



Diving Skomer Marine Conservation Zone – Safety Information

Divers are recognised as being safety conscious. However, divers sometimes get into serious difficulties around Skomer; the information in this leaflet is intended to help you avoid adding to H.M. Coastguard diving casualty statistics.

The information in this leaflet is specific to the Skomer Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ). Divers are urged to observe the safety guidelines issued by their own diving organisations, particularly for the use of surface marker buoys and the international A-flag. Boat users should observe Coastguard recommendations for safety precautions and suitable equipment for operating in a potentially hazardous area.

H.M. Coastguard

The local H.M. Coastguard station is Milford Haven Coastguard Operations Centre; telephone 01646 690909, VHF channel 16, call-sign "Milford Haven Coastguard". The Coastguard welcome being informed of diving activities, and also when they are safely completed. If VHF communication is poor under the cliffs move further out to make a call.

**IN AN EMERGENCY CALL THE COASTGUARD IMMEDIATELY
ALWAYS INFORM THE COASTGUARD AT AN EARLY STAGE IN ANY INCIDENT OR
AT ANY TIME THERE IS DOUBT AS TO THE SAFETY OF A DIVER.**

TIDES AND CURRENTS

Tidal streams are very strong almost everywhere around Skomer Island. During spring tides the currents exceed 7 knots in Jack and Little Sounds and 4 knots off the west coast of Skomer. Overfalls may be expected even in good weather where tides are strongest; in the Sounds and off the Garland Stone, Mewstone and the west coast of SKomer.

Deep water is close to the shore in many parts of the MCZ; beware of the combination of deep water and strong currents.

There are down currents into deep water at several locations around the island. Particular hazards are:

- Down-eddies into depths of 50 metres at the north end of Jack Sound cause by the strong currents during the north-going (flood) tidal stream. **DO NOT** dive Jack Sound in a north-going current.
- Down-eddies into deeper water north of Bull Hole, the Mewstone and the Garland Stone during both ebb and flood streams.

The strong, variable and unpredictable currents around most of the MCZ have carried divers far from where they began their dive; using a conspicuous surface marker buoy (SMB) at all times in all areas subject to current will keep the risk of support boats losing contact with divers to a minimum.

Slack water The tidal currents around Skomer are complicated and in some places slack water is difficult to predict. Current strength and slack water are time vary over very short distances around the island and there are local back-eddies. **The slack water and tidal stream maps are only a guide.**

BOAT USERS

Be aware of other divers, respect the A-flag and divers' surface marker buoys. Keep a particular lookout for shore divers in Martins Haven.

Dive support boats are not effective when anchored and, in any case, unnecessary anchoring is discouraged for reasons of conservation. Because of the strength of the tidal currents and the depth of water close to the shore the minimum useful length of anchor warp is 60m.

MARTINS HAVEN

Between spring and late autumn the Skomer Island passenger boat runs to and from the landing stage in Martins Haven many times a day. When alongside the landing stage the boat's propeller continues to turn. The boat reverses away from the landing stage, the boatman cannot see divers in the water nearby but will make the sound signal for going astern – three short blasts. Martins Haven can also be busy with dive boats.

When diving in Martins Haven:

- Use an SMB,
- Keep to the sides of the Haven,
- Keep clear of the landing stage at all times,
- Do not swim alongside, behind, or under the island passenger boat, or any other boat, at the landing stage.

THE LUCYWRECK

The wreck lies in deep water, 32m to the foredeck, and over 40m to the seabed at low water; it is subject to strong currents during some states of the tide.

The *Lucy* is buoyed for the convenience of divers and to forestall anchors being dragged across the seabed to locate it.

The island passenger boat, dive boats and yachts frequently pass close to the Lucy marker buoy. When diving on the Lucy make sure you surface close to the marker buoy or your boat or use a "delayed" SMB for surfacing.

EMERGENCY ACTIONS

Actions taken to prevent personal injury or loss of life, or to save a vessel, are exempt from the byelaws and Codes of Conduct, including the MCZ speed limits.

The Skomer Marine Conservation Zone is managed by Natural Resources Wales for the purposes of conservation and research. Although NRW has no responsibility for the safety of divers whilst in the area of the MCZ, it wishes to inform users about the hazards specific

to the MCZ area. By buoying the wreck of the Lucy NRW do not assume any liability and divers dive on the Lucy as elsewhere in the MCZ, at their own risk.

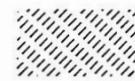
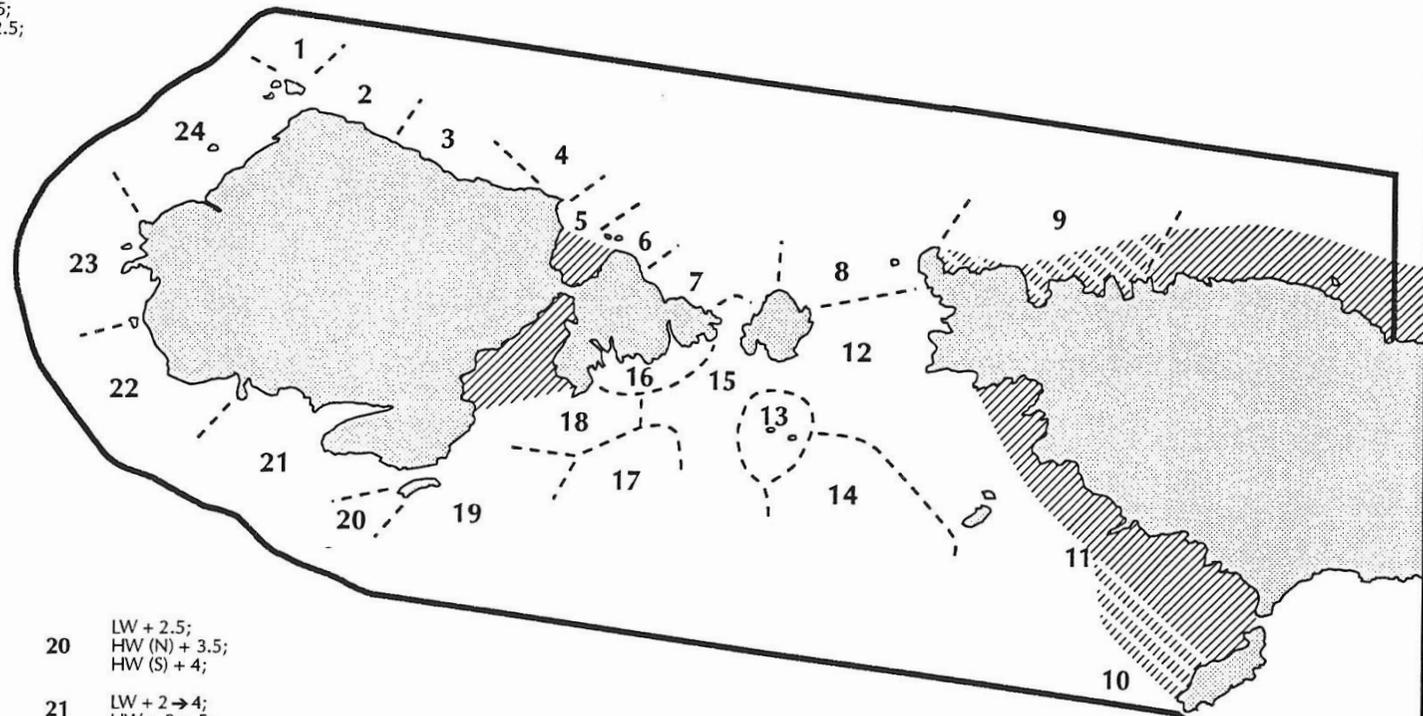
The text of this leaflet was produced by the Skomer MCZ Safety Advisory Committee (HM Coastguard, British Sub-Aqua Club, Pembrokeshire County Council (Water Safety), Dale Sailing Company, Sports Council for Wales and Natural Resources Wales.

SLACK WATER GUIDE

SLACK WATER TIMES

The times of slack water on this map are times at which slack water has been recorded. The map is not definitive but should be used as a guide. Times are related to High and Low tide at Milford Haven. At some locations slack water times are shown both for spring (S) and (N) tides (eg LW(S)+2 means 2 hours after LW during spring tides).

- 1 HW (N) + 2.5;
LW + 2 → 2.5;
- 2 LW + 1 → 3.5;
HW + 2.5;
- 3 LW → LW + 4;
HW + 1 → 4;
- 4 LW (N) + 0.5 → 4; LW (S) + 1 → 3;
HW (N) + 1.5 → 3.5; HW (S) + 2.5;
- 5 LW (N) + 1 → 4.5; LW (S) + 1.5 → 3.5;
HW (N) + 1 → 3.5; HW (S) + 1.5 → 2.5;
- 6 LW + 1 → 2.5;
HW + 2 → 4.5;
- 7 LW - 0.5 → 5;
HW (N) + 2 → 6;
- 8 LW + 2.25 → 2.75;
HW + 2.25 → 2.75;
- 9 LW → 5;
HW + 1 → LW;
- 10 LW + 2.5 → 3;
HW + 3;
- 11 LW + 2.25 → 2.75;
HW 3;
- 12 LW + 2.5;
HW + 2.5;
- 13 HW + 1.5;
LW + 2.5;
- 14 LW + 2 → 3;
- 15 LW (N) + 2 → 2.5; LW (S) + 2;
HW (N) 2.25 → 2.75; HW (S) + 2.25;
- 16 LW → HW;
HW + 2 → LW;
- 17 LW (N) → 1.5;
LW (S) → 1.5;
HW + 3.5 → 5;
- 18 LW →
LW + 2;
HW + 2.25 → 4;
- 19 LW + 2 → 2.5;
HW + 3.5 → 4;
- 20 LW + 2.5;
HW (N) + 3.5;
HW (S) + 4;
- 21 LW + 2 → 4;
HW + 3 → 5;
- 22 LW + 2.5 → 3;
HW (N) + 2.5 → 3.5;
HW (S) + 3;
- 23 LW + 2.5 → 3;
HW + 3.5;
- 24 LW (N) + 2 → 4;
LW (S) + 2 → 3;
HW (N) + 1.5 → 3.5;
HW (S) + 2 → 3;



Weak or no current
most of the time,
except over high water.



Weak or no current.



Approximate boundary.

TIDAL STREAMS

1 1 -2 knots
 3 3 -4 knots
 5 5+ knots

(N) Neap tides only
 (S) Spring tides only
 Slack water

