



## **Harbour Master's Safety Update 1/21**

**21 June 2021**

### **Introduction**

This new note will be the first in a series of updates on safety matters within the River Hamble.

Its purpose is to highlight current safety trends and help inform River Users of activity which may affect Navigational Safety. In doing so and through the provision of incident analysis where appropriate, it is hoped that it will assist in developing a broader understanding of particular issues in various quarters of our River and in making the River a safer place.

Regular River Users are well aware that the Hamble is a River with many competing requirements and busy traffic levels. Things often look very different for instance from the perspective of the skipper of a large yacht or motor vessel to that of a kayak user, paddle boarder or dinghy sailor. It almost goes without saying that each has an equal right to be

a float on the River. These rights of course depend on an understanding of all the factors and on recognition of the constraints under which the various types of other craft operate. Varying levels of marine knowledge and experience, 'seamanship' and understanding of the challenges of a tidal River mean that it is important to establish a common basis upon which as many people as possible can enjoy the River safely. That is why this note and those which will follow it will be disseminated as widely as possible. It is not targeted at any particular community but is a general broadcast of observations. Current issues are not listed necessarily in order of priority because each will be of greater importance to some than to others.

### Current Issues

#### Paddle boarding and kayaking.

Increasingly popular since COVID lockdown restrictions have been lifted whether as a sport, as recreation or as a means of transport, paddle boarding and kayaking are with us to stay. Some areas of the River lend themselves better to this form of activity than others, it can be argued. Nevertheless, paddleboarders and kayakers have every right to navigate within any area of the River. Inevitably, this means that they will find on occasion themselves near much larger vessels, notably but not only at Bursledon as they launch from Swanwick. That many are novices increases the challenges for larger craft which are required under the Rules to take action to avoid kayakers when the latter do not take action. That is why the Harbour Authority has put in place some reasonable control measures targeted at the less experienced including signage (in pictorial format – 'STOP', 'GIVE WAY') to guide small craft out of the Main Channel. The Harbour Authority has also engaged with the burgeoning hire community to ensure that appropriate briefing takes place before launching. From the other end of the telescope, I am aware that things can look different. Large manoeuvring vessels can find it challenging to both understand small craft intent and find their way through traffic on occasion. This calls for patience, draws on ship handling skills and planning on leaving or arriving at times in certain circumstances when small craft activity is lighter, difficult or inconvenient as that may seem to be. More than anything however, it requires tolerance, good communication among everyone and a clear understanding of the Rules of the Road (specifically 5, 6 and 8f, i, ii and iii among those more experienced and trained). These relate to proper look out, safe speed (which may be less than 6 knots) and responsibilities between vessels when approaching one another so as to avoid risk of collision. While most understand this readily, at least in principle, I have come across hubris in various camps which show that patience and mutual understanding is occasionally in short supply. That will not promote safety.

#### Anti-Social Behaviour.

This is sadly an unfortunate reality in certain locations. Addressing the root causes and bearing down on a badly-behaved minority is the responsibility of local councils and the

Police. We support that by presence and persuasion but the Harbour Authority's powers are limited. While Hamble Quay is the current epicentre on the River, anti-social behaviour takes place at a number of locations routinely, including the A27, Railway and M27 bridges, from farmland opposite Eastland's Shipyard and at Warsash. Violence, criminal damage, theft, under-age drinking and the use of drugs are all encountered. These criminal matters are addressed by particular legislation. The Crown Prosecution Service Guidance sets thresholds for the enforcement of public order offences, in particular, Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986. Section 35 Dispersal orders are also tools at the Police's disposal. Such disorder affects both those ashore and those who use the River and the Police alone have the power to enforce the Law. The Harbour Authority's duty is, as for every member of the public, to support the Police in the execution of that duty. For River Users, current concerns relate to three specific areas. First, the approaches to Hamble Jetty, where groups of swimmers, intent on irresponsible behaviour contrary to signage, verbal guidance and the presence of Harbour Authority Officers. Here, not only do some swimmers ignore the obvious and signposted dangers of interaction with craft but they also ignore anti-climb paint and signage and obstruct the jetty and its access. Attempts by Harbour Patrol to move them are mostly successful but, when called away on other tasking, they return. Their behaviour both on the jetty and ashore often reaches the threshold for action by the Police who, this year will be basing themselves at the Life Boat station to take timely action. For River Users visiting Hamble, this is worth bearing in mind both for their approach and departure and also when considering leaving their boat there unattended. The Second area causing concern is the area of the three bridges where individuals and groups, as ever, can occasionally be seen jumping into the River from all three bridges. The hazard here is clear and again, the Police are aware. The third area where anti-social behaviour prevails is from the farmland opposite Eastland's Boatyard where swimmers congregate and swim across the narrow channel to the yard opposite. Some of these have thrown material at passing vessels.

It gives me no pleasure in listing these public order matters. I can only tell you of the current danger and that incidents perhaps obviously tend to take place when three things coincide: Fine weather, High Water and outside school hours or in holiday times. It is hoped that River Users may find that analysis helpful in their planning.

#### Activity From Warsash to the Mouth of the River

I will group activity because the following takes place in this geographical area.

We have seen an increase in incidents involving speeding and wash, most notably between No 1 mark at the Mouth of the River and Warsash Maritime Jetty. These incidents involve a variety of craft including Personal Water Craft (Jet-Skis), Rigid Inflatable Boats and Motor Boats. This is in clear contravention of General Direction No 1 (speed limit 6 knots), put in place to protect those navigating within the River because of the traffic density, to avoid damage to moored craft and to prevent damage to our heavily protected environment. This

year, we have issued several formal written warnings to individuals which will be kept on record for 5 years. Prosecution will be pursued against repeat offenders. Those warned have operated a variety of craft. It is true that some are jet skis. Warsash has become increasingly popular as a launching site since lockdown, with almost immediate access to the Solent. Over half (check) of our warnings have been issued to the skippers of these craft. At the time of writing (11 June), we have recorded 227 jet ski launches in 10 weeks. Along with other Solent Harbours which face similar problems with speeding and other offences afloat, we are working with Hampshire Marine Police Unit to build a database of owners so that evidence of any habitual bad behaviour can be built and shared. It is also true to say that many Jet Skis behave entirely correctly within the River. Taking launching fees at Warsash enables us to brief Jet ski owners on our Bye Laws and also upon what constitutes dangerous behaviour in Southampton Water as they approach manoeuvring large commercial vessels. Warnings have also been given to the owners of RIBS and motor vessels, some of which are River residents. Monitoring speed and wash is simple and good seamanship as well as good manners. The speed limit is widely advertised and should reasonably be known to all. It is advertised in plain sight on No 1 Mark at the Mouth of the River and applies to everyone from there inwards. The increasing tendency to hold on until No 7 Mark inbound and increase speed there when outbound is unfortunate and my staff have been told to issue warnings to the few who disregard that and for whom the Rules apparently do not apply.



The long-awaited return to sailing has also seen a return to evening dinghy sailing. Busy starts on some Summer evenings are familiar to regular users but, for those new to the River, this is usual Hamble fayre. The Harbour Authority has always supported rightly and actively the dinghy community. Our excellent Clubs organise World, European and National championships and the River offers sailing for all, from the novice to the very best. Accommodating that involves understanding as large fleets can and do congregate at the

start line off Warsash on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings for an hour from 1800 onwards. All River Users are advised to bear that in mind when planning navigation and make use if appropriate of the Secondary Channel which may offer an alternative route.

I hope you enjoy your Summer on the water, whatever you are doing.

Jason Scott

Marine Director and Harbour Master