



LOCAL NOTICE TO MARINERS NO 13 OF 2011

COWES CHAIN FERRY

(This notice supersedes No27 of 2010 Cowes Chain Ferry, which is hereby cancelled.)

The Cowes Chain Ferry (Cowes Floating Bridge) is situated within Cowes Harbour and in close proximity to the blind bend of the River Medina and **notice is hereby given** that all mariners should navigate with caution in the area of the chain ferry; taking full account of the following points:

1. Nothing in this notice shall exonerate the chain ferry from its obligation to give way to all traffic under Cowes Harbour Commission Byelaw 34
2. The Chain Ferry operates between the east and west bank of the river by hauling on two chains, each of approximately 165 metres, which span across the estuary and are permanently attached to both river banks. These two chains therefore lay partially on the seabed and part hang in the water in catenaries from slipway to slipway.
3. A new hydrographic survey has recently been undertaken, the charts showing the clearance over the chains at various heights of tide (4.3m, 2.4m and 0.5m) and with the chain ferry moored at either riverbank. It can be downloaded from the port website and should be considered when planning your passage.
4. The depth of navigable water above these chains varies depending on the state of the tide height and the position of the Chain Ferry in relation to either east or west riverbank. The depth of navigable water is deepest in the middle of the visible fairway and decreases towards either riverbank and the prow or 'forward end' of the ferry as the chains rise closer to the surface.
5. When the Chain Ferry is berthed on either riverbank and therefore not partway across the fairway, the least depth of navigable water over the chains is approximately 1.7 metres **BELOW** chart datum in the middle of the visible fairway during the half tide period.
6. The shallowest section of the river lies to the south of the chain ferry between the northern Whitegates pontoons in the vicinity of GKN and Medina Yard where the depth of water is a minimum of 1.7m below chart datum at all states of tide.

7. All vessels and in particular deep draught sailing vessels shall consider the available depth of water as well as the restrictions and risks associated with the chain ferry when planning their in port passage plan.
8. Vessels subject to the Cowes Pilotage Directions shall be restricted as to their maximum permissible draught when transiting the area of the Floating Bridge as follows:

Maximum Permissible Draught = Actual Tide Height + 1.5metres

When within 0.8metres of the maximum permissible draught, the floating bridge shall be instructed to wait on the *EAST bank for the transit of the vessel.

*Due to the catenary of the chains there is an increase in the depth of water over the chains in the middle of the visible fairway of between 0.3m-1.0m when the ferry is berthed at East Cowes compared with West Cowes.

Other deep draft vessels should also consider using the recommendations in this clause.

9. The Chain Ferry shall by day and night just prior to and when proceeding from one bank to the other, exhibit at the fore end a flashing white light so positioned as to be visible all around.
10. Vessels under mechanical propulsion approaching the chain ferry by reason of good seamanship may reduce their speed if safe and practicable to allow the chain ferry to complete her passage to the opposite bank, passing astern of the chain ferry.
11. Sailing vessels fitted with mechanical propulsion shall proceed under power when navigating in any part of the Main Harbour Fairway
12. Masters of all vessels over 20 metres length, vessels constrained by their draught, vessels towing and vessels with limited manoeuvrability shall call, the 'Cowes Chain Ferry' on VHF radio Channel 69 to give indication of their approach. Cowes Chain Ferry operator shall acknowledge all such calls. In addition to this VHF call the above vessels shall also sound one prolonged blast when approaching the chain ferry.
13. All vessels navigating within the river shall keep well clear of the prow or 'forward ' ramp of the Chain Ferry and be aware that if the Chain Ferry is not on either riverbank and is therefore part way across the fairway, the navigable depth of water above the chains decreases rapidly.
14. During all tides, especially spring tides, there are strong tide currents associated with this area. The ebb flows are usually more pronounced than the flood. The ebb tide is accentuated towards the eastern side of the river where the spring ebb may be in excess of 4 knots and cause the unwary to be set down upon the eastern bank especially in the area of the Trinity House Wharf (East Cowes) and the Red Funnel ferry terminal (East Cowes)

15. All vessels navigating in these above mentioned areas must adhere strictly to the direction of Rule 9 of the Merchant Shipping (Distress Signals and Prevention of Collisions) Regulations (as amended) which refer specifically to the navigation within narrow channels and areas of limited visibility due to the bend of the fairway and narrow channel
16. The Chain Ferry maintains a listening watch on the Cowes Harbour Working Channel (VHF Channel 69) and may give her intentions if so requested on the radio
17. The Chain Ferry operates throughout the year but ceases daily operation across the river at approximately midnight or shortly thereafter. The service usually resumes again at approximately 0500 hours Monday to Saturday and approximately 0630 hours on Sundays. The service is extended by special arrangement e.g. Cowes Week
18. During the period of night when the Chain Ferry is not in operation, the Chain Ferry may 'moor up' just off the western bank i.e. not in contact with the slipway, to prevent the Chain Ferry remaining stranded or aground in an ebb tide situation. The Chain Ferry is crewed throughout the 24-hour period and maintains the VHF Channel 69 watch

Captain S McIntosh

Harbour Master, Harbour Office, Town Quay, Cowes, Isle of Wight, PO31 7AS

Email: chc@cowes.co.uk

Internet: www.cowesharbourcommission.co.uk

31st March 2011