

Risk Assessment – Sailing Passage to Bembridge (Isle of Wight)

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

Location: St Denys Boat Club (River Itchen) to Bembridge Harbour, Isle of Wight

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

Assessor: James Wardle

Reviewed by: Steve Everitt

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Scope and Context

This risk assessment covers a supervised sailing passage from St Denys Boat Club to Bembridge Harbour on the Isle of Wight. The route passes through Southampton Water and the Eastern Solent, involving busy commercial shipping lanes, high-speed ferry and hovercraft operations, strong tidal streams along the Island coast, and complex pilotage at the destination. The passage is significantly longer and more complex than typical club coastal trips and requires experienced skippers, well-prepared crews, and conservative decision-making. The skipper retains overall responsibility for navigation, crew safety, and dynamic risk management.

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, pilotage, and emergency situations. Crew must report fatigue, seasickness, or uncertainty early and avoid distracting the helm during high-workload phases such as traffic separation areas and harbour approaches.

Risk Assessment Table

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Risk	Control Measures (Port / Harbour guidance)
Large commercial shipping in Southampton Water	All on board	Collision; severe injury; vessel damage	Avoid main channel where practicable; maintain lookout; do not impede vessels constrained to shipping lanes promptly at 90°; monitor S

			ready for avoidance
High-speed ferries and Hovercraft to Ryde	All on board	Extreme wash, close-quarters situations, collision risk	Treat hovercraft as priority hazard; keep vessel clear of hovercraft channel; anticipate rapid acceleration; maintain manoeuvrability; avoid crossing close ahead; maintain situational awareness
Strong tidal streams along the Isle of Wight coast	All on board	Loss of control, fatigue, delayed arrival	Plan passage with tidal atlas; time departure; maintain effective sail plan; avoid wind-against-tide
Bembridge Ledges and shallow reefs	All on board	Grounding; hull or keel damage	Use up-to-date charts and pilotage notes; follow marked channels precisely; maintain depth awareness; avoid anchoring; enter harbour only in suitable tide and visibility
Ryde Shallows	All on board	Grounding; reduced manoeuvrability	Give wide berth; maintain depth monitoring; avoid narrow channels outside marked channels; consider offshore if uncertain
Wind-against-tide and overfalls	All on board	Steep seas; loss of control; seasickness	Check forecast and tidal interaction; reef early; maintain control; alter route or delay if conditions worsen
Long passage duration and crew fatigue	All on board	Reduced vigilance; errors	Rotate lookout and helm duties; regular handover; monitor crew condition closely; plan rest periods
Restricted visibility (sea haze, rain, glare)	All on board / other vessels	Collision or grounding	Enhanced lookout; reduced speed; navigate with caution; appropriate; avoid tight pilotage in poor visibility if not needed
Engine failure offshore or near shoals	All on board	Loss of control; drift towards hazards	Thorough pre-departure engine checks; sails ready for deployment; sails prepared for inboard use; engine ready
Man overboard during offshore leg	Individual overboard	Drowning; hypothermia	Lifejackets worn; MOB briefing and drill; throwable flotation

			clear recovery plan
Congestion from leisure craft near Bembridge entrance	All on board / other craft	Collision; confusion in confined waters	Slow approach speed; clear skipper comm; prepare fenders and lines early; defensive
Navigation errors during complex pilotage	All on board	Grounding or collision	Pilotage plan with waypoints; no distraction; position with multiple sources

General Notes

- This passage is significantly longer and more complex than typical club trips and should only be undertaken with suitably experienced skippers and crews.
- Passage planning must include tidal gates, weather margins, and clear abort options.
- 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.