

Risk Assessment – Cruiser Sailing Passage to River Hamble (Overnight)

Activity: Skippered small craft passage (sailing cruiser)

Location: St Denys Boat Club (River Itchen) to River Hamble (overnight stop)

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

Assessor: James Wardle

Reviewed by: Andrew Ktenas

Date last reviewed: January 2026

Version: v1.0

Scope and Context

This risk assessment covers a supervised cruiser sailing passage from St Denys Boat Club to the River Hamble with an overnight stop (marina berth, visitor mooring, or anchorage as appropriate). The route transits Southampton Water where there is frequent commercial traffic and significant wash, then enters the River Hamble which can be heavily congested with leisure craft, close-quarters marina manoeuvring, and organised racing fleets. Additional overnight risks include darkness, fatigue, cold exposure, and safeguarding considerations when children and families are aboard. Careful tidal planning, conservative decision-making, and disciplined boat handling are required throughout, with clearly defined abort and contingency options.

Participant Responsibilities

All crew are responsible for supporting their own safety and that 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/mooring, and emergency situations. Where children are aboard, parents/guardians retain day-to-day responsibility for supervision, supported by the skipper's onboard safety rules and safeguarding expectations.

Risk Assessment Table

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Risk	Control Measures (Port / Solent guidance aligned)	Risk Level	Further Actions
Large commercial shipping in Southampton Water (incl. cruise, container & Ro-Ro traffic)	All on board / other vessels	Collision; severe injury; vessel damage	Keep clear of main channel where practicable; continuous lookout; cross channels promptly at ~90°; do not impede vessels constrained by draught; monitor Southampton VTS working channel; engine ready for avoidance	Medium	Skipper brief on crossing points, VTS channels and call-in triggers
Tankers manoeuvring to/from Fawley Marine Terminal with tug	All on board / other	Close-quarters situations; large wash; collision	Assume limited manoeuvrability; keep well clear of tug/tow lines; avoid passing ahead/astern in confined water; monitor VTS and planned movements; maintain	Medium	Check planned movements before departure; agree safe

assistance	vessels	risk	predictable course/speed		holding areas
Grounding on Hamble Point Spit / Hamble Spit on approach/exit	All on board	Grounding; hull/keel damage; loss of propulsion; injury from sudden stop	Pilotage plan with waypoints; use up-to-date chart/plotter and depth alarm; approach on rising tide where possible; maintain offing from spit; slow speed in shallow/confined areas; dedicated bow lookout	High	Brief crew on spit location and shallow-water cues
Very high leisure craft density in River Hamble (yacht traffic, marinas, rafting)	All on board / other craft	Collision; allision with pontoons; crew injury during close-quarters manoeuvring	Reduce speed; fenders and lines prepared early; clear communications and designated line-handlers; avoid peak congestion where possible; maintain safe separation and anticipate erratic small craft	Medium	Decide pre-arrival whether to take marina berth, visitor mooring, or anchor
Racing fleets and fast craft (e.g., Weston / Netley clubs) with constrained racing lines	All on board / other craft	Close-quarters situations; collision; capsize risk for smaller craft nearby	Enhanced lookout (especially to windward/leeward); avoid cutting through fleets; maintain predictable track; if crossing, do so well astern of leading boats; brief crew on avoiding race courses	Medium	Monitor local racing schedules; choose arrival/departure windows
Overnight operations: darkness, fatigue, reduced situational awareness	All on board	Navigation error; collision; falls; hypothermia	Conservative go/no-go; ensure nav lights and torches; warm kit and hot drinks; structured watch/helm rotation; enforce jackstays/clip-on policy on deck at night; reduce workload with early reefing	High	Avoid Sailing at Night
Mooring/anchoring/rafting overnight (dragging, chafe, swing room, other vessels)	All on board / other vessels	Collision; grounding; damage; injury handling lines	Select suitable berth/mooring for draft and tide; check depth/swinging room; adequate scope; anchor watch if required; clear lines and fenders set for rafting	Medium	Plan secondary anchorage / marina option
Man overboard (cold water / strong tide / night recovery)	Individual overboard	Drowning; hypothermia; separation	Lifejackets worn on deck; MOB briefing and practice; throw lines & lighted buoy ready; engine ready; recovery plan matched to crew strength;	Medium	Skipper to confirm recovery capability and crew roles before departure
Safeguarding: children / families aboard	Children / vulnerable	Injury; distress; safeguarding	Minimum supervision expectations agreed with parents/guardians; child-specific briefing (stay in cockpit,	High	Parent Present and responsible for

(supervision, boundaries, sleeping arrangements)	participants	incident	hold-on rule, no foredeck without permission); separate sleeping spaces where practicable; clear rules on privacy; at least two responsible adults present; incident reporting route		children, emergency contacts, medical info; confirm safeguarding lead contact
Alcohol / impaired judgement (especially overnight in a marina/ashore)	All on board / children	Injury; poor decision-making; safeguarding concern	Clear alcohol policy: moderate and only when secured for the night; no alcohol for under-18s; designate responsible adults; monitor fatigue next day	Medium	Include policy in joining instructions; skipper empowered to enforce
Adverse weather / wind-against-tide in Southampton Water & Solent approaches	All on board	Seasickness; loss of control; injury; delayed arrival	Forecast and nowcast checks; reef early; avoid wind-against-tide gates; define go/no-go thresholds (wind, sea state, visibility); carry sickness meds; conservative routing	High	Set decision points and bail-out ports/berths
Engine or steering failure in traffic-dense water	All on board / other vessels	Loss of control; collision; grounding	Pre-departure checks; spares and tools; sails ready for manoeuvre; anchor ready for immediate deployment; VHF ready; tow plan / assistance contacts	High	Mandatory engine test before leaving Itchen; confirm breakdown procedure

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.