

What is free sailing?

The Club promotes sailing for all our members whether racing, cruising or training through official events advertised in our sailing programme. Some members may prefer not to sail as part of an official event or during times when no facilities are available (e.g., safety boat cover or opened Clubhouse). Additionally, members may also wish to sail when an official event cannot continue as originally planned.

In essence, 'Free Sailing' is when it is not part of an official event and this guide is a way that when going afloat, sailing can be enjoyed while mitigating risks to yourself and other river users. Examples of 'Free Sailing' would be:

- You arrive for a Wednesday evening sail to find that no qualified safety boat drivers are available.
- Adult Rookies does not have a lead sailor to organise or manage the event.
- Sunday racing is cancelled due to lack of wind.
- Sailing on a day when there is no official event planned.

If you go afloat without safety boat cover or are not part of an organised event, this will be classed as 'free sailing'.

What must you do?

As with all members that go afloat, you must abide by Club rules and byelaws, which state:

9. The owner and/or skipper of any boat launching from the club shall be responsible for:
 - (a) the seaworthiness of that boat, and
 - (b) ensuring the boat has adequate insurance against third party risks.

If a situation occurs once afloat where you need to moor or beach your dinghy on the river, or it has sunk, or it is impeding navigational parts of the river, then Medway Peel Ports must be notified by calling 01795 596596.

Juniors can only sail within a group when other adult members are afloat and only when the junior has been given permission from their parent(s) or guardian(s), who must not leave the Club whilst the junior is afloat.

What should you do?

Weather conditions, tide and current

- Based on the current conditions, is it safe to sail?
- If the weather conditions change, can you return safely?
- When the tide changes, will this impair your ability to return safely?
- Can you plan your sail so that the tide can return you to the Club if the wind drops?

Sailing ability and experience

- Can you sail within your capabilities?
- Could you come ashore to another location if you needed to?

Dinghy and equipment

- Is your boat adequate for the sailing you intend to do?
- Do you need to carry additional equipment, including mooring rope, anchor or paddle?
- Do you need to take a whistle or other means of communication to get attention from other river users?

Sailing as a group

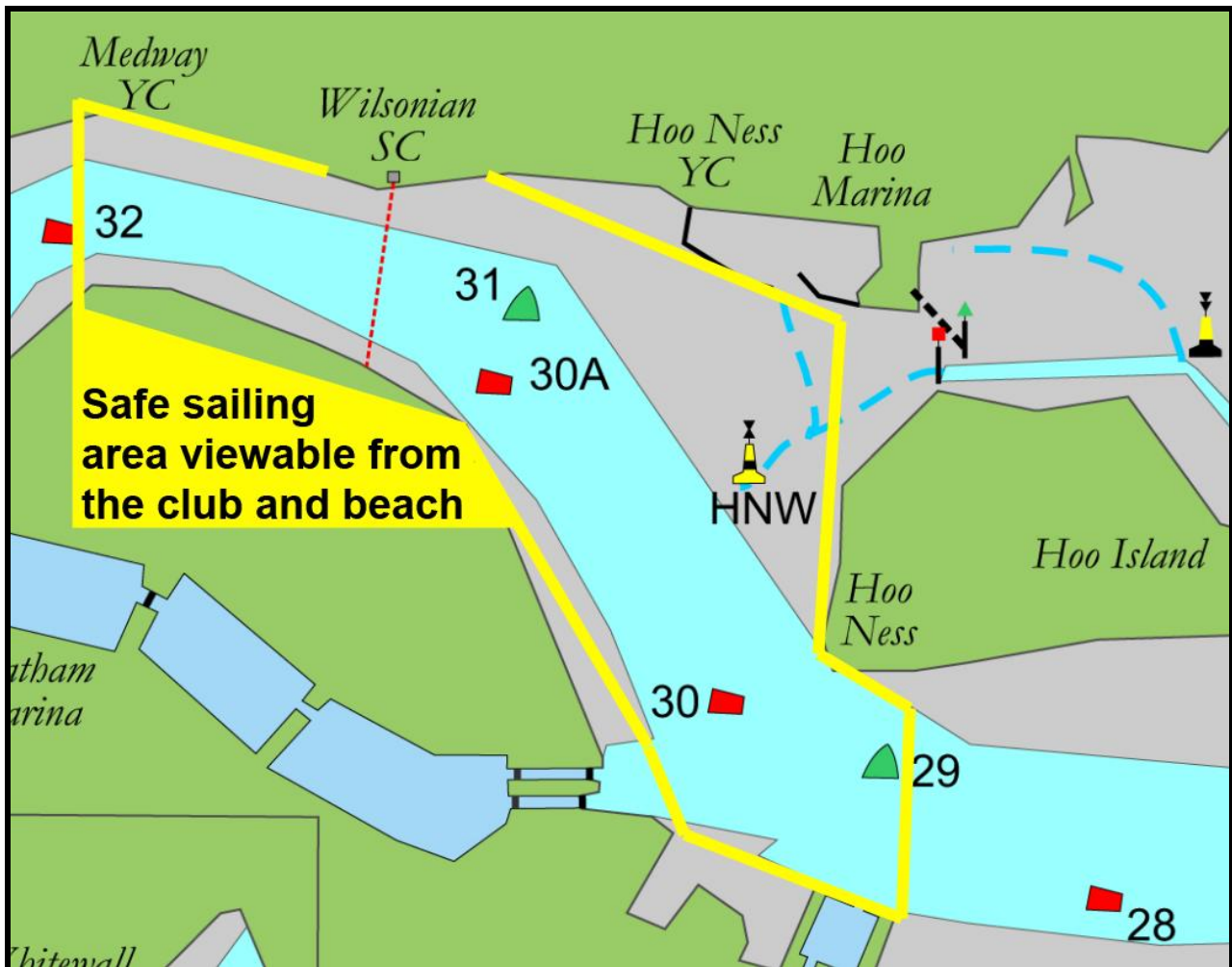
- Are you able to sail in a group with a set destination and agreed route?
- Do you know everyone in the group before you go afloat?
- Are you able to keep an eye on those in your group who may not be as experienced as yourself and others?
- Are you able to let all those in the group know when there is a change of plan?
- Once ashore, are you able to keep an eye on those still afloat to ensure they can return safely?

Communication

- Use the sign-on/off board or sheet available by the block house, or use the race board to enter your name, class, sail number, intention, the number of persons in your dinghy, and the expected time of return.
- Advise fellow members, friends or family of your intentions and when you are likely to return. It would also be prudent to advise those that you have notified, that you have returned safely.
- Take a charged mobile phone or VHF radio in a waterproof bag with contacts that you can call if needed, as well as Medway Peel Ports (to report any incidents) on 01795 596596.
NB: If an expected time of return has passed, this may trigger an alarm from a member of the Club to raise a possible incident with authorities.

Safe sailing area

The following map shows a safe sailing area where you can be viewed from the Club and foreshore.



Club Officials

If a Club official feels that one or more sailors cannot partake in free sailing, then their decision is final and those asked not to go afloat MUST not do so.

Summary

Any member taking part in free sailing does so at their own risk and must understand that their dinghy and crew is their responsibility.