

Risk Assessment – Sailing PHYC to Brownsea island (Self-Led Passage, Laden Vessel)

Activity	Sailing / Motoring (Self-Led)	Vessel Profile	Small cruising keelboats (e.g., Drascombe Lugger / Coaster)
Route	Poole Harbour Yacht Club to South Shore, Brownsea Island (Poole Harbour)		
Additional Context	Vessel carrying equipment and bags for kayakers landing on Brownsea Island		
Activity Type	Self-led, passage with no formal instruction or supervision		
Review	Annual review or following incident / near miss		
Assessor	James Wardle		
Reviewer	Stephen Everitt		
Date	11 th Jan 2026		

Scope and Context

This risk assessment covers a self-led sailing passage from Poole Harbour Yacht Club to the south shore of Brownsea Island using small cruising keelboats, including Drascombe Luggers, that may be carrying bags and equipment for kayakers.

The vessel may be operating at or near its practical loading limits, which can reduce freeboard, stability, manoeuvrability, and sailing performance. As a result, conservative loading, careful weight distribution, and prudent decisions regarding sail versus engine use are essential.

This is a self-organised, peer-to-peer activity. Participants are individually responsible for their own safety, navigation, seamanship, and decisions. No participant is acting in a supervisory or instructional role.

Poole Harbour presents additional hazards including strong tidal streams near the entrance, busy commercial and passenger traffic, narrow and shifting channels (including Blood Alley), sandbanks, oyster beds, and extensive drying areas at low tide.

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Risk	Existing Controls	Risk Level	Further Actions
Overloading / excessive payload (bags and equipment)	Crew / vessel	Reduced stability, freeboard, and manoeuvrability; increased capsize or flooding risk	Load kept within vessel manufacturer/design limits; conservative payload;	High	Confirm maximum load and conduct pre-departure load check
Poor weight distribution of cargo	Crew / vessel	Trim imbalance; reduced steering and recovery capability	Weight kept low and centred; loads secured; trim checked before departure	Medium–High	Re-check trim after loading and before leaving berth
Sailing when heavily laden in more than	Crew / vessel	Loss of control; excessive heel; broach	Preference to motor rather than sail in	High	Define wind limit above which motoring

gentle winds		risk	anything above gentle conditions; early reefing if sailing		is mandatory
Narrow entrance to PHYC while heavily laden	Crew / nearby craft	Collision or grounding due to reduced responsiveness	Low-speed manoeuvring; fenders rigged; engine ready; experienced helm	Medium	Time movements to avoid congestion
Sandbanks and drying areas	Crew / vessel	Grounding or stranding with reduced under-keel clearance	Strict tide planning; avoidance of shortcuts; depth monitoring	Medium-High	Set minimum depth limits
Blood Alley and narrow channels south of Brownsea	Crew / vessel	Grounding in confined waters	Charts and Local Notices checked; proceed at safe speed; avoid at lower tides	Medium	Confirm latest buoyage before trip
Commercial traffic and ferry movements	Crew / other water users	Collision risk when manoeuvrability is reduced	Active lookout; COLREG compliance; VHF listening watch; avoid shipping channels	Medium-High	Brief crew on give-way priorities
Man overboard (laden, lower freeboard)	Individual crew member	Drowning or injury	Lifejackets worn; cockpit discipline; MOB procedure briefed	High	Rig recovery equipment before departure
Engine failure when motoring is preferred	Crew / vessel	Loss of control in traffic or confined waters	Engine checked before departure; spare fuel; anchor ready; oars available	Medium	Confirm engine start and cooling before casting off
Weather deterioration	Crew / vessel	Exposure; reduced visibility; increased loads on rig	Forecast checked; conservative go/no-go; early abort decisions	Medium	Agree clear abort criteria

General Notes

- This is a self-led passage; The Skipper is responsible for their own safety and decisions.
- When carrying significant cargo, conservative loading and weight distribution are critical.
- In more than gentle winds, motoring is preferred over sailing to maintain control.
- Lifejackets or buoyancy aids should be worn while underway.
- Carry appropriate communications (VHF and mobile in waterproof case) and leave a float plan.
- This assessment aligns with RYA safety guidance, good seamanship practice, and Poole Harbour advice.

