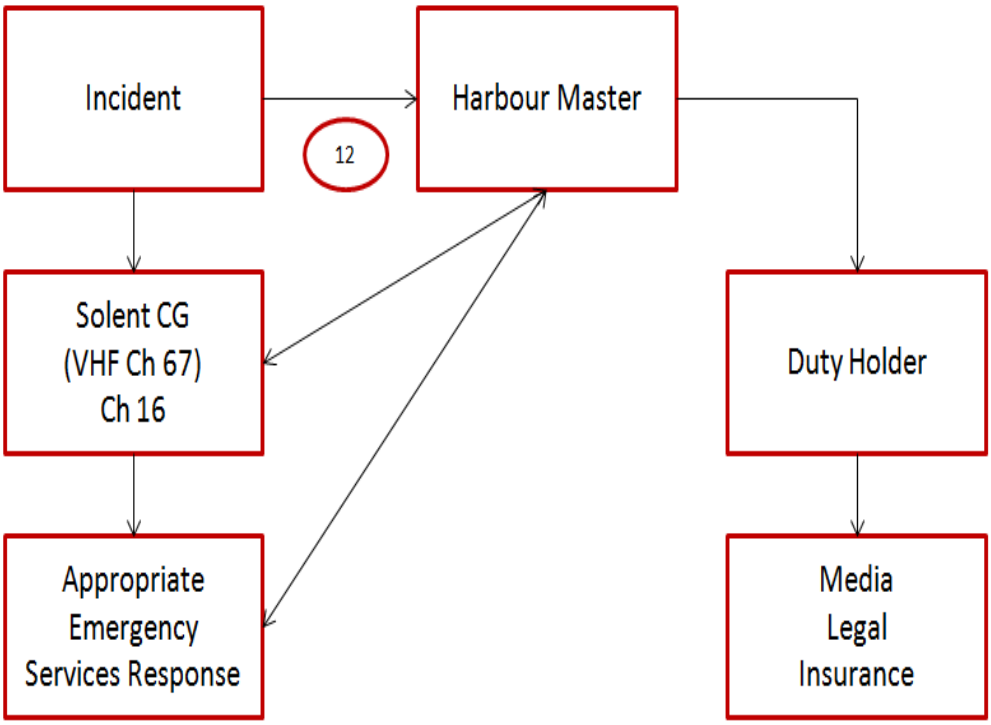
The Harbour Master should be informed of incidents and emergencies within the Weymouth Harbour limits or approaches via calling the Berthing Office on 01305 838423. Alternatively, if within range, the UHF Site Radio orange button facility on the radio handset can be used for establishing communications in an emergency.

6.11 Press and Media

Information to the Public and Press will be channelled through Dorset Communication Team. Staff must be instructed not to make "on the spot" statements to the media unless authorised by the Communication Team. Contact: 01305 838073.

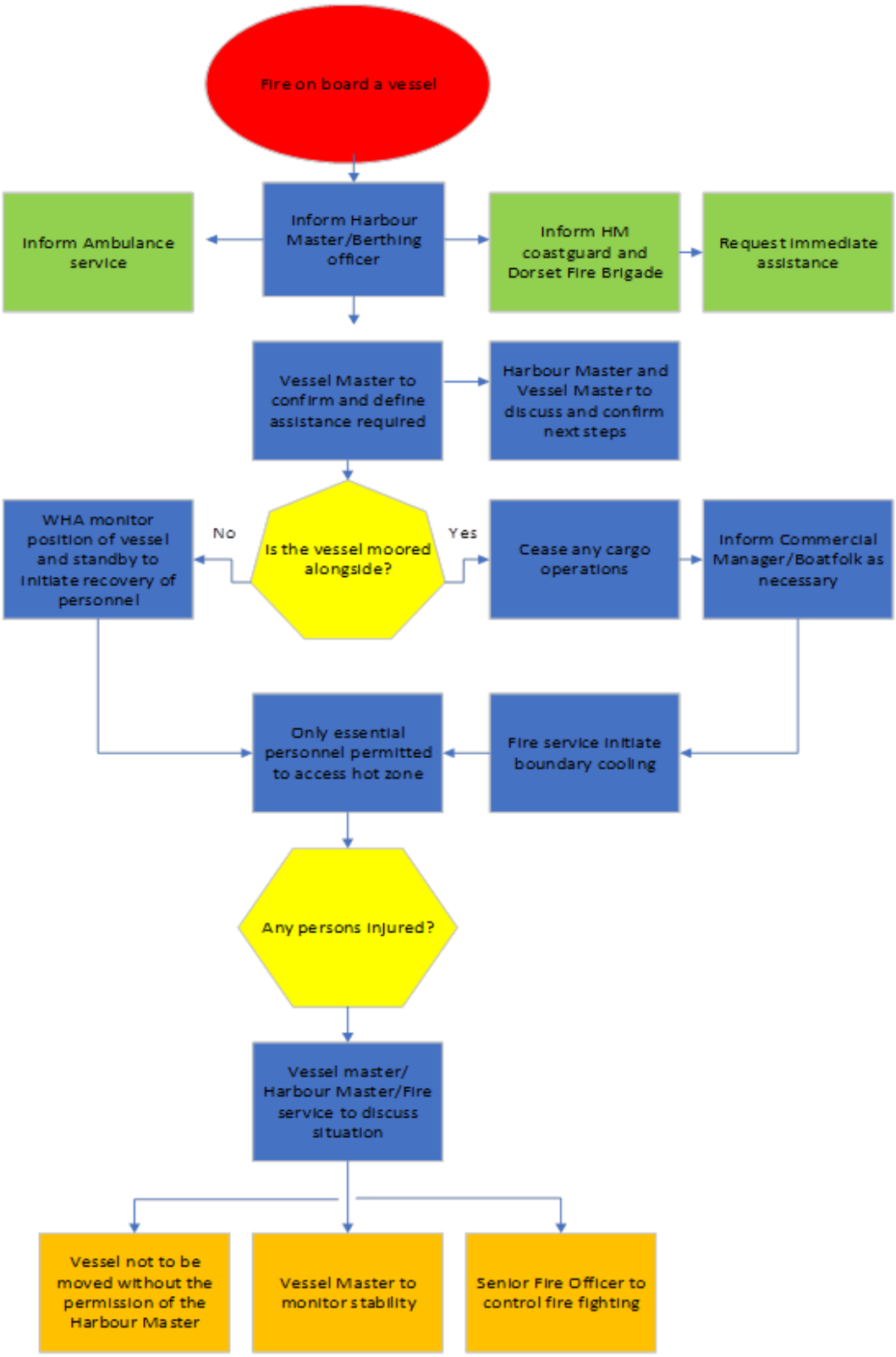
7.0 Incident Management Flowcharts

7.1 High Level Process



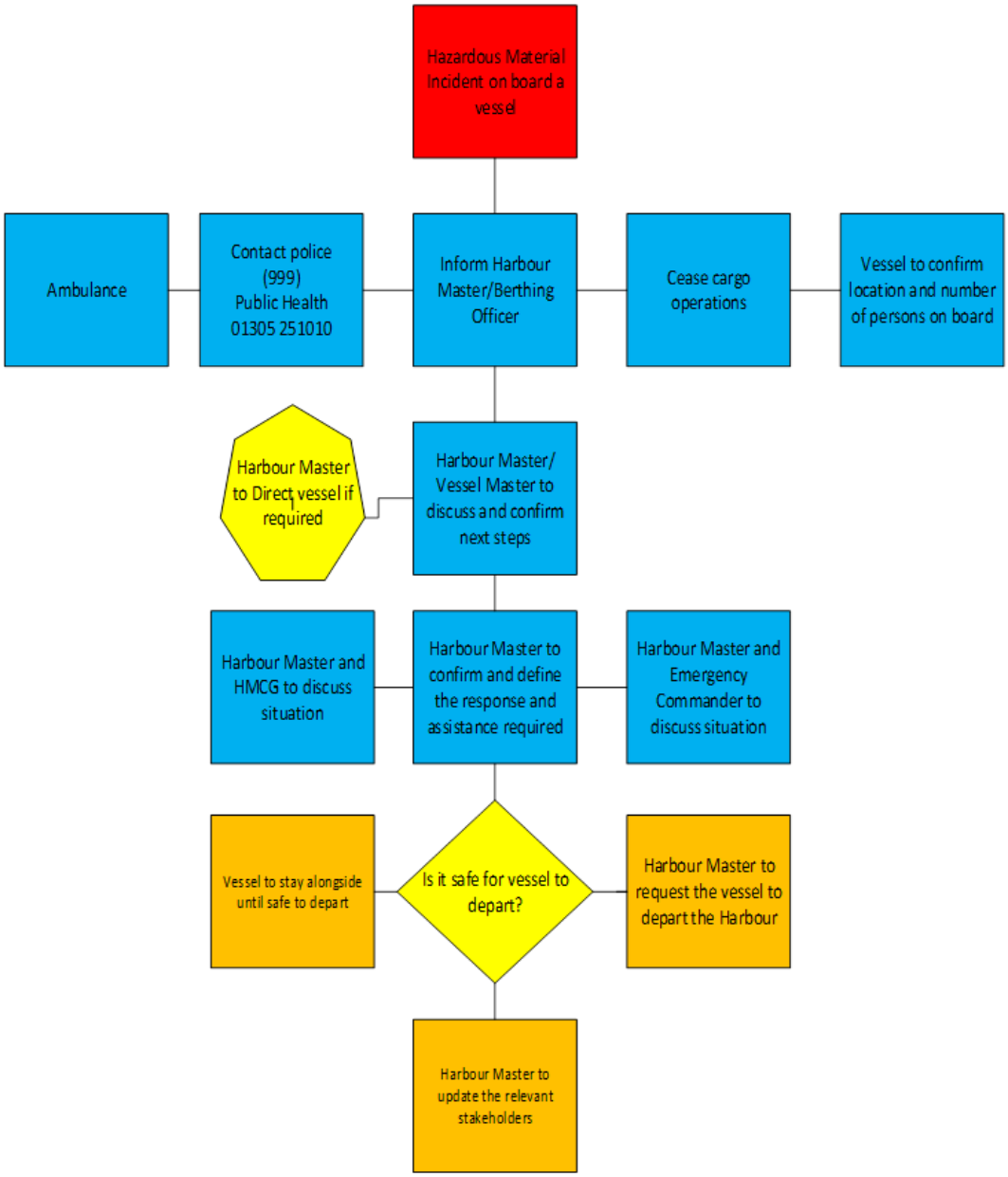
7.2 Man Overboard

7.3 Fire on board vessel

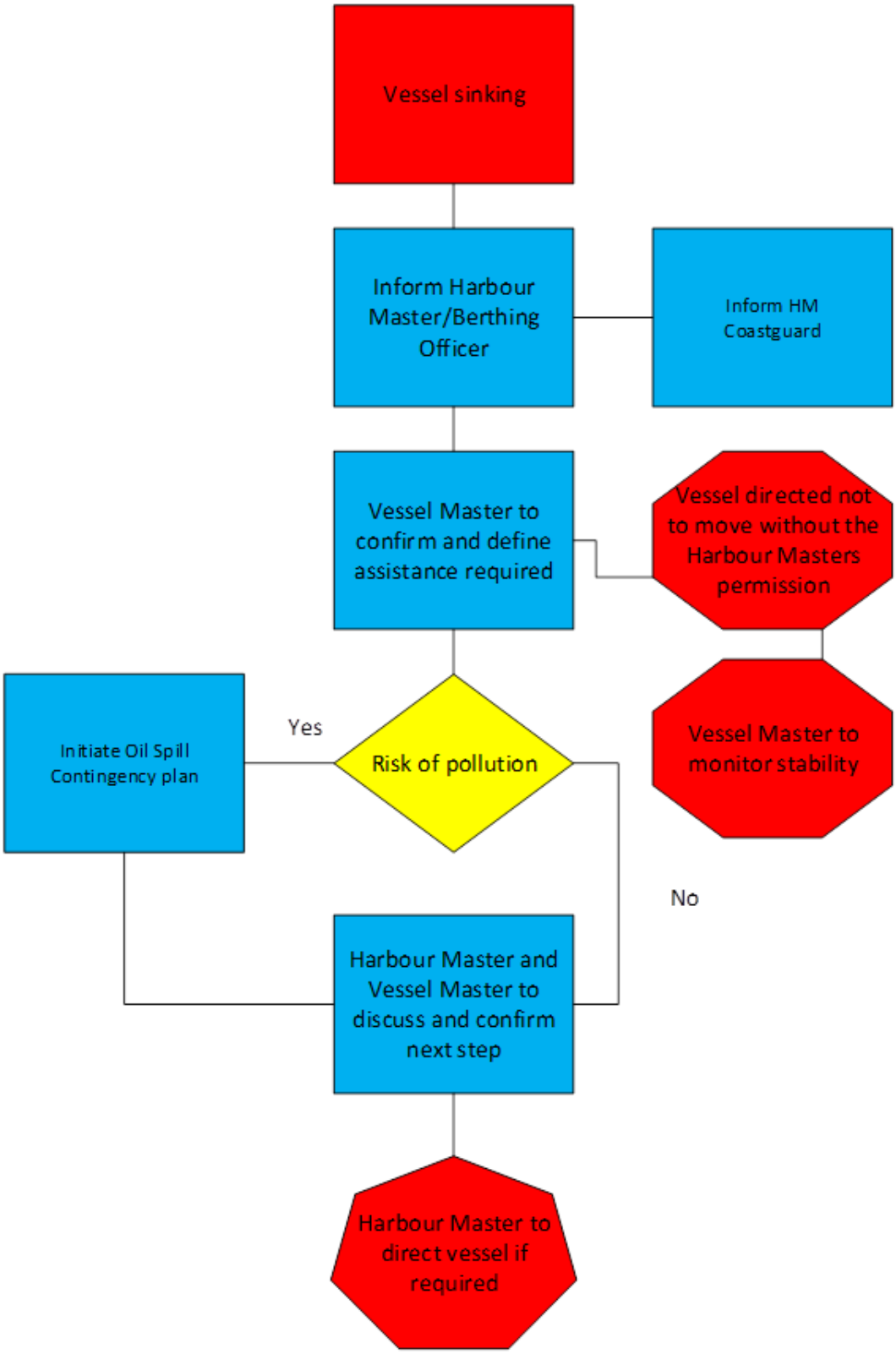
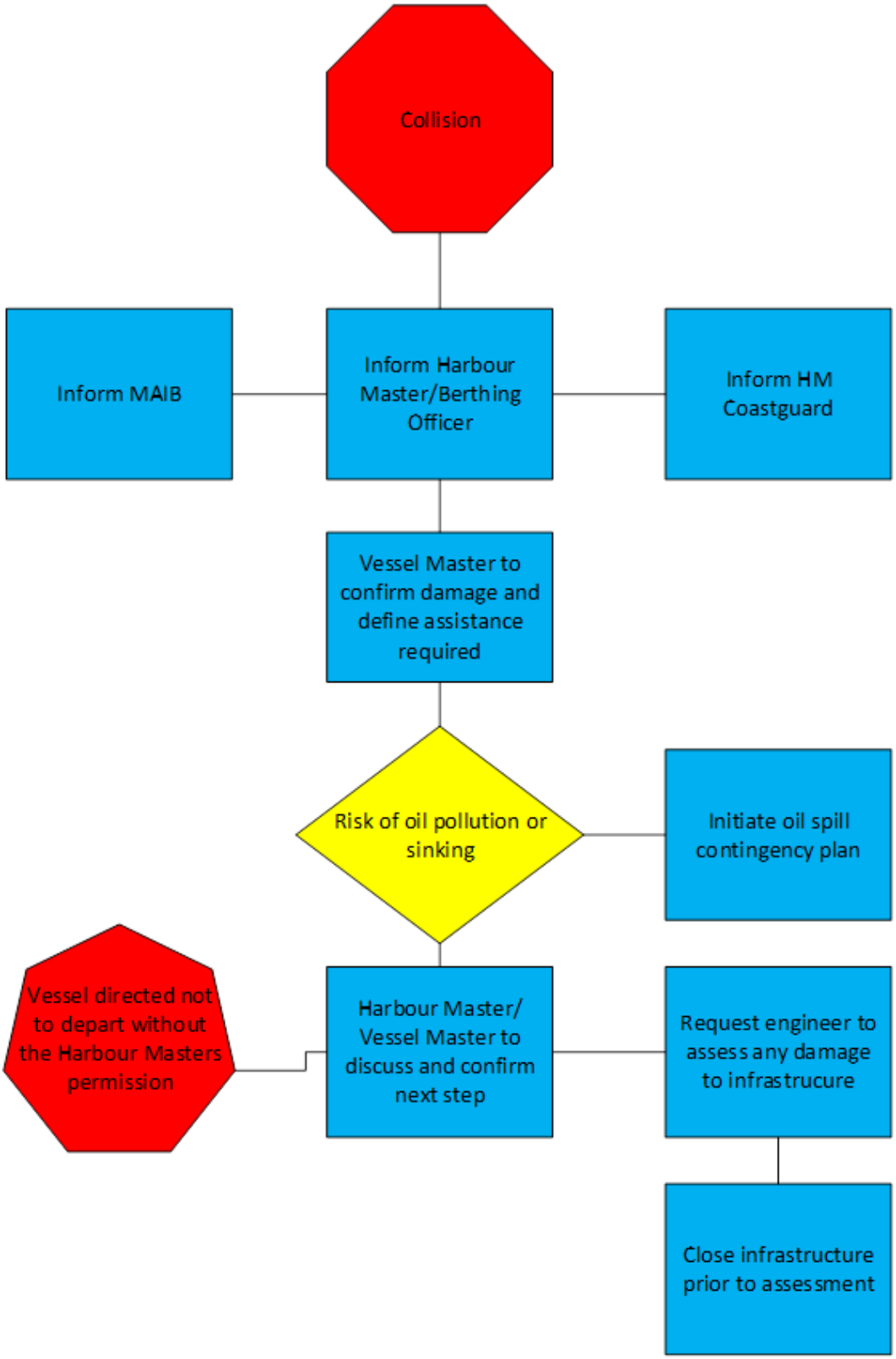


7.4 Medical Emergency

7.5 Hazardous material incident



7.6 Sinking vessel



7.7 Vessel collision