



Coronavirus resilience: maritime pilot transfer arrangements – suggested procedure at UK ports Version 2, updated February 2021

This guidance note has been prepared in consultation with a collection of UK maritime trade associations and is designed to give some non-prescriptive options to help pilotage authorities remain resilient. There are a wide variety of pilotage options around the UK and our approximately 500 maritime pilots are a critical component in facilitating a wide number of shipping movements and helping to maintain UKCNI and energy supplies, supply chains and trade. Pilots and other port and maritime operatives have been identified as ‘key/critical workers’ by the Government and therefore expected to carry out their roles in as normal a way as possible whilst being mindful of advice on limiting the potential spread of COVID-19.

The guidance is intended to supplement other local transfer advice that already exists or be integrated, either in full or in part, where appropriate. Such other local transfer advice may relate to shore-side arrangements involving port vehicles, taxis, tugs and mooring boats where similar procedures and principles should be followed to what it contained in this document. It does not attempt to alter or replace the safety advice contained in the Pilotage Boarding and Landing Code or any Workboat Codes, it merely highlights additional procedures that will contribute to limiting the risks presented by infectious diseases such as COVID-19, particularly in light of the new variant of the virus that appears to be more transmissible than the original virus. The guidance is non statutory and harbour authorities may wish to use sections as appropriate.

Suggested procedures:

Like many key/critical workers in other occupations, it will not always be practically possible to precisely follow the Government’s guidance to maintain a two-metre distance at all times during pilotage and pilot cutter operations. However, the following measures may significantly reduce the likelihood of spreading COVID-19 if followed closely as far as practically possible but subject to adjustment:

- Prior to boarding a cutter, the coxswain and crew should ensure they are not suffering with any of the symptoms of COVID-19 nor are any members of their household, i.e. the people they live with (in this case they should self-isolate in line with Government guidance).
- The cutter crew shall have all washed their hands thoroughly prior to boarding the cutter.
- The coxswain/crew shall ensure that the cutter is cleansed and that appropriate touch surfaces such as handrails and seats are wiped down with a soap-based or disinfectant solution or wipes before and after each run. They should also aim to have an on board supply of hand sanitiser/wipes which should be used regularly, especially on entry and re-entry into the cabin.
- Where possible the cutter should be as ventilated as possible with fresh air.
- The pilot and his/her immediate household should also be symptom free, having thoroughly washed their hands prior to boarding.
- It is strongly advised that all cutter crew and pilots should wear a face-covering (preferably a Type IIR Medical Grade face mask) when boarding, travelling in and disembarking from the launch.
- If the pilot is joining from a ship, the cutter crew should where possible provide disposable hand wipes to the pilot and have a safe way to dispose of them after use.
- Pilots should observe the highest precautions with their own health and to minimise exposure whilst on board the cutter and minimise physical contact with cutter crew members if not essential or use gloves where possible, maintaining as much distance as practical.



- To aid physical distancing, for some operations the Competent Harbour Authority may wish to limit the number pilots transferred on a single cutter and, subject to boat size and seating arrangements attempt to maintain as close as is practicable to a 2 metre space for those on board.
- Consider using NHS Track and Trace app/QR code or other internally managed track and trace system on pilot boats to rapidly identify potential asymptomatic cases.
- Consideration should be given to the installation of screening (Perspex/plastic) between seating on the pilot cutter to supplement distancing between personnel.
- Consumption of food or drink whilst on board the cutter should be avoided unless essential.
- Prior to boarding or landing the Pilot, the coxswain may confirm via radio with the master of the ship that previous advice provided to the harbour authority/VTS that nobody on board is suffering from COVID-19 like symptoms. Some authorities may choose to seek this confirmation through their VTS.

There could be differences on the rare occasions a pilot may be asked/required to board a visiting ship that has, or suspects it has a member/s of crew experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. Each pilotage authority should liaise with their local Port Health Authority to ensure that the appropriate health protection measures have been put in place prior to the pilot boarding. This will include, but will not be limited to:

1. The vessel should be subject to an individual risk assessment involving the appropriate persons such as port or pilotage authorities, local port health authority and the pilot.
2. The vessel should confirm that the crew member(s) suffering COVID-19 symptoms are isolated away from any area of the vessel that the pilot needs to access or transit.
3. A clear and sanitised pathway from the pilot boarding point to the bridge should be clearly identified and confirmed to the pilot prior to boarding.
4. Crew members required to be present on the bridge during the pilotage should be kept to a minimum, all should maintain social distancing where possible and should wear face-coverings at all times.
5. The pilot could be provided with appropriate enhanced PPE as an additional precaution, where practicable, as identified by the individual risk assessment and dependent on the severity of the circumstances.
6. The pilot should follow Port Health guidance before disembarking from the vessel and adhere to appropriate decontamination/disrobing procedures. Pilotage authorities should ensure that they have appropriate stocks of enhanced PPE and should ensure that relevant training and guidance in its use should be given to the pilot prior to use.