

Chapter 10 Recreation & Tourism

Guiding Principles:

Chapter 4 details all the guiding principles relevant to the overall management of the Harbour. Whilst all should be given some consideration the following are of particular relevance to recreation and tourism.

Key Guiding Principle numbers: 1, 5, 15, 16 and 17.

10.1 Introduction

Poole Harbour is a popular and accessible destination both with tourists and recreational water users. Poole Harbour Commissioners (PHC) have jurisdiction over the various water based recreational pursuits that take place within the Harbour and regulate these activities to ensure the safety of users.

Annual recreational surveys are carried out to monitor the usage of the Harbour and to identify trends in activity from year to year. These are done over the summer using fixed sightline points at locations around the Harbour.

Information from previous surveys has highlighted the need to maintain designated areas for certain watersports, where their activity can be carried out with the minimum of disturbance to wildlife and other users. Figure 3 shows the location of the different activity zones and the quiet area within the Harbour.

The use of these zones assists in the reduction of disturbance to ecologically sensitive areas and in minimising the dangers associated with the mixing of powered and non-powered craft. Since its introduction in 1995 the zoning scheme has proved very successful in managing the multifarious recreational activities within the Harbour and the majority of users are now aware of, and restrict their activities to, the relevant areas.

There is also an existing quiet area which lies to the south of a line from Patchins Point to South Haven Point where there is an advisory speed limit of 6 Knots. This allows yachtsmen and other recreationalists a quiet anchorage in which to enjoy the beauty of the southern Harbour. The provision of this quiet zone has helped to reduce adverse impacts on the flora and fauna of the undeveloped mudflats and shallow inlets which characterise much of the southern shores. The area helps to provide a safe haven for birds and wildlife as well as for humans and it is intended to maintain the current policy against changes in land use and excessive recreational activity.

10.2 Yachting / Motor Boating

It is estimated that around 5000 yachts visit Poole each year and the eight yacht clubs situated within the Harbour have around 7500 members in total who enjoy racing and cruising within the surrounding waters. There are also several boatyards within the Harbour, which along with the yacht clubs provide facilities for launching, storage and maintenance. Many also offer receptacles for the disposal of litter and waste and some also have pump out facilities for marine holding tanks, and boat owners are encouraged to use them.



10.2.1 Safety and Legislation

The International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea (IRPCS) always take precedence over International Sailing Federation (ISAF) Racing Rules and Race Sailing Instructions.

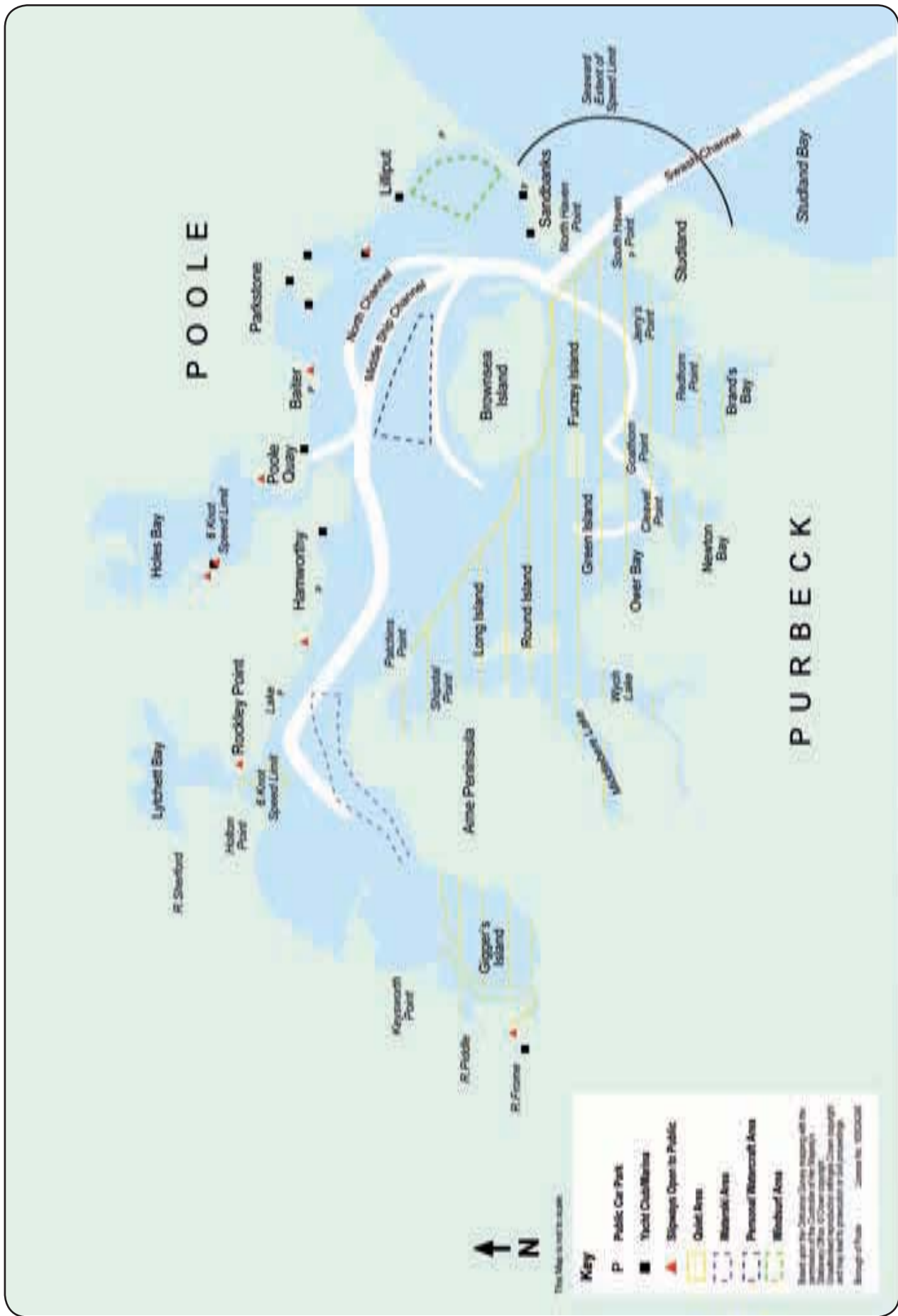


Figure 3: Map showing the Poole Harbour, Recreational Activity Zones and Access Points.

All craft participating in racing or cruising must not impede vessels which can only navigate within the main shipping channel. Crossing or passing close to such a vessel may be regarded as dangerous navigation and could result in prosecution under local byelaws.

10.2.2 Harbour Dues

Harbour Dues are payable by all motorised vessels over 4.5m in length entering waters under the Harbour Commissioners' jurisdiction. Dues are charged on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis and are payable to Poole Harbour Commissioners. The dues can be paid directly at the Harbour office or to the Harbour Master's staff ashore or afloat, or through any of the yacht clubs, boatyards or mooring contractors. They are used to maintain and improve safety within the Harbour, for example the marking of minor boat channels, the policing of the harbour and the management of traffic. Commercial vessels also pay harbour dues by way of "boomage" fees.

10.2.3 Moorings Policy

Moorings within the Harbour are managed and regulated by Poole Harbour Commissioners. There are approximately 2500 swinging moorings within the Harbour as well as around 2300 sheltered marina and pontoon berths. The Environment Agency also has over 100 moorings along the River Frome, downstream of South Bridge at Wareham, which are managed independently of those that fall within the jurisdiction of PHC.

Of the moorings regulated by PHC, some are private moorings which are managed directly by the Commissioners, while others are leased to contractors, boatyards, yacht clubs and other small organisations. It is the Commissioners' policy to minimise the number of swinging moorings within the Harbour in environmentally sensitive and recreationally busy areas and to maximize the areas of open water for safe navigation. All moorings are licensed by PHC. Private moorings are allocated to individuals in specific locations and the mooring is maintained by the owner. Block moorings are allocated to organisations who are responsible for the maintenance of all the moorings in the block. However PHC also recognise the need to offer mooring facilities for craft of varying size, particularly in light of the current trend for larger yachts and will always look to retain the most suitable mooring sites. The demand for the convenience of marina berths is increasing and where these are made available the Commissioners' policy is to reduce the swinging moorings managed by that operator by the same number. Marinas offer safer more accessible berths for sailors, but cost is often the deciding factor for the boat user as to which facility they may want to use. Ideally the provision of facilities should reflect demand and it is essential that a range of facilities is available so as not to discriminate participation on the basis of affordability

The swinging moorings are grouped in several different locations around the Harbour with the main concentrations being around the north shore and adjacent to the channels north and east of Brownsea Island. The Commissioners' moorings policy dictates that no moorings will be laid in environmentally sensitive areas and within the quiet area south of Brownsea Island they will be restricted to private moorings leased to local landowners. Swinging moorings continue to be popular due to their affordability compared with marina berths. However there are disadvantages such as lack of security, access to boats from the shore and the need to remove craft from more exposed locations during the winter months.



A licence fee is payable to The Crown Estate for every mooring laid within the Harbour on seabed owned by them. Under the terms of a management agreement this is collected by the Harbour Commissioners and passed on to The Crown Estate on an annual basis.

There are seven significant marinas in the Harbour all of which are located along the north shore. The largest of these is in Holes Bay which has berths for some 800 craft. The Poole Harbour

Commissioners manage the Poole Quay Boat Haven which was opened in 2001 with the aim of offering improved facilities for visiting yachts as well as local fishermen.

In addition to marina pontoon berths and swinging moorings, several operators have facilities for dry boat storage throughout the year. Around the Harbour there is capacity for approximately 2000 boats to be stored in this way, which reduces the requirement for swinging moorings. Owners still have continuous access to their boats, which can be launched on request at any time.

Trends in the recreational boating industry are linked closely to the strength of the national economy and if personal affluence continues to grow then there is likely to be an increase in the demand for marina berths within the Harbour. However construction costs are high, often leading to a demand for associated residential and retail development to make the schemes viable. Some benefits will accrue from such developments, such as reducing the number of swinging moorings in the Harbour, providing better facilities for yachtsmen and bringing revenue to the town. On the other hand there will be environmental concerns which the planning authorities will have to take into account when considering any planning application.

Land for such developments is at a premium and any such project would require a full Environmental Impact and/or Appropriate Assessment in order to obtain the relevant, local authority, Government, and Harbour authority consents.

10.3 Windsurfing

Windsurfing within the Harbour has traditionally taken place within the Whitley Lake zone. This shallow area with easy access has been cleared of swinging moorings and is ideal for windsurfers of all levels. Many more experienced windsurfers also launch from the shore at Hamworthy and enjoy the open waters of the western Harbour, however they need to be aware of the Measured Half Mile that is located in this area and along which craft may be tested at high speed.

There is no recognised local windsurfing association although some groups are run through yacht clubs and equipment hire and tuition can be arranged through many of the local windsurfing shops.



10.3.1 Safety and Legislation

Windsurfing may take place throughout the Harbour but sailors should avoid the busy shipping channel and craft participating in organised or commercial activities. There are local byelaws which are specific to the regulation of windsurfing within the Harbour.

10.4 Kitesurfing

Kitesurfing is a growing sport within the Harbour and activity is generally centred around the windsurfing zone at Whitley Lake. As with windsurfing local water sports shops provide tuition and equipment hire and there is a local association, which is part of the British Kitesurfing Association (BKSA), which is run through one of the local shops.

10.4.1 Safety and Legislation

Kitesurfers are urged to restrict their activities to the Whitley Lake area where there is less chance of conflict with other water users. However consideration also needs to be given to the windsurfers who use the zone and the dangers posed by out of control kites to members of the public and traffic on the busy Banks Road.



In terms of conflict with windsurfing, the sports are to some extent self-regulating, with kitesurfers generally operating in shallower water that is inaccessible to deeper finned windsurfing boards.

Kitesurfing is also governed by local byelaws and the activity is controlled by the same restrictions imposed on windsurfers.

10.5 Water-skiing / Wakeboarding

A permit is required for water skiing and wakeboarding inside the harbour; this can be obtained from the Harbour Office or the Poole Harbour Commissioners' website and signifies the Harbour Master's written permission. The designated water ski area is in the Wareham Channel and is approximately 2000 metres long and varies in width between 300 metres and 600 metres. The area is marked by yellow buoys and notice boards. Water skiers are exempt from the general Harbour speed limit when operating within this area. Boats are encouraged to launch from the public slipway at Baiter.

10.5.1 Safety and Legislation

All water skiers must abide by the Harbour Master's directions supplied with the permit application and the activity is controlled under local byelaws. Participants should follow the Code of Safe Practice for Water Skiers, which is issued with every permit.

10.6 Personal Watercraft (PW)

Also known as jet skis or water bikes, PW are permitted to use the Harbour with some restrictions. A permit is required to operate PW within the Harbour and this signifies the Harbour Master's permission. Permits are available from the Harbour Office or the Poole Harbour Commissioners' website.

There is a designated area for PW to the north of Brownsea Island where they are exempt from the speed limit. PW are prohibited from using the quiet area to the South of Brownsea Island and are not allowed to land on the Island. Launching should take place from the public slipway at Baiter where permits can be obtained during the summer months.

10.6.1 Safety and Legislation

Users should abide by the Harbour Master's directions which accompany the permit applications and are urged to follow the Code of Safe Practice for PW which is issued with the permit. This activity is also controlled by local byelaws.

10.7 Swimming

Although there are several small sandy beaches around the Harbour most notably at Hamworthy, swimming is not a common activity within the Harbour. It is however a popular summer activity from the beaches of Sandbanks, Shell Bay and Studland which, although outside the Harbour entrance, fall within the Harbour Authority's jurisdiction.

10.7.1 Safety and Legislation

Along the beach at Sandbanks a zoned swimming area is marked out by buoys during the summer months and the RNLI provide sea rescue lifeguards who are supported by local authority beach rescue lifeguards. Swimming in the Harbour can sometimes be dangerous due to conflict with watercraft that often use the same beaches to launch and land. There are currently no safe swim zones within the Harbour and although swimming is not recommended, it is recognised that some beaches are used for this activity. Future initiatives therefore need to focus on ensuring the safety of all users and that swimming and other recreational activities do not come into conflict.

10.8 Other Water Based Activities



Rowers and canoeists also use the Harbour and there are several clubs, particularly around the Hamworthy area. There are no restrictions as to where these activities can take place within the Harbour but participants should avoid the shipping channels and be fully aware that small craft are difficult to spot from larger vessels. As with all other users, canoeists and rowers should comply with byelaws pertaining to safe navigation and restrictions on where they may land. Recreational diving also takes place within the Harbour and there are currently no regulations pertaining to this activity. However anyone diving within the Harbour must be aware of the dangers posed by other users, particularly those who may not be aware of the flag system used by dive boats. The diving flag (international flag code A) must be flown by boats from which divers are operating or from a point onshore as close as possible to where the dive is taking place.

10.9 Harbour Access

There are several points around the north shore which offer public access to the Harbour.

The launching of Personal Watercraft is encouraged from Baiter where there is a manned slipway with parking for cars and trailers. Other small craft such as water ski boats can also be launched from here as well as from Lake Road at Hamworthy, although there is currently restricted access here and parking of cars and trailers can cause conflict with local residents. Many boatyards also offer launch sites and facilities that can be used by members of the public for the payment of an annual, seasonal or daily fee.

The main slipway at Baiter can become very crowded and there are constraints with the area available for parking cars and trailers. However there are not currently any plans to provide additional access points and opportunities for such provision are limited. Creation of a new slipway would require suitable road access and adequate space where cars and trailers would not impact on local residents or the natural environment. Land and resources would also need to be made available for the construction and manning of the slipway. Access and facilities could be improved at Lake Pier but this has caused concern from local residents about increased congestion in the area. As part of the Poole Bridge Regeneration project improvements are planned for Slipway and Whittles Way. The improvements to Slipway will be undertaken ahead of the construction of Twin Sails bridge providing racks for tenders and replacement of the current steps with a proper slip into the Back Water Channel.

Whilst the need to maintain adequate access to the Harbour is essential for many of its users it is also recognised that improving access to environmentally sensitive areas could be potentially damaging. Improving access to southern parts of the Harbour would greatly increase disturbance to wildlife and have a detrimental effect on the natural features of the Harbour. Any review of access would therefore need to have due regard for the environmental interests of the site.

10.10 Wildfowling

The Dorset Wildfowling Association for Shooting and Conservation (DWASC) undertake their activities in the south and west of the Harbour. They have a long-term lease for the sporting rights over the foreshore, (land between Mean High Water and Mean Low Water) which is granted by The Crown Estate as landowner. The wildfowling season runs from 1st September to the 20th February with most of the activity taking place at dawn or dusk.

As a requirement to first obtaining their lease from The Crown Estate the DWASC produced a management plan. This original management plan was prepared in consultation with English Nature and other conservation bodies such as the Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT) and the RSPB, who expressed their approval of the plan. The plan is reviewed regularly and revised when necessary. It provides details of refuge areas, conservation initiatives and monitoring of bird numbers.

The plan also makes provision for the regulation of shooting via a permit and warden system, which is administered by the DWASC. Generally only about 40-50 permits are issued to members each year and the numbers of such permits can be restricted if necessary to ensure that there can never be excessive shooting pressure on the area. A small number of permits are also issued to non members who must have third party liability insurance and belong to the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, (BASC) to whom DWASC is also affiliated. Shooting is further restricted due to the fact that access to the shooting marshes is by boat only, as the Association does not have any direct land access to leased foreshore.

Conservation measures undertaken by the Association include the setting up and management of no shooting areas for birds. These currently reflect what are believed to be significant roosting or feeding areas for wildfowl and waders in the Harbour. Other initiatives have been clean ups of marine debris from the tideline and habitat restoration in conjunction with the RSPB and the DWT. The Association has also helped with the construction of gravel nesting islands on the Brownsea Island lagoon which has led to a significant increase in the numbers of sandwich and common terns breeding in the Harbour.

Overall the DWASC endeavour to carry out its activity in a considerate, sustainable way, with minimal disruption or inconvenience to other Harbour users.

10.11 Review of Zoning

Since being established in 1995 the recreational zones as shown in Figure 3 have proven to be successful in segregating potentially conflicting activities. However although surveys have shown that the existence of these zones is widely known and the associated restrictions largely adhered to, it is recognised that their ongoing effectiveness needs to be monitored. In the face of increasing numbers of recreational users and the emergence of different activities and craft over the last 10 years, a complete review of the zoning scheme is necessary to ensure the continued safety of all Harbour users and the natural environment.

Management Objectives:

The following is a list of the management objectives identified. Whilst some are specific to the management of recreational activities, others may relate to activities and issues discussed in other chapters of this plan. All management objectives can be found in the matrix contained within Section 2, which also lists proposed management actions.

- To ensure all recreational activity is undertaken in a sustainable & sensitive manner.
- To manage access to & use of the Harbour from land to minimise conflicts between users and wildlife.
- To improve communication with user groups & organisations to explain their potential impacts on the interest features of the EMS.
- To ensure safe navigation for all by minimising conflict between commercial and recreational craft.
- To review moorings policy to ensure impact on wildlife, habitats and seascape is minimised.
- To maintain and improve present standards to reduce conflict between yacht racing and commercial activities.