


Dock Gate Operations - information to berth holders

- 1) The dock gate is automatic in normal sea conditions and can be manually overridden to be closed to protect people, pontoons & vessels during storm surge conditions.
- 2) In order to keep vessels afloat on their berths at low tide, the gate will automatically close to retain a minimum of 1 metre depth, some berths will hold up to 1.5 metres for deeper draft vessels.
- 3) Seaham's tidal predictions to retain 1 metre depth of water within the marina will be +2.5 metres CD. *Please note that this is the "predicted" tide height and can change due to high or low atmospheric pressures acting on the tides i.e. the levels of sea water through the gateway may be higher or lower than predicted therefore the gate could close earlier or later than the predicted time for that tide, albeit the same depths will be retained on the berths.*
- 4) The period of time the gate will be closed at low water will depend upon the size of the tide below the predicted height of +2.5m CD. *The average duration the gate will be open is approx 3.5 hours either side of high tide (total of 7 hours).*


It is therefore important that all berth holders allow for differences in durations and times the gate will be closed or open according to the height of low water tides. The marina staff cannot open the gate before it is due to be opened as this would result in the loss of water within the marina and put pontoons & vessels at risk of grounding.

- 5) Two sets of navigation lights are situated either side of the dock gate, one set positioned towards the marina berths for vessels departing the marina and the other set positioned so that they can be seen from the seaward side for incoming vessels.

The navigation lights indicate the following;

-  **3 vertical red lights;** a) the gate is closed b) the gate is closing c) the gate is opening
d) there are special port shipping movements in progress through the inner harbour

Please note that in no circumstances must any vessel approach the gate or gateway during the phase of red lights.

-  **3 vertical green lights;** a) the gate is open for navigation

Please note that the green lights are not 'one way traffic lights' but indicate the freedom to navigate through the gateway to both incoming and departing vessels. Vessels must not moor or stop within the gateway or the entrances to the gateway. In the interest of safety

and good seamanship please give way to any manually powered craft or yachts in either direction.

- 6) An audible alarm sounds when the gate is opening or closing; the alarm will sound 5 minutes prior to the gate moving then for 10 minutes as the gate opens or closes. The navigation lights will show red during the whole of this 15 minute phase.
- 7) In adverse sea conditions the gate can be closed manually to protect the pontoons and vessels within the marina. When storm surge or wave heights approaching the gateway reaches a level that could cause damage to pontoons or vessels, a height of approx 0.5 metres, the gate must be closed. This height of swell within the gateway will mean that the surge passing over the bar (the approach between the outer piers) will be in excess of 2 metres high therefore it is unlikely that any resident vessels would be at sea during these conditions.

If vessels are at sea during deteriorating sea conditions and the skipper of a vessel is unsure or concerned that the gate may be closed whilst heading back to the marina, then contact the marina to receive information on the situation.

In some situations, the marina staff may contact vessels at sea to warn of impending gate closure, it is thereafter at the discretion of the skipper to head back to the marina.

Should sea conditions reach a state that requires the gate to be closed and a vessel or vessels are still at sea then it is at the discretion of the skipper and his or her crew to use the safety disembarking ladders which are situated on the east quay outside of the gateway.

Please remember that the gate is there to prevent storm surge entering the marina and to protect people and their vessels on the pontoons, therefore the gate cannot be opened once it is closed during storm conditions. Please think safety first and head back to the marina before conditions deteriorate to an unsafe state.

- 8) In some circumstances and beyond the control of the marina operator, gate failure could occur that may affect the gate not closing when it should at low tide or during storm surge conditions i.e. local power failure, hydraulics/ram failure, which would result in the loss of water within the marina and vessels to sit on the sediment or storm surge to enter the marina. Similar failures may apply when the gate is in the closed position and not opening when it should resulting in not being able to navigate in or out of the marina. In such rare circumstances as these then the marina staff will endeavour to rectify the situation as soon as possible and work closely with the berth holders to ensure the safety of those and their vessels are of primary importance.
- 9) In the interest of safety to vessels and obstructions to gate operations, berth holders are asked to report any solid floating debris or obstacles within the inner harbour and marina that could cause such a hazard to navigation or the opening & closing of the dock gate.