

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 aligned)	Risk Level	Further Actions
Large commercial shipping in Southampton Water	All on board	Collision; severe injury; vessel damage	Avoid main channel where practicable; maintain continuous lookout; do not impede vessels constrained by draught; cross shipping lanes promptly at 90°; monitor Southampton VTS; engine ready for avoidance	High	Skipper briefing on shipping avoidance strategy
Offshore powerboats transiting the Western Solent at high speed	All on board	Close-quarters situations; severe wash; collision risk	Enhanced lookout; assume high closing speeds; avoid sudden course changes; maintain predictable track; keep well clear of apparent racing lines	High	Brief crew on fast-craft detection and response
Strong tidal streams in the Western Solent	All on board	Loss of control; fatigue; delayed arrival	Plan passage using tidal atlas; time departure carefully; maintain effective sail plan; avoid wind-against-tide conditions	High	Define tidal go/no-go thresholds
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 are suitable; maintain offing from headlands; reef early; alter route or timing to avoid adverse tide	High	Plan alternate offshore routes
Approach to Newtown Creek – shallow, narrow, and	All on board / other	Grounding; collision; loss of	Use detailed pilotage plan; approach at slow speed; enter only with sufficient tide; follow	High	Abort entry if traffic density is

congested entrance	vessels	control	buoyage precisely; dedicated lookout forward		high
Limited manoeuvring room and swinging space inside Newtown Creek	All on board	Collision; grounding; anchor dragging	Prepare anchoring plan in advance; check depths continuously; use appropriate scope; maintain anchor watch if required	Medium	Identify secondary anchoring areas
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 and food available; clear plan to remain aboard; consider abort if crew condition marginal	Medium	Reassess crew welfare before committing to entry
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 awareness; avoid known drying edges; plan for potential soft grounding	Medium	Brief crew on drying-out implications
Restricted visibility (rain, haze, glare)	All on board / other vessels	Collision or grounding	Enhanced lookout; reduced speed; navigation lights as appropriate; delay harbour entry if visibility poor	Medium	Carry and check sound signals
Engine failure near harbour entrance or tidal stream	All on board	Loss of control; drift into hazards	Pre-departure engine checks; anchor ready for immediate deployment; sails prepared for manoeuvring; VHF ready	High	Mandatory engine test before departure
Man overboard during strong tidal flow	Individual overboard	Separation; drowning; hypothermia	Lifejackets worn; MOB briefing and drill; throwing aids ready; clear recovery plan considering tidal set	High	Confirm recovery capability with crew strength
High leisure craft density during	All on board	Collision;	Avoid peak periods where possible; defensive navigation; clear skipper commands; increased	Medium	Check local notices and

weekends and holidays	/ other craft	congestion	separation distances		forecasts
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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.