



ABP Marine Policy 2025 – 2028



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Introduction

Associated British Ports (ABP) Marine Policy 2025 - 2028

As the UK's leading port operator, ABP is committed to upholding the highest standards of marine safety, environmental protection and navigational assurance across its Competent and Statutory Harbour Authorities (SHAs).

This Marine Policy sets the context for ABP's Marine Safety Management System (MSMS) and aligns with the ten sections of the 2025 Ports and Marine Facilities Safety Code (PMSC) and the principles outlined in the Guide to Good Practice (GtGP).

The Harbour Authority's policies and procedures commit the authority to undertake and regulate marine operations in a way that safeguards all of its ports and harbours, their users and the environment.

ABP commits to:

Safe and Regulated Marine Operations

ABP is fully committed to undertaking and regulating marine operations in a manner that safeguards the harbour and its facilities, all users, the general public, and the surrounding environment. This commitment is embedded in our MSMS, which ensures that all marine activities are conducted in accordance with the PMSC and relevant legislation. ABP recognises its duty to maintain safe harbours and to continuously assess and manage risks to prevent incidents and protect life, property and the environment.

Integration of Commercial Activities and Operational Efficiency

ABP acknowledges the importance of balancing commercial activity with the safe and efficient provision of marine services. Our operations are structured to support the timely and effective regulation of vessel movements, including the proactive reporting and investigation of near misses. We maintain clear procedures for pilotage, towage, berth allocation, and navigational safety, ensuring that commercial throughput is managed without compromising safety standards. The MSMS includes mechanisms for monitoring performance and learning from incidents to drive continuous improvement.

Managing Commercial Pressures Responsibly

While ABP operates in a competitive commercial environment, we are resolute in ensuring that commercial pressures do not undermine our statutory duties or the safe provision of services. Decision-making processes are guided by safety-first principles, and operational priorities are aligned with our legal obligations as a SHA. Where conflicts arise between commercial imperatives and safety considerations, safety will always take precedence. This approach is reinforced through leadership accountability, staff training and regular audits of our safety systems.

1. Duty Holder Responsibility

As the Duty Holder, ABP's Harbour Authority and Safety Board (HASB) is responsible for ensuring ABP's compliance with its obligations under the PMSC, in relation to ABP's ports, by undertaking the following tasks:

- To review and be aware of its existing powers based on local and national legislation;
- To ensure ABP complies with its port and harbour related duties and powers under existing legislation, including but not limited to the Harbours Act 1964 (as amended) and the Pilotage Act 1987 and in relation to its conservancy functions;
- To ensure marine risks are formally assessed and eliminated to reduce all such risks to "as low as reasonably practicable" in accordance with good practice;
- To operate an effective MSMS that has been developed after consultation and uses formal risk assessment;
- To use competent people (i.e. trained, qualified and experienced) in positions of responsibility for safety of navigation;
- To monitor, review and audit the MSMS on a regular basis;
- To publish a Safety Plan at least every three years, showing how the standards in the PMSC will be met and a report of performance against the plan;
- To comply with directions from the General Lighthouse Authorities and supply information and returns as required;
- To maintain a strategic oversight and direction of all port/harbour operations affecting marine safety and conservation;
- To develop policies, plans, systems, and procedures for safe navigation;
- To ensure the HASB seeks and adopts appropriate powers to effectively enforce its regulations;
- To set dues at a level to adequately fund the discharge of its duties;
- To appoint a Designated Person;
- Once every 3 years the CEO as Chair of the HASB will write to the Maritime and Coastguard Agency to confirm compliance with the PMSC

2. Designated Person

In accordance with the PMSC, ABP has appointed the Group Marine Manager as the Designated Person (DP) to provide independent assurance to the Duty Holder that the MSMS is working effectively.

While the DP is an internal appointment, the role is carried out with full commitment to functional independence, impartiality, and transparency. The DP has direct access to the Duty Holder and operates independently of day-to-day operational decision-making when discharging DP responsibilities.

To ensure the integrity of the assurance process:

- The DP's activities are clearly delineated from operational functions.
- All findings and recommendations are documented and reported without influence.
- Independent audits and peer reviews are commissioned where appropriate to supplement internal assurance.

This structure ensures that the DP function remains credible, competent, and effective, while benefiting from in-depth knowledge of the organisation's marine operations and risk environment.

3. Legislative Compliance

- ABP complies with all statutory duties, including the Harbours Act 1964, Merchant Shipping Acts, and relevant international conventions.
- This includes statutory duties under the Merchant Shipping (Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation Convention) Regulations, ensuring capabilities to deal with marine pollution incidents.
- ABP recognises its open ports duty, allowing unrestricted access to port facilities while maintaining control over safety, security and environmental protection. ABP's powers, derived from the Harbours Act 1964, include:

- The ability to regulate navigation and vessel movements within port limits.
- Authority to impose harbour dues and charges for services.
- Powers to undertake dredging and maintain navigational channels.
- The right to issue Harbour Revision and Empowerment Orders to improve port efficiency.
- Enforcement capabilities to ensure compliance with safety and environmental regulations.
- These powers are kept under regular review to ensure they remain effective in supporting safe, efficient, and sustainable port operations.

4. Risk Assessment

ABP's risk assessments ensure marine risks are mitigated to As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP). Structured risk assessments are embedded in operational decision-making and change control, ensuring:

- Safe movement of vessels and craft within the harbour.
- Safety at work for employees and other persons who may be affected by ABP's activities.
- Protection of the environment by assessing operational impacts.
- Prevention of omissions that could cause personal injury or environmental harm.
- Promotion of safety and environmental awareness among employees and stakeholders.

5. Safe Marine Operations

ABP is committed to ensuring the safety of all port users. The MSMS governs safe marine operations, including:

- Vessel traffic management, pilotage, berth planning, and emergency preparedness.
- Aids to Navigation (AtoN) provision and conservancy, maintaining safe navigation channels.
- Proactive engagement with commercial and recreational users to ensure compliance.

6. Harbour Master's Powers

ABP's Harbour Masters are legally authorised to exercise powers for safety and efficiency. They are supported by clear governance frameworks, appropriate resourcing and delegation to act decisively in fulfilling statutory responsibilities.

7. Pilotage

In ports where ABP is the Competent Harbour Authority, pilotage services are managed safely, transparently and in compliance with the Pilotage Act 1987, ensuring:

- Competent, qualified pilots.
- Rigorous training and assessment frameworks.
- Transparent administration of Pilotage Exemption Certificates (PECs).

8. Vessel Traffic Services (VTS)

Where formal risk assessments dictate, ABP provides VTS in accordance with IALA standards and IMO Resolutions, contributing to:

- Safety of life at sea.
- Safe and efficient navigation.
- Environmental protection.

9. Conservancy & Environmental Protection

ABP's conservancy duty aligns with GtGP conservancy and environmental objectives, ensuring:

- Proactive acquisition of hydrographic data for safe navigation.
- Maintenance and marking of navigation channels, including the provision of AtoN.
- Implementation of biodiversity measures, promoting good ecological status where feasible.
- Collaboration with government agencies to manage environmentally designated areas.



10. Compliance and Continuous Improvement

ABP is committed to full compliance with the PMSC and fostering a culture of continuous improvement across all marine operations. This commitment includes:

- Monitoring safety performance via metrics and KPIs, covering incident frequency, near-miss reporting and stakeholder feedback.
- Regular internal and external audits to ensure MSMS effectiveness.
- Duty Holder assurance reporting, covering safety performance, emerging risks, non-conformities and progress against objectives.
- Understanding the safety and compliance status of marine facilities operating within each Statutory Harbour Authority (SHA). ABP works with marine terminals, berths, and facilities conducting marine operations to delineate areas of responsibility and establish safety protocols where required.
- Applying lessons learned from audits, incident investigations, stakeholder input and cross-industry best practices.

This approach ensures the MSMS remains effective, adaptive, and fit for purpose in a dynamic operational and regulatory environment.

This Marine Policy is reviewed every three years and formally endorsed by the HASB. It is communicated across ABP's marine teams and stakeholders, reinforcing collective commitment to safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible port operations.

