



Belfast Harbour Marine Operations Safety Plan 2021 - 2023

Belfast Harbour Commissioners (BHC) is the Statutory Harbour Authority for Belfast Harbour and the Competent Harbour Authority for the waters of Belfast Harbour Pilotage Area.

The Port Marine Safety Code published in 2000 by the Department of Transport and revised in November 2016, has established an agreed national standard by which the policies, procedures and performance of harbour authorities are measured.

The role of duty holder is undertaken by BHC which is (both collectively and individually) publicly accountable for marine safety under the Code. As such the BHC is committed to managing marine safety to a standard compliant with the Port Marine Safety Code. The aim of this plan is to provide detail of the management measures in place and to set targets for performance.

As part of its compliance with the requirements of the Port Marine Safety Code, BHC is publishing this Marine Operations Safety Plan for the period 2021-2023.

A more comprehensive overview of the structure and management of the port's Marine Safety Management and compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code in support of this plan is contained in BHC's Safety Management System Manual.

Belfast Harbour Commissioners has declared compliance with the requirements of the PMSC in March 2021 to the MCA. The next compliance exercise is expected to be 2024.



Marine Policies

Harbour authorities have a range of statutory and non-statutory duties and powers relating to marine operations

For Belfast Harbour Authority, these duties include a duty of care to those using the harbour, which means it has an obligation to conserve and facilitate the safe use of the harbour as well as a duty of care against loss caused by the harbour authority's negligence. Duties to ensure the safety of marine operations are matched with general and specific powers to enable the authority to discharge these duties. The following policies are in place to ensure BHC executes these duties effectively.

- Navigational Safety Policy
- VTS Policy
- Pilotage Policy
- Hydrographic Policy
- Enforcement and Prosecution Policy

All policies are included within BHC's Safety Management System and are published on the Belfast Harbour website.

Each Marine Policy is reviewed every 3 years.

Marine Procedures

Operational procedures, processes and guidance in support of Belfast Harbour's marine services and operations are contained within the following documents:

- Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) Manual
- Pilotage Manual
- Conservancy, within Marine Safety Management System (MSMS) Manual
- Marine Services, within MSMS Manual



The Designated Person, as identified in the Port Marine Safety Code, provides independent assurance directly to the 'Duty Holder' that Belfast Harbour's MSMS is compliant and working effectively through assessment and audit.

The Safety Management System was last externally audited in December 2023.

The Management of Marine Operations

This Marine Operations Safety Plan commits Belfast Harbour to undertake the management and regulation of marine operations within the scope of its powers and authority in a way that safeguards the port, its users, the public and the environment.

Belfast Harbour is committed to a positive safety culture and to continual improvement of its risk based Marine Safety Management System and safety performance.

Belfast Harbour will undertake its role and responsibilities to provide efficient services and effective regulation of shipping in support of all activities in the harbour: in particular commercial vessel movements, to facilitate the safe transit of vessels in the port.

In ensuring the continued provision of services, especially during times of disruption, Belfast Harbour will always keep the safety of its personnel, port users and vessels as a priority. Whilst at times this may mean that services, vessel movements or activities are subject to delay such commercial considerations will be secondary to the safety of navigation.

Established Management Activities

Communication, consultation and feedback are a fundamental to ensure the safety and navigational requirements are understood and are continually reviewed. The following are undertaken to ensure the maintenance of an effective Safety Management System:

- Dedicated Risk Assessments of existing marine operations and services.



- The proactive and reactive review of identified hazards to navigation and the associated risk control measures required to mitigate these risks to a level which is As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP).
- The investigation of all reported Marine Incidents and the maintenance of a comprehensive Incident Management System.
- Daily liaison between the Duty Harbour Master and Port Control in relation to the safety and effective regulation of vessel movements in the harbour and its approaches.
- Monthly Marine Safety Management meetings to review Incidents and Non Compliance.
- Marine Safety Forum – meetings every 6 months
- Towage & Boatmen Operations Liaison Group – meeting every 6 months
- Regular Pilotage meetings comprising Harbour Masters and authorised Belfast Harbour pilots.
- Regular internal and external audits and reviews of the Marine Safety Management System, its functions, procedures and performance.
- Training and Development of Marine Department Personnel - Continual Professional Development.
- Maintenance and exercising of Belfast Harbour marine emergency plans and procedures, including oil spill management and Business Continuity Plans.

Performance Objectives

	Objective	Performance Target	By When	Completion Measure	Status
1.	Navigational Incidents – determine the cause of an incident to prevent reoccurrence	No major incidents, serious injuries or serious pollution as a result of the failure of the port’s Marine Safety Management System.	2021	No major incidents, serious injuries or serious pollution events in 2021 Minor observations of pollution reported OPRC approved and 2021 OPRC returns submitted to MCA CPSO	Compliant
			2022	1 deployment of BHC Tier 2 Contractor. All other Minor observations of Pollution reported. OPRC approved and 2022 OPRC returns submitted to MCA. CPSO	Compliant
			2023	2 deployments of BHC Tier 2 contractor. All other Minor observations of Pollution reported. OPRC approved and 2023 OPRC returns submitted to MCA. CPSO	Compliant
		All reported Incidents investigated in a timely basis.	2021	3 Major (3 reported to MAIB) 29 Moderate 91 Minor 34 Insignificant	Compliant
			2022	5 Major (4 reported to MAIB) 27 Moderate	Compliant

				83 Minor 45 Insignificant	
			2023	2 Major (7 reported to MAIB) 33 Moderate 123 Minor 44 Insignificant	Compliant
			2021	Following Document created: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot Boat Operations Manual Following documents reviewed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marine Safety Management System VTS Manual SOPs reviewed 	Compliant
			2022	Following Documents Reviewed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSMS VTS Manual Pilot Boat Operations Manual, Pilotage Directions. 6 new SOP's introduced and all others reviewed. 	Compliant
			2023	Following Documents Reviewed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSMS VTS Manual Towage Manual Pilot Boat Operations Manual 2 new SOPs introduced, 1 SOP amended 	Compliant
Compliant	Vessel Traffic Service – operational capability and delivery	Provide an effective Traffic Organisational Service and Information Service throughout the port.	2021	Continual risk assessment process ongoing to manage impact of COVID-19 pandemic.	Compliant
			2022	Service reviewed to meet the requirements of MGN 401. VTS resourcing reviewed.	Compliant
			2023	Assessment made for VTS requirements factored into VTS procurement process	Compliant
		Seek to ensure that Belfast Harbours VTS System operates at 99.9% availability through a maintenance, procurement and installation strategy for the VTS equipment which will add to the reliability of individual elements or to its duplication.	2021	No technical outages. COVID-19 response and safeguards resulted in no reduction in service.	Compliant
			2022	3 minor outages not affecting safe navigational services. VTS system effectively operational for 100% of the period	Compliant
			2023	VTS system effectively operational for 100% of the period	Compliant

		VTS Operators recruited and trained to industry standards	2021	Annual assessment process resumed following COVID-19 lockdown.	Compliant
			2022	1 New Relief VTSO trained 1 New VTSO trained 1 New VTS Supervisor 1 attended refresher training. VTS compliment increased by 2 and all personnel subject to an annual independent assessment.	Compliant
			2023	1 New Relief VTSO trained 1 VTSO employed	Compliant
3.	Pilotage – provision of pilotage service including the authorisation of Pilotage Exemption Certificates (PEC)	No major incidents resulting from pilot or PEC holder error.	2021	No major incidents resulting from pilot or PEC holder error.	Compliant
			2022	No major incidents resulting from pilot or PEC holder error.	Compliant
			2023	No major incidents resulting from pilot or PEC holder error.	Compliant
		Authorised Pilots and PEC Holders to be trained and assessed as per procedures and protocols.	2021	1 new pilot authorised in April 2021. PEC's re-issued in November- 7 new PEC certificates issued	Compliant
			2022	All Pilots Reauthorised. PEC's reissued in November. 5 new PEC Certificates issued. Gas Pipeline Navigational Risk Workshops conducted and introduced as part of Pilot and PEC training.	Compliant
			2023	Total number of Pilot movements: 3998 5 new PEC Certificates issued. 11 Unlimited pilots Pilot competency under review Total PEC Acts: 7523	Compliant
4.	Marine Services – Towage services, pilot launch and mooring services	Ensure operators are compliant with national and local regulation for equipment and personnel.	2021	July - Legal review of BHC powers to implement a licencing regime.	Compliant
			2022	Further legal review undertaken to assess most appropriate form of licence. Draft Licence format developed in 2022 with target implementation in 2023	Compliant
			2023	Towage providers audit process commenced	

				Process of management of workboat records reviewed and amended	
		Fully compliant with industry best practice and Belfast Harbour policies and procedures.	2021	All towage operations conducted in compliance with the Towage Operations Manual	Compliant
			2022	All towage operations conducted in compliance with the Towage Operations Manual 1 Towage simulation workshop conducted with a towage operator. 1 minor incident with a boating company resulting in internal review of procedures.	Compliant
			2023	All towage operations conducted in compliance with the Towage Operations Manual 2 Towage simulation workshops conducted with towage operators including project simulation- FPSO SEAROSE BHC invested in modifications in simulator suite to improve training outcomes	Compliant
5.	Conservancy – conserve the harbour and its approaches	Hydrographic Surveys - Ensure that the port and approaches have an adequate schedule of hydrographic surveys and that these are undertaken in line with the defined schedule.	2021	Surveys conducted in May and November	Compliant
			2022	Surveys Conducted in May and December	Compliant
			2023	Dredging campaign completed Q3 2023 All channels returned to original depths. Revised Notice To Mariners published with continued berth and channel restrictions	Compliant
		Navigational Lights – In conjunction with the Commissioners of Irish Lights to provide and maintain adequate navigational aids consistent with port user requirements to facilitate safe navigation within the port and its approaches. Report to CIL on a quarterly basis.	2021	Nav Aid Reliability 99.9%. Category 2 99.88%, Category 3 99.93%	Compliant
			2022	Nav Aid Reliability 99.88%. Category 2 99.83%, Category 3 99.93%	Compliant
			2023	Nav Aid Reliability 99.88%. Category 2 99.83%, Category 3 99.93%	Compliant
		Wrecks and Obstructions – Investigate all reported wrecks and Obstructions in a timely basis.	2021	No wreck or obstructions reported in 2021	Compliant
			2022	1 small wreck occurred. Last known position surveyed and no debris found.	Compliant
			2023	No wreck or obstructions reported in 2023	Compliant
		Notices / Warnings – Promulgate Local Notices and Warnings to port users of changes to Navigational Aids, depths and other dangers to Navigation.	2021	19 Notice to Mariners issued. 5 Operational Notices issued.	Compliant
			2022	21 Notices to Mariners issued.	Compliant

				19 Port Operational Notices issued.	
			2023	32 Notices to Mariners issued. 10 Port Operational Notices issued.	Compliant
6.	Consultation - liaison and consult with port users	Arrange regular meetings with port users to consult on any traffic management and navigational issues, safety issues, pilotage, conservancy, and leisure activity.	2021	Consultations heavily impacted by COVID-19, where possible held over Teams.	Compliant
			2022	Following Documents circulated for stakeholder consultation: Pilotage directions Extensive Consultation on Gas Pipeline Post Incident review with MCA and Coastguard	Compliant
			2023	-Towage concession consultation published -Marine Safety Forum meeting held July 2023 -Towage Sub-Committees held -Incident review with MCA and Coastguard -Regular routine and specific meetings held with pilots	Compliant
7.	Contingency and Emergency Planning	Review of Emergency Plans and Procedures.	2021	Following internal marine services audit- VTS and Pilot Boat Emergency Action Cards reviewed.	Compliant
			2022	Following Documents Reviewed. MSMS, VTS Towage Manual, Pilot Boat Operations Manual, Pilotage Directions. 6 new SOP's introductions and all others reviewed. Cruise vessel emergency plan reviewed	Compliant
			2023	Following Documents Review for emergency plans and procedures: MSMS Cruise Emergency Plan VTS Manual Towage Manual Pilot Boat Operations Manual Various SOPs reviewed	Compliant
		Undertake desk top / real time exercises	2021	August- pilot boat MOB regime updated to 1 every 4 days and Fire/First Aid emergency drill regime updated. 20 th September – Boom deployment exercise Milewater Basin 29 th September- Exercise Theia, Live oil pollution exercise at VT4. Utilising BHC workboat and drone assets	Compliant

			2022	Several Multi Agency exercises undertaken OPRC Cruise Security Gas Pipeline Pilotage and Towage simulation workshop. VTS drills Pilot boat MOB and Emergency drills weekly.	Compliant
			2023	Several Multi Agency exercises undertaken Operation Redwave- Cruise security COMAH- Exolum & Puma off site OPRC scenario exercises IT cyberattack Pilot MOB and Emergency drills weekly (new improved MOB recovery system added to pilot boat	Compliant
8.	Training of Marine Personnel – to ensure required qualifications are current for all marine personnel and any ongoing professional development and training needs are identified.	Continual Professional Development to ensure all marine personnel are competent to perform their duties.	2021	Training of Pilot Boat Crew as per Workboat Code Edition 2 Amendment 1. Training matrix in place for VTS and Pilot Boat Crew PMSC code audit highlights need for Training Matrix for Harbourmaster and Deputy Harbourmasters. Training Matrix drafted December outlining training requirements for all Port Operations staff	Compliant
			2022	Incident investigation and audit training conducted for HM team. Extensive Training of Pilot Boat crew, including First Aid Stability and Radar courses.	Compliant
			2023	Accident and Investigation Training Formalised Risk Assessment Training of HMs and VTS Supervisor Training of Pilot Boat crew for compliance with Workboat Code Edition 3 OPRC refresher courses Hydrographic survey training	Compliant
		Undertake annual appraisals and training needs analysis.	2021	Training matrix in place for pilot boat crew and VTS. By December drafted for all port Operations staff	Compliant
			2022	All of the Port Operations team involved in Personal Development discussions. All VTS Annual assessments completed.	Compliant

			2023	Continued personal development discussions Training needs analysed for boat crew as per Workboat Code Edition 3	Compliant

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