

Risk Assessment – Sailing Passage to Ashlett Creek

Activity: Supervised small craft passage (sailing cruiser / dayboat)

Location: St Denys Boat Club (River Itchen) to Ashlett Creek (Southampton Water)

Activity Type: Supervised club passage – skipper-led dynamic risk management

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Scope and Context

This risk assessment covers a supervised sailing passage from St Denys Boat Club to Ashlett Creek. The route passes through Southampton Water adjacent to Fawley refinery and into a very narrow, shallow tidal creek with strong cross-currents, extensive mudflats, and minimal manoeuvring space. Entry and exit are highly tide-dependent.

Participant Responsibilities

All crew are responsible for acting in a manner that supports their own safety and the safety of the vessel. Crew must follow the skipper’s instructions, wear lifejackets at all times on deck, assist with lookout duties, and be prepared to respond promptly to sail handling, anchoring, and emergency situations. Crew must report fatigue, seasickness, or uncertainty early and avoid distracting the helm during high-workload phases such as tidal gates, traffic-dense areas, and harbour approaches.

Risk Assessment Table

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Risk	Control Measures (Port / Solent guidance aligned)	Risk Level	Further Actions
Fawley refinery tanker traffic	All on board	Collision; severe consequences	Maintain safe distance; monitor VTS; avoid tanker movements	High	Highlight exclusion zones

Narrow creek entrance	All on board	Grounding; collision	Approach slowly; precise pilotage; use transit lines	High	Brief helm
Strong cross-tide at entrance	All on board	Set onto mudbanks	Enter at slack water; maintain control speed	High	Timing critical
Extensive drying mudflats	All on board	Stranding; delay	Enter on rising tide; continuous depth awareness	High	Plan exit
Limited manoeuvring space	All on board	Collision; grounding	Pre-plan turn; abort if unsafe	Medium	Define abort point

General Notes

- Passage planning must include tidal gates, weather margins, and clearly defined abort points.
- A float plan must be filed with a shore contact including route, crew list, and ETAs.
- VHF: monitor appropriate port and harbour working channels; Channel 16 for distress only.
- Review annually or following any incident, near miss, or significant route change.