

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OBAN BAY, NORTH CHANNEL & SOUND OF KERRERRA (www.obanharbour.scot)

This Code of Practice was developed through extensive consultation with a wide range of commercial and leisure users of Oban Bay. It has no standing in law but following the key principles of common sense, sound seamanship and common courtesy and drawing on the experience of many users of Oban Bay over many years it provides advice on how to navigate safely through the Bay. Nothing in this Code of Practice relieves the master/skipper from their responsibility for the safety of their vessel and all those on board. Similarly, nothing in this Code of Practice constitutes a deviation from or variation to the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972 as amended (IRPCS), published in Merchant Shipping Notice No.1781/COLREG 1 or relieves the master/skipper from their responsibility for complying with the IRPCS.

For the purposes of this Code of Practice, the following expressions shall have the associated meanings as described below: -

Large Vessel: A vessel of more than 20 metres in length overall, and/or a vessel with a draft in excess of three (3) metres.

Large Vessel Channel: The deep water route through the North Channel marked on the appropriate charts and sailing directions as being for use by 'large vessels', which is considered to be a "narrow channel" as defined in IRPCS Rule 9.

Oban Bay: Those waters lying to the south of a line from the north-west tip of Kerrera (Rubh 'a' Bhearnaig) to the north-west tip of Maiden Island and to the north of a line drawn east-west through Sgeirean Dubha light tower (Cutter Rock Beacon, Kerrera Sound).

Oban Harbour: That part of Oban Bay lying to the east of a line drawn between Dog Stone to the north and Brandy Stone to the south.

Small Vessel: A vessel other than a Large Vessel.

Code of Practice

1. **Right of Way:** Large vessels "leaving" Oban Bay shall have the right of way over all vessels "entering" Oban Bay. Small vessels, including sailing vessels, shall not impede the passage of a large vessel entering or leaving Oban Bay.
2. **Sound of Kerrera:** Small Vessels entering or leaving Oban Bay through the Sound of Kerrera should keep as near to the starboard side of the main channel, which is buoyed and liesto the west of the Ferry Rocks as is safe and practicable.
3. **North Channel:** Vessels using the North Channel are likely to have their sightlines obscured in many circumstances, therefore 'small vessels' entering or leaving Oban Bay through the North Channel should remain outside the Large Vessel Channel where practicable. 'Small vessels' shall not cross the Large Vessel Channel if such crossing impedes the passage of a vessel which can safely navigate only within the Large Vessel Channel (IRPCS Rule 9(d)).

4. **Sailing vessels** should use their auxiliary engines (if fitted) at all times when navigating through the North Channel and in any event shall not impede the passage of a vessel which can safely navigate only within the Large Vessel Channel (IRPCS Rule 9(b)).
5. **Speed:** the speed limit in the area covered by this code is 10 knots through the water, except in Oban Harbour where it is 6 knots.
6. **Wash:** All vessels should show proper seamanship and common courtesy to others and avoid making excessive wash.
7. **VHF Channel 12/16:** All vessels approaching or navigating in Oban Bay should listen on VHF Channel 12/16. Large Vessels should make a warning broadcast on VHF Channel 16, followed by a brief safety announcement on VHF Channel 12, giving an ETA at Dunollie Light prior to entry or departure. More details are at the VHF tab on the Oban Harbour website.
8. **Seaplanes:** A seaplane service operates to and from Oban Bay. The aircraft commander should ensure that the area is clear of surface craft before landing or taking off and shall, when on the surface, be governed by the IPRCS.
9. **Berthing:** 'Large vessels' berthing at the NLB berth, ferry berths or North Pier require sea room to manoeuvre onto or off the berths. For example: ferries loading over the bow will swing into the northern half of Oban Bay to give room to line up for the berth; those loading over the stern will initially, swing into the southern half of Oban Bay and then head towards the northern half to give sea room to back down onto the berth at Railway Pier. All vessels are to keep clear of 'large vessels' so manoeuvring.
10. **Anchorage:** Mariners should note the designated anchorages portrayed under the port information tab on the web site.
11. **Cruise Ship Tenders:** cruise ship tenders ferrying large numbers of passengers between cruise ships anchored in Oban Bay and the shore are often to be seen; mariners should keep a good and wary lookout for these vessels.

Very small vessels such as kayaks, paddleboards and inflatables should make every effort to ensure that they are easily visible from the bridge of large vessels by use of brightly coloured clothing and lights when appropriate – the attention of people in these vessels is drawn to the 'Be Safe – Be Seen' guidance available from the website www.obanharbour.scot.