



The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company Limited

NAVIGATION GUIDELINES



PORT OF LIVERPOOL

NAVIGATION GUIDELINES

These Navigation Guidelines are produced for advisory purposes and as an aid to passage planning, and do not take precedence over, but are to be used in conjunction with, The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company Limited's Byelaws, Directions and terms and conditions.

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Guideline No.1: Under-keel clearance

Vessels entering or leaving the Port should do so after careful consideration of the dangers to navigation and only after the Master is satisfied that there is always sufficient under-keel clearance for the vessel.

Tidal waters

Mariners are advised that, when determining safe under-keel clearance, consideration must be given to any special circumstances that may exist, including atmospheric conditions and wind direction (which may result in a reduction of the height of tide) and the effects of squat and interaction (which may result in an increase of the draught of the vessel). It is recommended that vessels do not, other than in exceptional circumstances, operate in tidal waters if the under-keel clearance is deemed to be less than 60 centimetres. Furthermore, it is recommended that laden tankers arriving at or departing from for Tranmere Oil Terminal, and passenger vessels do not - other than in exceptional circumstances - navigate in tidal waters if the under-keel clearance is deemed to be 10% or less of the vessel's observed draught or if it is less than 1 metre.

Non-tidal waters

Mariners are advised that, when determining safe under-keel clearance in non-tidal waters, consideration must be given to any special circumstance that may exist, including the actual impounded water level of the enclosed dock systems and the available depth of water.

Guideline No.2: Restricted visibility

In addition to the requirements of the General Directions for the Port of Liverpool—

Inward-bound vessels requiring tug assistance to swing should consider carefully whether the probability of the visibility reducing to less than 2 cables is such that an abort should be considered before passing the Q1 buoy.

Should a large vessel when committed to entering the Queens and Crosby Channels experience a further reduction in visibility, it must be understood that while the tugs will endeavour to assist, they may have difficulty in making fast safely.

Mersey Ferries must, when visibility between the ferry stages is below 1 nautical mile, establish contact with Mersey VTS on VHF Ch.12 upon leaving the Liverpool, Seacombe and Wallasey Stages.

Mersey Ferries should consider suspending passenger services when visibility between the ferry stages is less than 2 cables.

Guideline No.3: Pilotage of large vessels

In addition to the requirements of the Port of Liverpool Pilotage Directions—

For all vessels over 100,000 deadweight tonnes, the Pilot will be accompanied by an Assistant Pilot (who will also be an authorized Liverpool Pilot).

Vessels of less than 100,000 deadweight tonnes may be required to board an Assistant Pilot if the Pilot considers it necessary (e.g. in the interests of safety or owing to the design or characteristics of the vessel).

The Assistant Pilot assigned to a vessel must hold an authorization sufficient to enable the Assistant Pilot to take conduct of the vessel from the Pilot if circumstances require (e.g. the Pilot becomes incapacitated).

Note: If terminal-specific guidelines or procedures refer to requirements for Assistant Pilots and those guidelines or procedures are inconsistent with this Guideline, the provisions of the terminal-specific guidelines or procedures will prevail.

Guideline No.4: Tugs and dead tows

When manning a tug and dead tow, the class of Pilot will be determined by the overall maximum length of the tug and tow combined. The towage operation should be carried out in daylight unless by agreement with the assigned Pilot. Tows of dead ships can only be conducted in daylight.

All dead tows of 82m or over in combined overall maximum length will be subject to consultation with a Pilot. A request for consultation with a Pilot should be made at least 48 hours prior to the tow first navigating within the Port.

All dead tows are subject to the Harbour Master's consent. Applications (completed in the format specified from time to time by MDHC) to perform a dead tow must be submitted to MDHC at least 24 hours prior to the tow first navigating within the Port.

Guideline No.5: Alfred Lock - Compulsory consultation

In addition to the requirements of the Port of Liverpool Pilotage Directions—

Any vessel of 82m or more in overall length that intends to depart Alfred Lock on an ebb tide will require a consultation with a Pilot before navigating within the Port.

Any vessel that intends to enter Alfred Lock inward-bound from the River Mersey on an ebb tide will require a consultation with a Pilot before navigation within the Port.

Vessels arriving at or departing from facilities operated by Cammell Laird Shiprepairers and Shipbuilders will require a consultation with a Pilot.

Guideline No.6: Boarding of large vessels at the Bar

Generally, a vessel exceeding 200m in overall length or constrained by draught (a “large vessel”) will board a Pilot at the Bar pilot station when heading in a westerly direction (i.e. away from the entrance to the Queens Channel), which will allow sufficient time for a comprehensive Master-Pilot exchange prior to the vessel entering the Queens Channel.

Other vessels will not normally be permitted to pass the Bar inward-bound until the Pilot for the large vessel has been boarded. Vessels should listen on VHF Ch.11 until the large vessel’s Pilot has been boarded safely and the launch is clear of the large vessel.

Guideline No.7: Tug provision for swinging in the River Mersey

Vessels that require a tug to assist with swinging in the River Mersey must ensure that a tug is available in the River Mersey prior to the vessel committing to the inward-bound passage of the Queens and Crosby Channels.

Guideline No.8: Clear channel

In addition to the requirements of the General Directions for the Port of Liverpool—

Vessels exceeding 200m in overall length or constrained by their draught must be given a clear channel between the Formby and Crosby safe water marks. Co-ordination of this requirement will be between the relevant Pilots, Pilotage Exemption Certificate Holders or Masters.

Mersey VTS will provide information to the vessels concerned and can provide prediction information upon request.

Guideline No.9: Towage

Towage within the Port is organized on a commercial basis.

Vessel owners contract towage operators to assist their passage in and out of the Port. It is left to the relevant tug operator’s judgement to provide the tug capacity to suit the contracts it has or is likely to be required to service, having regard to Port-traffic.

If for any reason the provision of tugs is not enough for the effective management of relevant risks, the Harbour Master may identify other means of doing so. This may include imposing restrictions on Port operations or the contracting-in of other tug provision.

Except in circumstances directed by the Harbour Master, the use of tugs for berthing, unberthing and escorting is a matter for the Master and for the agreement of the Pilot, where embarked. Except where directed by the Harbour Master, it is the wishes of the Master and the professional judgment of the Pilot, using a dynamic risk assessment, that will set the level of tug provision.

Only tugs registered in accordance with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board Act 1945 section 48, and of an appropriate flag state will be permitted to provide ship-handling towage services within the Port.

MDHC has published Towage Guidelines for the Port and the specifications of tugs registered to operate within the Port for use by Pilots and Pilotage Exemption Certificate Holders who may use towage services.

Guideline No.10: River event pilot

All public events on the River Mersey that may affect the safety of navigation of other Port users must employ the services of an Event Pilot. On application, a Pilot will be nominated to assist in the organisation of traffic on the River during the event and act as liaison for other vessels, Mersey VTS and the event organisers.

The Event Pilot should be stationed onboard a craft supplied by the organisers of the relevant event.

Guideline No.11: Bunkering

MDHC has published Bunkering Guidelines and Regulations, which should be applied by all relevant parties a minimum standard for bunkering operations conducted within the Port.

In visibility of less than 2 cables, bunkering operations involving craft alongside must cease when another vessel is due to pass.

Guideline No.12: De-ballasting

It is an offence for vessels to permit any substance that might cause damage to the conservancy of the Port to enter its waters (Mersey Docks and Harbour Board Act 1971 Section 10). Therefore, unless the Master of a vessel is confident that the vessel's ballast water is such so as not to cause such damage, de-ballasting must not take place.

De-ballasting within the Port must comply with the relevant UK-laws relating to the application of the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments 2004.

Guideline No.13: Vessel clearances

Within the River Mersey and the Queens and Crosby Channels, vessels exceeding 200m in overall length or constrained by their draught should, as far as is practicable, be given clearances of 5 cables ahead and 2.5 cables astern so that they are not impeded on their passage.

Guideline No.14: Approaches to quays and passageway transits

Mariners with the conduct of a vessel's navigation should note that, whilst manoeuvring within the enclosed dock systems, due attention should be paid to passing through passageways as near to the centreline of those passageways as possible, whilst taking leeway into account, fully utilising the attendant tugs for positioning and changes in speed, and that due allowance should be made to the closing aspect of quays and passageway walls with regard to oversailing. Note should be made of the changing Port architecture with regard to leeway allowances.

Guideline No.15 River entrance arrivals

Master and Pilots of vessels that are scheduled for a timed River entrance arrival should ensure that their Passage Plans allow for sufficient time to slow the vessel's speed and set the vessel for a safe River entrance approach, taking into account the tide, weather, and traffic whilst giving due consideration to other Port users. The decision to use tugs to assist any approach should be made within the Passage Plan. Over reliance on the use of dynamic risk assessment should be avoided.

In addition, deep-draught vessels in relation to any particular tide should not, as far as possible, be booked for an inward lock later than 30 minutes to high water.

Guideline No.16: River entrance gates and caissons

All vessels arriving at or departing from a River entrance must cross the entrance sill only when the gates or caissons are fully retracted into their recesses and permission is given to proceed by the relevant Dockmaster via VHF radio. Three vertical, fixed docking lights (green when open to traffic and red when closed) are used to provide a visual indication.

Operative from January 2013

Note:

In these Navigation Guidelines, unless the context otherwise requires:

“Port” means the Port of Liverpool as defined in The Mersey Docks and Harbour Act 1971 and any statutory amendment or re-enactment thereof;

“Harbour Master” means the Harbour Master appointed by The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company Limited and includes their authorized deputies and assistants and any person so authorized by The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company Limited to act in that capacity;

“MDHC” means The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company Limited;

“Pilot” means a pilot authorized by The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company Limited; and

“Pilotage Exemption Certificate Holder” means a Deck Officer holding a valid Pilotage Exemption Certificate issued by The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company Limited.

List of Amendments

No.	Effective Date	Details
1	1 January 2013	Original as issued
2	1 April 2023	Re-formatted G7: references to CLCT removed following amendment of the CLCT Guidelines G11: removal of provisions duplicated in the Bunkering Guidelines and Regulations G12: reference added to UK law for ballast water management
3	13 September 2024	G3: Amended to clarify the authorization level required for Assistant Pilots