



ABP PMSC Annual Review 2024

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Introduction

About ABP and the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC)

Associated British Ports (ABP) is the Statutory Harbour Authority (SHA) for 21 ports (22 SHAs) across the UK. We are committed to ensuring the safe and efficient operation of our harbours in full compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC). This Annual Review summarises our marine safety performance and key activities during 2024 and is issued by the Duty Holder – ABP’s Harbour Authority and Safety Board.

What is the Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC)

The Port Marine Safety Code (PMSC) sets the UK’s national standard for marine safety across ports, terminals, and other marine facilities. It provides a framework for managing marine operations safely, responsibly, and in line with legal obligations.

The Code promotes:

- Clear accountability for marine safety
- Risk-based Safety Management Systems (SMS)
- Competence and training of marine personnel
- Continuous improvement and legal compliance

Though not statutory, the PMSC is endorsed by government and industry and represents best practice. ABP’s Marine Policy is aligned with the PMSC to ensure safe, efficient, and environmentally sound operations across our facilities.



Vessel Activity

ABP ports recorded a total of 99,940 vessel movements in 2024, a 2% decrease from 2023. Southampton remained the busiest port, with over 52,647 movements, many of these being from Pilotage Exemption Certificate holders running ferry services across the Solent. Notably, South Wales ports saw a 6% increase in traffic, largely due to increasing steel slab imports in Newport.

Marine Incidents and Safety Performance

(including Risk Assessment, Accident Reporting and Investigation)

A total of 511 marine safety reports were submitted in 2024, with a continued emphasis on near-miss reporting. Equipment failure was the most reported category. Pleasingly we have seen a reduction in pilot boarding defects and weighted heaving line incidents. Targeted campaigns and training to address these issues, including engagement with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and MAIB (Marine Accident Investigation Branch), are ongoing. All 21 ports reviewed their existing risk assessments during the year and introduced new ones where necessary. Lessons from incidents across the UK and internationally were incorporated into local assessments to ensure ABP continues to learn from the wider port sector.

Emergency Preparedness and Exercises

ABP conducted multiple emergency exercises in 2024, including live oil spill drills in our Scottish ports and notification and tabletop exercises across all other locations. All our ports met the Oil Pollution Preparedness Response and Cooperation Plan (OPRC Plan) requirements stipulated by the MCA. These exercises tested our response capabilities and strengthened collaboration with local authorities and emergency services.

Conservancy and Hydrography

ABP maintained all navigational channels to published depths through a combination of trailer suction, water injection and grab dredging. Our hydrographic teams conducted over 650 surveys, with data shared promptly with the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office to promote navigational safety with all mariners entering our waters.

Management of Navigation and Pilotage

ABP's pilotage services remain a cornerstone of safe navigation. In 2024, over 23,000 acts of pilotage were conducted across our ports. We continued to invest in pilot training and safety, including participation in national reviews of pilot boarding arrangements and the rollout of pilot ladder safety posters. An improved, more efficient Pilot Vessel operating model was introduced across the group to reduce fuel consumption and emissions supporting ABP's commitment to Net Zero by 2040. Further improvements are planned for 2025.

Marine Department Operations

ABP's Marine Departments ensured the safe and efficient movement of vessels across our ports throughout 2024, with VTS centres operating 24/7 in line with national and international standards. These teams also supported berth planning, marine operations and emergency readiness, while continuing to strengthen coordination with pilots, tug operators, and port users.

Professional Qualifications and Competencies

The PMSC requires that all personnel involved in the safety of navigation are appropriately qualified and competent. Throughout 2024, all personnel engaged in marine activity across ABP's 21 ports were fully in date for all mandatory safety-critical training required to work safely in our port environments. This reflects ABP's strong commitment to maintaining high standards of competence and operational safety. Central to this is the ABP Academy, based in Hull, which monitors, coordinates, and supports training across the group. The Academy not only oversees marine-specific training but also supports development across all departments—from executive leadership and engineering to operations, HR, and finance—ensuring a consistent and professional standard across the business. Training compliance is reported to the Duty Holder quarterly.

Continuous Improvement and Future Plans

We met or made progress on all 2023 Marine Safety Plan objectives, including internal and external audits across with all 22 ports/SHA audited, all of which were found to be compliant, and our 2:1 Near-Miss to Incident reporting ratio. We also re-wrote our Marine Policy and PMSC Marine Safety Plan and published this on our website. This can be viewed at www.abports.co.uk.



The following audit schedule was undertaken:

LOCATION	DATE	AUDIT TYPE
SOUTHAMPTON	13-14 FEB	INTERNAL AUDIT
SOUTH WALES (NEWPORT, CARDIFF, BARRY, SWANSEA AND PORT TALBOT)	23-26 APRIL	INTERNAL AUDIT
BARROW, FLEETWOOD, GARSTON, SILLOTH, AYR and TROON	29 APRIL - 3 MAY	EXTERNAL AUDIT
HUMBER ESTUARY SERVICES	14 MAY	INTERNAL AUDIT
KING'S LYNN	18 JUNE	INTERNAL AUDIT
LOWESTOFT	19 JUNE	INTERNAL AUDIT
IPSWICH	20 JUNE	INTERNAL AUDIT
SOUTH WALES PORTS	29 - 31 JULY	EXTERNAL AUDIT
HUMBER PORTS (HULL, GOOLE, GRIMSBY & IMMINGHAM)	29 - 31 JULY	INTERNAL AUDIT
PLYMOUTH	3 DEC	EXTERNAL AUDIT
TEIGNMOUTH	4 DEC	EXTERNAL AUDIT

For 2025, we aim to enhance near-miss reporting, expand stakeholder engagement, reduce fuel consumption in our Pilot Vessels, and meet the requirements of the updated Ports and Marine Facilities Safety Code. This document refers to the Port Marine Safety Code and declares compliance with that code for the year 2024 when that code was in force. It is noted that this report was published after the release of the Ports and Marine Facilities Safety Code against which ABP will report for 2025.

Public Compliance Statement

ABP confirms its continued compliance with the Port Marine Safety Code for the year ending 31 December 2024. This statement is made on behalf of the ABP Harbour Authority and Safety Board.