

WHITSTABLE HARBOUR

PORT MARINE SAFETY CODE

SAFETY MANAGEMENT

SYSTEM

2026 - 2029

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1 Safe Marine Operations Policy

Whitstable Harbour Board are committed to comply with the standards laid down in the Ports and Marine Facilities Safety Code (PMSC).

Whitstable Harbour Board are cognisant of their responsibility and accountability for the harbour's role and powers in relation to marine operations and port undertakings within its control.

The Harbour Board understands its statutory and common law duties which include an obligation to conserve and facilitate the safe use of the harbour and an express duty to take such action it considers necessary for the maintenance, operation, improvement and conservation of the harbour.

The Harbour Board is committed to the management of marine operations in a way that safeguards the harbour, its users and the public. Consultations will take place with all those who work in and use the harbour to ensure that they are fully consulted and involved in the preparation of safety policies and procedures.

Full and comprehensive risk assessments are undertaken in respect of all activities and facilities within the harbour leading to the development of a comprehensive Risk Assessment and Safety Management System for marine operations.

On behalf of the Council, Whitstable Harbour Board exercises the authority's functions under the legislation listed below, and any other legislation that may apply from time to time to the Council's port marine safety, harbour administration and harbour management responsibilities.

- The Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847
- The Whitstable Harbour Act 1957
- The Whitstable Urban District Council Act 1948 (so far as it affects land transactions for Harbour Land held under the Whitstable Harbour Act)
- The Harbours Act 1964
- The Docks and Harbours Act 1966
- The Ports (Finance) Act 1985
- The Dangerous Vessels Act 1985
- The Dangerous Substances in Harbour Areas Regulations 1987
- Pilotage Act 1987
- Aviation and Maritime Security Act 1990
- The Transport and Works Act 1992
- The Merchant Shipping Act 1995
- Marine Navigation Act (No 2) 2013

The Harbour Board acknowledges its role in protecting the port marine environment from the risk of pollution, excessive disturbance or misuse, by the adherence to relevant legislation, safe working practices and diligent monitoring of operations.

The Harbour Board is committed to the continuous improvement of safety within this harbour by the implementation of appropriate policies and procedures of management.

This Safety Management System will be regularly monitored and reviewed.

2 Introduction

The Port Marine Safety Code is based on the principle that harbour authorities will formulate plans, policies and procedures relating to port marine operations on a formal safety assessment of the hazards and risks encountered. Under the requirements of the Port Marine Safety Code harbour authorities should maintain a formal safety management system developed from the risk assessment process.

The purpose of this document is to illustrate how risks are reduced to as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP) through the identification and implementation of supporting plans, policies and procedures within the overall structure of a Safety Management System.

3 Overview of Harbour Operations

Whitstable Harbour's primary commercial activity is the importation of aggregates. Between April 2021 and March 2025 an average of 46 ships per year were received with an average of 67,728 tons of stone aggregate per year were handled.

Ship lay-by facilities for hull inspections and light repairs are provided on the west side of the West Quay.

An active fishing and shell fishing fleet in addition to several small work boats operate from the port. There are currently 16 such vessels berthed in Whitstable Harbour.

A limited number of leisure craft and passenger-carrying vessels visit the harbour, mainly during the summer months. Four leisure boats are also based in the harbour during this period, including the barge Greta, which berths on the South Quay. A pontoon is located on the East Quay, where three passenger-carrying boats are allocated berths.

The allocation of berths for passenger carrying boats is based on several qualifying criteria such as crew qualifications and experience, local knowledge, boat certification and insurance.

A diverse number of ancillary services are based in Whitstable Harbour in support of the above-mentioned activities.

Numerous shops, restaurants, leisure sailing facilities and associated retail traders are based on the quayside of the harbour. Twenty-four fishermen's huts are available for short term lease.

4 Authority, Responsibility & Organisation

4.1 Competent Harbour Authority

The Competent Harbour Authority for Whitstable Harbour as defined under the Pilotage Act 1987 is Canterbury City Council. The Harbour is classed as a Municipal Port.

The harbour's statutory responsibilities, general powers and limits of jurisdiction are defined in the Whitstable Harbour Act 1957 and supported by the Whitstable Harbour Byelaws 2008.

The Harbour Authority will keep under review these powers, and the extent of its jurisdiction, to ensure they are sufficient for maintaining the overall safety of the harbour and its approaches.

4.2 Harbour Board

The overall strategy and performance of the harbour is managed by the Whitstable Harbour Board. This Board consists of five elected councillors and three independent members. The Board meets approximately 6 times per year.

The Harbour Board ensure that adequate resources are provided to manage marine operations effectively and to adhere to the stated marine and navigation policies, procedures, and systems.

4.3 Duty Holder

The role of Duty Holder as defined in the Port Marine Safety Code is Canterbury City Council.

The Council properly discharges its duties and powers as a Statutory Harbour Authority and Duty Holder in relation to marine safety and the safe use of all harbour lands, in accordance with the Port Marine Safety Code, to The Whitstable Harbour Board.

All Board Members, as part of their induction when joining the Harbour Board, are enrolled onto a Port Marine Safety Code Duty Holder training session, provided operational tours of the harbour and are briefed on policies and procedures at Harbour Board meetings or when required.

4.4 Designated Person

The role of Designated Person (DP) as defined in the Port Marine Safety Code is Mr Peter Steen.

The DP should hold thorough knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the Code (Inc. the Guide to Good Practice) and associated marine legislation.

The DP provides independent assurance directly to the Duty Holder that the Marine SMS is working effectively in ensuring compliance with the Code. This is completed yearly and provided to the Harbour Board as part of the Harbour and Foreshore Manager's reporting process.

The DP monitors and audits the MSMS as and when required or changes are implemented. The DP also receives regular reports through the Harbour Board reporting process by the Harbour and Foreshore Manager.

4.5 Harbour Staff

The responsibility for implementation of the plans, policies and procedures of Whitstable Harbour rests with the Harbour and Foreshore Manager and his staff. The delegation of responsibilities is in accordance with the detailed job description held for each officer.

The standard of harbour services delivered is influenced by the quality of its personnel. The harbour authority is committed to providing training and development opportunities for all personnel.

Harbour staff attend the arrival and departure of all large commercial ships. A local port service is maintained by the harbour staff on VHF Channel 9. The depth of water, tidal and weather conditions, shipping movements and any defect to navigational aids are relayed to the ship by VHF.

Linesmen services for both ship arrivals and departures are provided by harbour staff. At least two linesmen attend each arrival and departure of ships

A shipping log detailing the particulars of each ship arrival and departure is maintained by the Senior Harbour Officer.

5 Health & Safety at Work

5.1 Overview

The harbour authority accepts its responsibilities for other persons not in their employment who may be affected by the harbour authority's activities by ensuring that they are not exposed to undue risks to their health and safety.

Harbour staff, fishermen and other harbour users are encouraged to raise any safety related issue with the Harbour and Foreshore Manager at any time and not wait until a safety meeting or any other forum is convened. An online reporting form for near misses is promoted on notice boards and accessed using a QR code.

Lifesaving equipment is provided and placed in several locations on the quayside. Regular inspections of these appliances are maintained and logged.

5.2 Training

The harbour authority is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of its employees.

As part of the Health and Safety management system implemented by Canterbury City Council, a training matrix is managed by the Harbour and Foreshore Manager. The Matrix identifies minimum corporate requirements together with additional training opportunities and 'Red Line' requirements including all required Marine training.

Training records, assessments and requirements are reviewed and monitored monthly with certification recorded on a central Human Resources software system.

5.3 Risk Assessment

Whitstable Harbour staff are encouraged to operate dynamic risk assessments - these are continuous, requiring quick, on-the-spot decisions and awareness of surroundings to maintain safety. They complement, but do not replace, formal risk assessments and are essential for unpredictable, high-risk situations where conditions can change rapidly.

Canterbury City Council's health and safety audit process examines the health and safety activities of the Harbour to determine whether they comply with the planned arrangements and if these arrangements are suitable, sufficient and implemented effectively.

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager will carry out health and safety audits based on the following principles:

Verification - Continue to verify corporate health and safety commitments including compliance with legislative standards, internal process and best practice.

Communication - Provide clear guidance on the audit process and clarity about the scope and purpose of the audit.

Improvement - Enhancement of the system and organisational performance.

Canterbury City Council is committed to achieving a high standard of health and safety compliance in all service areas through effective, proactive management and a cooperative effort at all levels.

5.4 Selection and Recruitment

Canterbury City Council expect the hiring manager to reflect any required knowledge and skills required for a role within the Role Profile or Job Descriptions.

Qualifications are in line with the Regulated Qualification Framework (RQF) if a requirement for a role, and any required professional accreditations are included. These accreditations and qualifications are guided by National Occupation Standards (NOS) when created.

6 Conservancy

6.1 Navigational Aids

Whitstable Harbour carries out its responsibilities as a Local Lighthouse Authority (LLA) by providing a comprehensive and well-maintained system of navigational aids in the harbour and its approaches.

The Whitstable Street Buoy is owned and operated by Trinity House.

The Oyster Buoy at the fairway entrance to the harbour is owned by Canterbury City Council and is maintained by harbour staff.

The Whitstable Harbour navigational aids are regularly inspected and maintained by harbour staff.

A computerised database managed by Trinity House called *LARS* (Local Aids to Navigation Reporting System) is maintained for all navigational aids. Reports on the operation and maintenance of these navigational aids are submitted to Trinity House as required.

6.2 Wrecks, Abandonment and Salvage of Vessels

In the event of a vessel becoming a wreck or abandoned in or near the approaches to Whitstable Harbour the harbour authority will mark the wreck and if necessary, call upon its considerable legal powers to take possession of, move, remove or destroy wrecks and abandoned vessels. In this respect a Risk Assessment will be undertaken to evaluate the danger to navigation that the wreck presents.

A Notice to Mariners will be issued to inform of wrecks in or near the approaches to Whitstable Harbour.

6.3 Admiralty Charts

Admiralty charts 2571 and 1607 refer to Whitstable Harbour and its approaches.

6.4 Hydrography

Hydrographic records of the harbour are maintained. The harbour is surveyed approximately every two years prior to and after maintenance dredging operations or as required.

Hydrographic information from local surveys is submitted to the UK Hydrographic Office.

Regular inspections of the seabed, specifically in areas subject to high siltation build-up and high use are undertaken by CCC Engineers Department and harbour staff.

6.5 Dredging

Dredging is undertaken bi-annually. As part of the dredging and licence application process, hydrographic surveys are completed and informed to stakeholders through the Harbour Board reporting framework and directly with the relevant stakeholder groups.

6.6 Notices to Mariners

Notice to Mariners are issued by the Harbour and Foreshore Manager. Copies of these notices are sent to several people & organisations including the following:

The UK Hydrographic Office
Peel Ports London Medway
RNLI

Whitstable Yacht Club
Whitstable Sailing School
Dept for Transport

Trinity House
HM Coastguard
Berth Holders

Whitstable and Herne Bay Water Safety Committee

CCC Foreshore Services Dept.
Armac Shipping
Whitstable Fisherman's Association

6.7 Tidal Information

Tidal Information is available to all shipping companies and associated agents and shared on a yearly basis or upon request by stakeholders. The harbour uses Poltips tidal prediction software which utilises historic data to increase accuracy. All staff have a comprehensive understanding of the tidal impacts upon the harbour. Tidal surges are monitored as part of operating procedures for shipping movements.

6.8 Meteorological Conditions

The harbour does not provide live information to stakeholders or users of the harbour. Links and advice on various sources of information are provided via the harbour webpages. As part of the operating procedures for shipping movements, information is provided to visitors to assist in the entry to, and departure from, the harbour.

7 Marine Environmental Protection

Whitstable Harbour provides appropriate facilities for the reception and disposal of solid and liquid wastes and rubbish.

The environmental protection measures carried out are outlined in the Whitstable Harbour Marine Environmental Protection Policy.

An MCA approved Port Waste Management Plan is in operation. Ships agents or owners submit a Waste Notification Sheet to the Harbour Office prior to their vessel's arrival.

Hazardous or dangerous cargoes are not handled at Whitstable Harbour.

8 Pilotage Operations

In 2018, with the cooperation and agreement of the MCA and DfT, Whitstable Harbour adopted a Shore to Ship pilotage information system in lieu of direct pilotage.

Prior to the arrival of any vessel over 20m LOA, the ship's Master will receive a document pack by email from the Shipping Agent. This information pack includes:

- An aerial photograph of the harbour showing it's approaches and berths
- A chartlet showing the port approaches, navigational aids and direction of tidal influences
- Details of the proposed passage and general information.

Declarations are received from the ship's Master, confirming they understand the Shore to Ship Passage Plan to enter the port safely given the information received and that the vessel has no issues affecting the safe navigation into the Harbour.

Under these procedures, a ship's Masters' first passage into Whitstable Harbour must take place during daylight hours. If the ship's Master has not visited Whitstable Harbour within one year of that first passage, their next passage must also be completed during daylight hours.

Following the ship's arrival and prior to departure, the Harbour and Foreshore Manager or Senior Harbour Officer will meet with the ship's master to discuss any concerns they may have.

9 Navigation Risk Assessment

A Navigational Risk Assessment (NRA) has been created to assess and manage safety and risk, covering the area known as the Whitstable Harbour Limits.

The risk assessment considers the navigation hazards to all vessels using Whitstable Harbour and the Competent Harbour Authority (CHA).

The aim of the NRA is to identify and reduce significant risks for the various stakeholder groups who use the harbour. The NRA process is based on the Formal Safety Assessment methodology as adopted by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

10 Severe Weather

Forecasts of severe weather and large tidal surges are received from the Environmental Agency and Canterbury City Council's Engineers Dept.

11 Port Security

Whitstable Harbour has a Port Security Plan in place. This plan was initially approved by TRANSEC in June 2004 and has been subject to various updates & amendments which have also been formally approved. The new DfT division of Maritime Security & Resilience conducts audits of the Whitstable Harbour plan.

The Harbour & Foreshore Manager is the designated Port Security Officer. The Senior Harbour Officer is the designated Deputy Port Security Officer.

The Whitstable Harbour Port Security Committee meets at least twice per year or at any other time as outlined in the Port Security Plan.

Ships calling at Whitstable Harbour notify the port authority of all relevant security information prior to their arrival. These notification sheets are maintained online.

12 Enforcement & Prosecution

The Harbour has statutory powers to regulate the conduct of vessels, harbour users, commercial operators and visitors within its designated area of jurisdiction.

The Harbour endeavours to use an educational approach to enforcement but will issue informal and formal warnings, when appropriate.

The harbour authority will take firm action, including prosecution where appropriate, against those people or organisations who flout the law or act irresponsibly.

The harbour authority will carry out enforcement and prosecution in a fair, equitable and consistent manner and will liaise with other enforcement bodies as appropriate.

Harbour staff are on duty from 0830 to 1700 from Monday to Friday and at any other times depending on tidal conditions, shipping movements or operational demands. During these times patrols of the harbour estate are conducted.

Closed circuit television surveillance of the harbour estate is maintained and operated from Canterbury City Council's Control Centre.

A 24-hour call-out system is maintained, and harbour staff are always available to respond to a general call out or any emergency situations.

13 Tugs and Towing

Should a tug and towage operation be proposed the Harbour & Foreshore Manager should ensure the operation is comprehensively risk assessed prior to taking place.

14 Diving

Any commercial or recreational diving is regulated and managed by the 2008 Whitstable Harbour Byelaws. No diving operation shall be carried out except with the consent of the Harbour and Foreshore Manager.

15 Provision of Mooring and Berthing

Whitstable Harbour has powers in byelaws and directions to regulate the mooring of vessels in the harbour. Directions are provided to commercial vessels over 20m, as part of the Whitstable harbour Pre-Arrival Passage Plan, identifying berthing areas.

A lineman service is provided as part of the mooring and berthing regulations. This service is supported by risk assessment and the associated Safe System of Work that has been developed using the Port and Skills Safety (SIP005) Guidance on

Mooring. This is reviewed when required and yearly as part of the Whitstable Harbour Health and Safety Management audits.

16 Events and Other Large-Scale Activities

Canterbury City Council grant permission for events and large-scale activities (including those within Whitstable Harbour), through an event application process. As part of the event management process, applications are consulted upon through a Safety Advisory group which includes representatives from Whitstable Harbour.

17 Emergency Contingency Planning

An MCA approved Oil Spill Contingency Plan is in place. Periodic exercises and appropriate training are carried out to familiarise staff with their responsibilities under this plan.

Whitstable Harbour's Tier Two provider is Ambipar Response Ltd.

The harbour maintains a basic stock of oil pollution equipment including booms, absorbent material and personal protective equipment to manage Tier 1 incidents.

A copy of the Canterbury City Council Major Emergency Plan is maintained in the Harbour Office.

18 Stakeholders and Communication

The Harbour Board endeavours to consult and communicate with its stakeholders as effectively as possible. This is achieved using Canterbury City Council's consultation framework (including employee forums and committees) and at a local level, email database (Harbour user groups) for direct communication with Harbour stakeholders.

Where relevant and required, all risk assessment for activity within the harbour will include consideration of recreational users to manage and mitigate conflict between recreational and commercial users of the Harbour.

19 Incident Reporting & Investigation

Harbour staff maintain records of any incident or accident reported, together with all routine port marine shipping operations.

A Canterbury City Council Accident/Incident Report Form system is maintained.

Where appropriate an investigation into the causes of an accident will be carried out. Photographic or physical evidence together with written statements will be collected. Where appropriate the MAIB and HSE will be informed.

In cases where vessels have deficiencies that may adversely affect navigation, a report will be made immediately by phone to the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB). The initial report will be followed by submitting a MAIB Accident Report Form (within 72 hours usually recommended).

Any outcomes and/or lessons from investigations are shared through the reporting framework at Harbour Board and the Corporate Health and Safety team with the aim of preventing recurrence.

20 Audit & Review

The Harbour Authority acknowledges that the process of port marine safety assessment is a continuous and on-going one. New hazards and changing risks should be identified promptly and addressed.

Independent audits of the Whitstable Harbour Safety Management System and level of compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code are carried out.

Internal audits by the Canterbury City Council's Health and Safety Officer of the Safety Management Systems and compliance with the Council's Health and Safety standards are carried out.

Bi-annually, Whitstable Harbour Board will seek an independent audit of the Marine Safety Management System. A report will be given to the Board post audit, providing recommendations for addressing any identified shortcomings.

Notwithstanding the bi-annual report, the system will be kept under continuous appraisal and immediate action taken where necessary. Such appraisals will include:

- Safety inspections
- Continuous appraisal
- On-going Hazard Identification
- Evaluation of and internal audit of Standard Operating Procedures and effectiveness
- Assessment of incident/accident reports
- Re-evaluation of risks
- Input of informal observations and reports.

The Whitstable Harbour Board, which meets approximately six times per year, are routinely updated on any matters pertaining to safe port marine operations and the harbour's compliance with the PMSC by the Harbour Manager as part of their reporting process.

A review of the operational procedures and the effectiveness of the associated policies and procedures (table below) will be reported to Whitstable Harbour Board by the Harbour and Foreshore Manager as part of their reporting process.

Policy or Procedure	Date of last review
Navigational Risk Assessment	2025

Shore to Ship Pilotage Passage Plan	2026
Marine Safety Management System	2026
Oil Spill Contingency Plan	2026

Regular staff meetings are held at which each member of staff is given the opportunity to raise any issue relating to port marine safety.

Independent external checks and reviews of port marine operations are conducted by the following agencies:

Port Marine Safety Code:	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Navigational Aids:	Trinity House
Port Waste Management:	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Oil Spill Contingency Planning:	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Environmental Management:	Natural England
Port Security	Maritime Security & Resilience Division