



## **Harbour Master's Safety Update 2/21**

**26 November 2021**

### **Introduction**

This second update on safety matters within the River Hamble will reflect on the issues raised in June and highlight trends since then.

As ever, it is written from an observational perspective. The Aim is to take those trends and highlight common factors which may be of use to River Users in making their time on the water safer, more enjoyable and relaxing. Sound planning and preparation, an awareness of others' intent through maintenance of a proper lookout and good communication and a full

understanding of why rules exist will be central factors in helping ensure that the Aim is met.

Unsurprisingly, of the issues raised in my last update, paddle boarding, kayaking and anti-social behaviour have become less prevalent with the change of season. The former are still enormously popular however and a number of enthusiasts can be seen taking advantage of the quieter periods of darkness to enjoy their sport. What is good to see is that those who do tend to be well illuminated. Separately, preparations for next season's management of anti-social behaviour are underway with the Police and further updates will be provided in due course.

Speeding in the mouth of the River has persisted and I would call for everyone's support in bearing down on that before an accident takes place. The speed limit of six knots, widely advertised as it is, must be adhered to at all times. It will not be lost on the reader that this note is another record of another reasonable attempt at advertising the 6 knot limit. While the Harbour Authority will always pursue a twin-track approach of education and enforcement, where individuals are stopped following an earlier warning or during an aggravated offence, prosecution will be pursued. I would be grateful if you could help me spread the word.

### Current Issues

#### Speeding between Warsash and the Mouth of the River.

The objective of this broadcast approach is to ask for everyone's support in developing a culture where poor behaviour is acknowledged as being unacceptable. That this is the second note about speeding means that the message has either yet to reach some or it is being openly disregarded.

There is a narrative that Personal Watercraft or Jet skis are predominantly responsible for speeding. While some do, what has been plainly evident over the course of the past few months is that, evidentially, a large number of those caught speeding and given verbal and/or written warnings have been resident motor vessels. While most accept advice when challenged, the response of a small minority has been unfortunately dismissive. The consequence for some has been a written warning that will stand on record for five years. A further offence in these cases will certainly lead to prosecution.

It is worth reflecting on one occasion when such activity caused me real concern that people would be hurt. While strong winds and the early timing of the demolition of Fawley chimney meant that many chose to remain at home, a good number of vessels departed the River early that morning to gain a better view of events. Of these, most acted in a seamanlike manner. Some did not and the River witnessed some of the most reckless behaviour I have seen in my time as a Harbour Master, as large numbers of occasionally unlit and heavily laden RIBs, some with young passengers not wearing lifejackets, departed

in poor visibility at speed in strong winds to gain a better view of the demolition of the chimney. With patrol following earlier speeding craft downstream, I personally witnessed 4 RIBs jockeying for position to pass the midstream Visitors' pontoon at a distance of between five and 10 metres at speeds of around 20 knots. The associated wash for vessels moored on the Visitors' Pontoon already suffering from the effects of a strong Southerly gale and swell was severe. A number of the moored vessels affected had very young and older people on board who had spent the night on the Visitors' Pontoon to witness the demolition. Luckily, there were no injuries as those vulnerable remained below in shelter for weather and safety reasons. A tragedy because of the dangerous and inconsiderate actions of a few was not inconceivable. The speed at which these vessels were travelling, the lack of visibility afforded by the spray and light levels and the immediate need to safeguard those at risk on the pontoon meant that, unfortunately, insufficient evidence is held for further action. I offer this here as a point upon which every mariner should reflect.

#### Groundings.

A number of groundings have taken place recently on Hook Spit between Nos 7 and 9 Marks. It is worth remembering the steep gradient outside the Main Channel that exists beyond the line between the Marks. Most will be wary of drift towards Hook if it is the lee shore and the tide is running and keep appropriately well clear. The new edition of Admiralty Chart 2022 (the River Hamble) is the 'master data document' and was issued in February 2020. It includes the most recent bathymetric data which confirms that the channel has not changed appreciably over the last 40 years. As many will be aware, a three knot Spring ebb can mean a loss of 60cm in the height of tide there within 30 minutes.

Jason Scott

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