



QUEENS HARBOUR MASTER  
PORTSMOUTH

GENERAL DIRECTION 07 / 10

**PORTSMOUTH HARBOUR ENTRANCE - APPROACH CHANNEL, SMALL BOAT CHANNEL, SWASHWAY AND INNER SWASHWAY.**

1. **Mariners are advised that the Queens Harbour Master has made the following General Direction under the Dockyard Port of Portsmouth Order 2005** that; The Approach Channel to Portsmouth Harbour including the harbour entrance is considered to be Narrow Channel for purposes of definition within the International Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea (COLREGS). To facilitate the safe passage of small craft to and from Portsmouth Harbour a Small Boat Channel for vessels less than 20m in length including PWC (hereafter referred to as Small Boats) is deemed to exist on the western side of the harbour entrance.
2. Approach Channel. The dredged limits of the Approach Channel from the harbour entrance to Outer Spit Buoy are marked by buoys, the positions of which are shown on chart BA 2625. Within the harbour entrance the channel is bounded on both sides by the limits of the dredged channel as shown on chart BA 2629.
3. Small Boat Channel. The Small Boat Channel is shown on Admiralty charts. Its northern and southern extremities are at Ballast Beacon and No 4 Bar Buoys respectively. A tide pole is fitted to Beacon BC4. Small Boats are reminded that they are extremely difficult to see and the harbour entrance is a blind bend to larger vessels. The following rules apply:
  - a. Small Boats must enter and leave the harbour through the Small Boat Channel.
  - b. All craft fitted with engines, when navigating in the Approach Channel to Portsmouth Harbour, are to proceed under power between No 4 Bar Buoy and the Ballast Beacon.
  - c. The Small Boat Channel may only be entered or exited by vessels approaching from the east at its northern or southern extremities.
  - d. A traffic pattern is established around Ballast Beacon; Small Boats entering the harbour are to pass close to the east of Ballast Beacon and those exiting close to the west.
  - e. Small Boats crossing the harbour entrance may only do so to the north of Ballast Beacon or to the south of No 4 Bar Buoy.

- f. Small Boats, save those listed below, are not to loiter in the Small Boat Channel.
  - g. Small Boats should remain on the Starboard side of the Small Boat Channel and should adjust their speed to remain within the Small Boat Channel rather than overtake and be forced into the main channel.
4. The following vessels under 20m in length are authorised to use the Main Channel and loiter in the Small Boat Channel when their duties require; Pilot Boats, Police Launches, QHM Volunteer Harbour Patrol Launches, Customs Craft, Royal Naval vessels, MCA Lifeboat, Senior Officers Boats flying official flags or discs and tugs engaged in towing operations or escorting a vessel under instruction from a pilot.
5. Small boats may continue to use the Small Boat Channel when the main channel is closed for the passage of a large vessel.
6. Personal Watercraft. PWC of all descriptions are prohibited from entering or operating in the Town Camber, (defined by the purple pecked “no anchoring or fishing” line shown on Admiralty Chart 2629 joining the entrance to Gunwharf Quays and The Point) save with the permission in writing of QHM.
7. Gunwharf Quays /Town Camber - Traffic Management. The following traffic management plan for craft under 20 metres in length (bound to/from Town Camber/Gunwharf Quays) is now in force:
- a. Arrival. In the interest of safety all Small Boats bound for Gunwharf Quays/Town Camber are to enter harbour through the Small Boat Channel. Vessels are only to cross the Main Channel when they are to the north of Ballast Beacon, and permission has been obtained from QHM on VHF Channel 11. Vessels fitted with engines are to use them from entering the Small Boat Channel until arrival at Gunwharf Quays/Town Camber.
  - b. Departure. Small Boats departing from Gunwharf Quays and Town Camber are to obtain permission from QHM on VHF Channel 11 before proceeding. Small Boats leaving the Town Camber are to obtain approval before slipping and again when in the vicinity of The Point prior to crossing the Main Channel. All vessels are then to cross the Main Channel direct to Ballast Beacon and leave harbour through the Small Boat Channel. Vessels fitted with engines are to use them until exiting the Small Boat Channel. If any of these vessels are not fitted with VHF radio, fixed or portable, then they are to be escorted by a marshalling craft or accompany another vessel so fitted.
  - c. Commercial vessels under 20m in length based in the Town Camber, which are specifically registered for this purpose with QHM, may enter and leave the harbour close inshore on the eastern side. They are nonetheless still to request approval to proceed giving their intended route.
  - d. Mariners are advised that there are no visitor berths or moorings at Gunwharf Quays, and that they will only be permitted to cross the harbour to Gunwharf quays if they have an assigned berth. The Gunwharf Berthing Manager is contactable on VHF Ch 80 or 02392 836732.
8. Swashway. - The Swashway is an important channel for shallow draught vessels approaching and leaving Portsmouth Harbour. Hovercraft and high-speed Catamaran ferries often transit the area en-route to and from Ryde at speeds in excess of 24 knots. Hovercraft,

being non-displacement craft usually navigate outside the Swashway in areas where depths are shallow. The Spitbank area, as a whole, is often used for yacht racing and regattas. Mariners in yachts and slow-moving craft are advised to maintain a thorough all-round lookout for the possible approach of high-speed ferries and other fast craft. Particular care needs to be taken to check the appropriate quarter before making an alteration of course. Mariners in high-speed craft are cautioned not to assume that other mariners, particularly those whom they are overtaking, are aware of their presence, and are to give them a sufficiently wide berth.

9. Inner Swashway. The Inner Swashway is closed to vessels of over 20m in length. Vessels over this size are to remain in the Approach Channel between the entrance to the Harbour and No 4 Bar Buoy. They should not enter the Small Boat Channel at any time except that they may do so when taking action to avoid collision under the COLREGS. A Red Beacon is sited ½ cable to the south of Fort Blockhouse. Small Boats transiting between the Inner Swashway and the Small Boat Channel are to leave this to port.

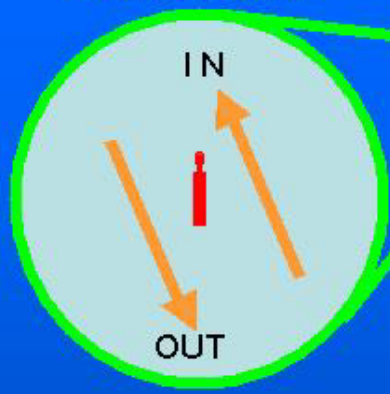
10. The Harbour Entrance. Extra caution is to be taken in the harbour mouth to ensure that Small Boats are not swept into mid channel from the Small Boat Channel by the strong cross-tide which is often present.

11. Contravention of the rules contained within this General Direction is a criminal offence.

01 December 2010  
Semaphore Tower  
HM Naval Base, Portsmouth.  
[www.ghmportsmouth.com](http://www.ghmportsmouth.com)

S O HOPPER  
Commander Royal Navy  
Queen's Harbour Master

### Ballast Beacon



Ballast Beacon

Gunwharf/Camber  
•Ask permission from QHM Ch 11 before crossing in either direction

No PWC in Town Camber

**Small Boat Channel for vessels <20m incl PWC**  
•Use motor  
•Do not cross between No 4 Bar Buoy and Ballast Beacon  
•Do not loiter

Enter or leave Small Boat Channel anywhere on Western side

4 Bar Buoy

### Inner Swashway



WARNING: The Inner Swashway is not a recommended route, see caution on the Admiralty Chart

