

Notes for local craft

When planning to go to sea it is recommended that the entrance is viewed from the shore before setting off. This will provide an appreciation of the general sea state, conditions on the bar and within the entrance. Navigation of Axmouth Harbour is very much reliant on the sea state and height of tide, consideration of both is essential for safe navigation.

Proceeding to sea – depths & tidal stream

The Harbour dries to approximately 1.5m. A rock bed sill known as the "*Rapids*", situated just below the Harbour Houses, maintains a certain amount of water within the harbour at all times; the sill is the shallowest part when navigating the harbour channel.

On departing the mooring basin, a course should be set towards the lower quayside buttress just below the Harbour Houses. From the buttress maintain a course parallel to the harbour wall approximately 5 metres off, this will avoid the shallows (*Rapids*) to starboard.

Once clear of the *Rapids* there is usually sufficient water in the entrance and the outside approach channel. Vessels with draughts up to 0.8m (2' 6") can usually clear the *Rapids* two and a half hours before Local High Water (HW), obviously the shallower the draught, the earlier one can leave.

During springs, the flood tidal stream can run upwards to five knots, the maximum flood runs for a period between two hours and half an hour before HW. The ebb runs stronger especially after heavy rain maintaining a maximum rate from one hour after HW until the harbour effectively dries out.

When proceeding to sea against the flood, low powered vessels are advised to make the harbour entrance either during the period two/three hours before HW or around the HW period. Re-entering the harbour during springs should be no later than one hour after HW, to avoid the building strength of the ebb flow.

Harbour Entrance

Vessels entering or leaving the harbour with the direction of flow should take great care especially in the entrance, where the stream tends to set towards the harbour wall and pier. When entering the harbour sufficient allowance should be made for the east going tidal stream, which can set a vessel towards the pier.

During neaps the tidal streams are much weaker enabling vessels to enter or leave between three hours before and two hours after HW (dependent on draught & sea state). However caution should be exercised due to shallower depths and build-up of the bar.

All of the above is dependent on sea and weather conditions. The approach and entrance can be dangerous with moderate to strong onshore winds, causing seas to break heavily on the bar. Such conditions are worse with the ebb tide opposing an onshore wind; this creates a dangerous wind over tide situation with overfalls. During such conditions the harbour entrance should be avoided.

Speed limit & navigation

There is a five knot speed limit in the harbour, including the approaches and estuary. Vessels navigating against the tidal stream have greater manoeuvrability and should give way to those navigating with the stream, especially in the entrance. Due to limited vision on the approach to the entrance from within or seaward, vessels

should navigate with caution and avoid overtaking in the approaches and entrance to the harbour.

Vessels should take care to make sufficient allowance when navigating within the harbour, especially during spring tides to avoid being set onto moored craft, pontoons or the bridge.

On occasions where the bar forms a constricting approach channel, either to the east or to the west, caution should be exercised to avoid being set onto the foreshore. Due to this, vessels returning to the harbour after an extended period should aim to arrive at HW to ensure maximum depth of water, especially if the position of the bar is uncertain.

**These notes were adapted from the AYC Activities afloat safety guidance.
Whilst every effort has been made to ensure their accuracy neither AYC nor
EDDC can be held liable where circumstances have changed from those
described. Every craft has its own capabilities and limitations and it is the duty
of the skipper to take these into account whilst navigating his vessel**