

Risk Assessment – Sailing Passage to Newtown Creek (Isle of Wight)

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

Location: St Denys Boat Club (River Itchen) to Newtown Creek, Isle of Wight (West Solent)

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 Newtown Creek on the Isle of Wight via the Western Solent. The route includes busy commercial waters, strong tidal streams, areas of tidal acceleration and race formation, and high leisure craft activity. Newtown Creek itself is a shallow, narrow, and often congested natural harbour with limited room to manoeuvre and very limited opportunities to go ashore once inside. Careful tidal planning, conservative decision-making, and disciplined boat handling are required throughout the passage and during entry and exit.

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)
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 by shipping lanes promptly at 90°; monitor Southampton Water

			ready for avoidance
Offshore powerboats transiting the Western Solent at high speed	All on board	Close-quarters situations; severe wash; collision risk	Enhanced lookout; assume high closing speed; course changes; maintain predictable track; avoid apparent racing lines
Strong tidal streams in the Western Solent	All on board	Loss of control; fatigue; delayed arrival	Plan passage using tidal atlas; time departure; effective sail plan; avoid wind-against-tide
Tide races at Lepe, and tidal acceleration at Egypt Point and Sconce	All on board	Steep seas; loss of control; crew injury	Avoid known race areas unless conditions favourable; offing from headlands; reef early; alter route to avoid adverse tide
Approach to Newtown Creek – shallow, narrow, and congested entrance	All on board / other vessels	Grounding; collision; loss of control	Use detailed pilotage plan; approach at slow speed; sufficient tide; follow buoyage precisely; do not anchor
Limited manoeuvring room and swinging space inside Newtown Creek	All on board	Collision; grounding; anchor dragging	Prepare anchoring plan in advance; check depth; appropriate scope; maintain anchor watch
No easy opportunity to go ashore once inside harbour	All on board	Extended exposure to fatigue, cold, or illness	Ensure crew welfare before entry; warm clothing available; clear plan to remain aboard; crew condition marginal
Grounding risk due to soft mud and drying areas	All on board	Loss of mobility; delay until refloat	Enter on rising tide where possible; maintain depth; avoid known drying edges; plan for potential grounding
Restricted visibility (rain, haze, glare)	All on board / other vessels	Collision or grounding	Enhanced lookout; reduced speed; navigate carefully; delay harbour entry if visibility poor
Engine failure near harbour entrance or tidal stream	All on board	Loss of control; drift into hazards	Pre-departure engine checks; anchor ready; engine deployment; sails prepared for manoeuvring
Man overboard during strong tidal flow	Individual overboard	Separation; drowning;	Lifejackets worn; MOB briefing and drill; tidal flow awareness

		hypothermia	recovery plan considering tidal set
High leisure craft density during weekends and holidays	All on board / other craft	Collision; congestion	Avoid peak periods where possible; defend skipper commands; increased separation

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.