

Consolidated Update

The Consolidate Update will add new material as required.

Dated 23rd April, 2024 – St George’s Day

1. The Long Sand Head (Page 119):

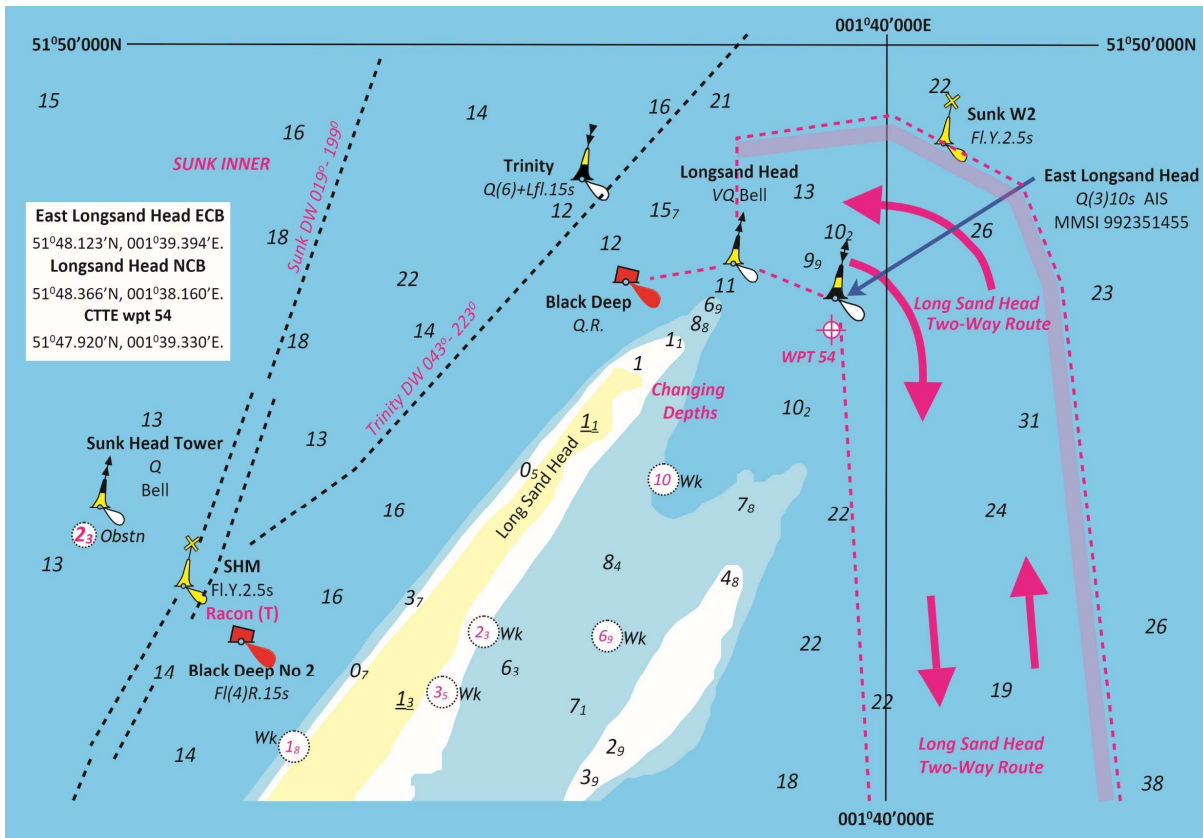
Trinity House have just issued a Notice to Mariners providing us advance notice of changes at the Long Sand Head. The changes are planned to be actioned “on or around 17th May, 2024”. In the past 12 months, the Long Sand Head has continued gently, but persistently, to creep more to the northeast. For us there is no crisis but heed the warning not to ‘cut the corner’. For shipping using the Two-Way Route in and out of the Black Deep two changes have been necessary.

The changes are:

The creation of a new east cardinal buoy. This will be positioned very close to current position of the Longsand Head north cardinal buoy. The new buoy will be designated ‘East Longsand Head’. Characteristics are shown in the chartlet. Note it will have AIS.

The Longsand Head north cardinal buoy will be moved west and a little north. As you will see in the chartlet the effect is to make the corner clear for shipping. Characteristics for this buoy will remain as at present.

The only CTTE routes involved are Routes 26 and 31 (Page 119): the ‘Outside’ routes between Ramsgate and Harwich Harbour or the Deben. At the Long Sand Head, CTTE has Waypoint 54. I consider that, at present, there is no need for the waypoint to be moved. As you will see the waypoint is located clear of the Two-Way Route TSS yet has ample water for leisure craft.



The chartlet is drawn by me based on Imray charts. You are able to download this chartlet at: <https://www.crossingthethamesestuary.com/page29.html> either as a jpeg or pdf file.

Dated 26th November, 2023

1. A typo/error (Page 46):

The first error in the Third Edition! Thank you to an eagle-eyed reader.

The error is in the image for Foulger's Gat and the Wind Farm and is the number of the waypoint adjacent to the Long Sand Inner safe water buoy. The waypoint is numbered as '27' when it should be '25'. The waypoint is correctly numbered in the images on Pages 10 and 115.

The reason is, I am afraid, an editing error by me. In Edition 2 that waypoint was, indeed, numbered '27' but as a result of deleting the routes via the North Edinburgh Channel for Edition 3, I deleted two waypoints there and thus the waypoint number at the Long Sand Inner was changed. Can you note the correction please?

2. Some general observations about the Estuary:

In terms of the Estuary it has been a good season. Except as noted in the update on 14th July and in item 3, there have been no changes affecting us.

The Port of London Authority has been very busy with surveys, principally about the main channels but early in the year they were also commissioned by the Crouch Harbour Authority. That has confirmed that our chartlet of the Ray Sand is correct, subject of course to the usual proviso that things can change. The PLA have told me that they shortly intend to survey the Whitaker area.

A major professional survey is also being conducted, to be finished by the end of this year, that will update the Naze, Wallet and Spitway areas. Of course I will be monitoring Notices to Mariners. Note that NtM do tend to just report 'bad' news. Good news such as deeper water tends to be updated by new chart editions. But better water at the Spitway might be notified by a move of the safe water buoys. We did not re-survey the Spitway this year but each time we passed through we checked and found no change. Several readers also reported no change, particularly in the 'best' part.

The London Array wind Farm has had a busy season. Some cabling has been uncovered but none will affect leisure craft. Some cabling was replaced within the Farm area and some large equipment used has by and large not affected Foulger's Gat. It is absolutely clear that wind farms need constant maintenance and can need to respond quite quickly. The Co-ordinators provide an excellent NtM service so we are always told. The Coordinators as all leisure craft to call up any Array boat on CH16 before entering.

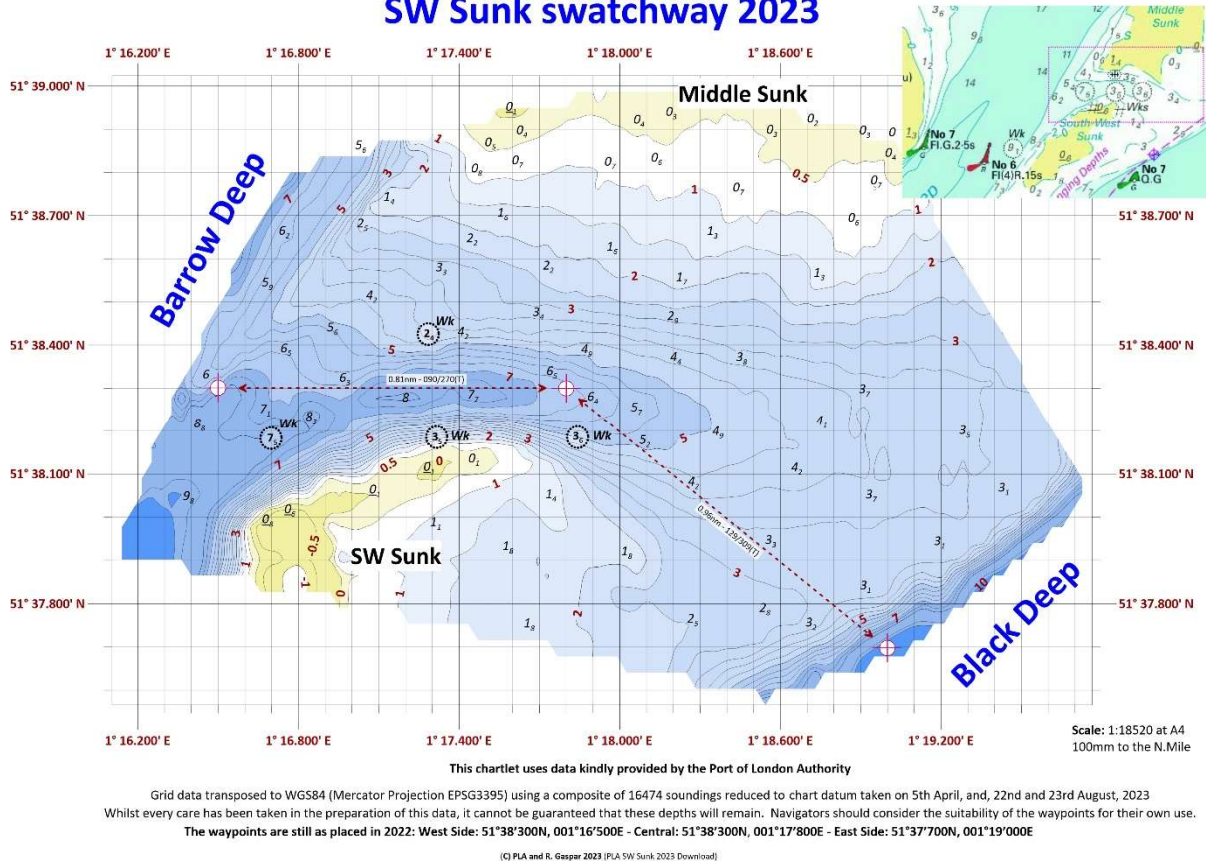
3. The SW Sunk Swatchway (Page 26):

Courtesy of some excellent work by the Port of London Authority, we can update on the SW Sunk. The short message is that the 'object' found this year in the swatch is a wreck and there is 2.4m CD over it, the SW knoll has been stable (i.e. it has not moved much if at all) and the SW edge of the Middle Sunk sand has continued to retreat (i.e. usable water in the swatch is wider).

The PLA work involved a multi-beam survey investigating the wreck and the SW edge of the Middle Sunk. That provides very detailed data and it is very kind that the PLA have allowed me to use the full XYZ data. As a result I have finished a new chartlet which can be downloaded at:

<https://www.crossingthethamesestuary.com/page29.html>

SW Sunk swatchway 2023



The conclusion is that the swatch remains feasible and whilst we will, of course, go back down there again next Spring, we would be very surprised if there was a problem. The three waypoints remain fine.

It seems clear that the discovery of the 'new' wreck was achieved because the sand in that area has been scoured away. Where the sand has gone is, of course, unknown. Perhaps it has continued to hamper the Middle Sunk crossing on the other side. We will consider going there next year.

4. The Ray Sand (Page 212/213):

Finally a brief addition to the comments below about the Ray Sand. Here is an image of the Ray Sand North



The Ray Sand North: Special Yellow Unlighted Pillar Buoy at **51°40'.81N., 001°00'.57E.**

I suspect Trinity House required the Crouch HA to change the buoyage to a special mark rather than a safe water buoy. We did find in some daylight, spotting the mark was not quite as easy.

Note the CHA are marking the 'best' water for obvious reasons but using the chartlet on the right tide and with the right draught, it is possible to 'cut the corner' subject to your responsibility.

Dated 14th July, 2023

1. The Ray Sand (Page 212/213):

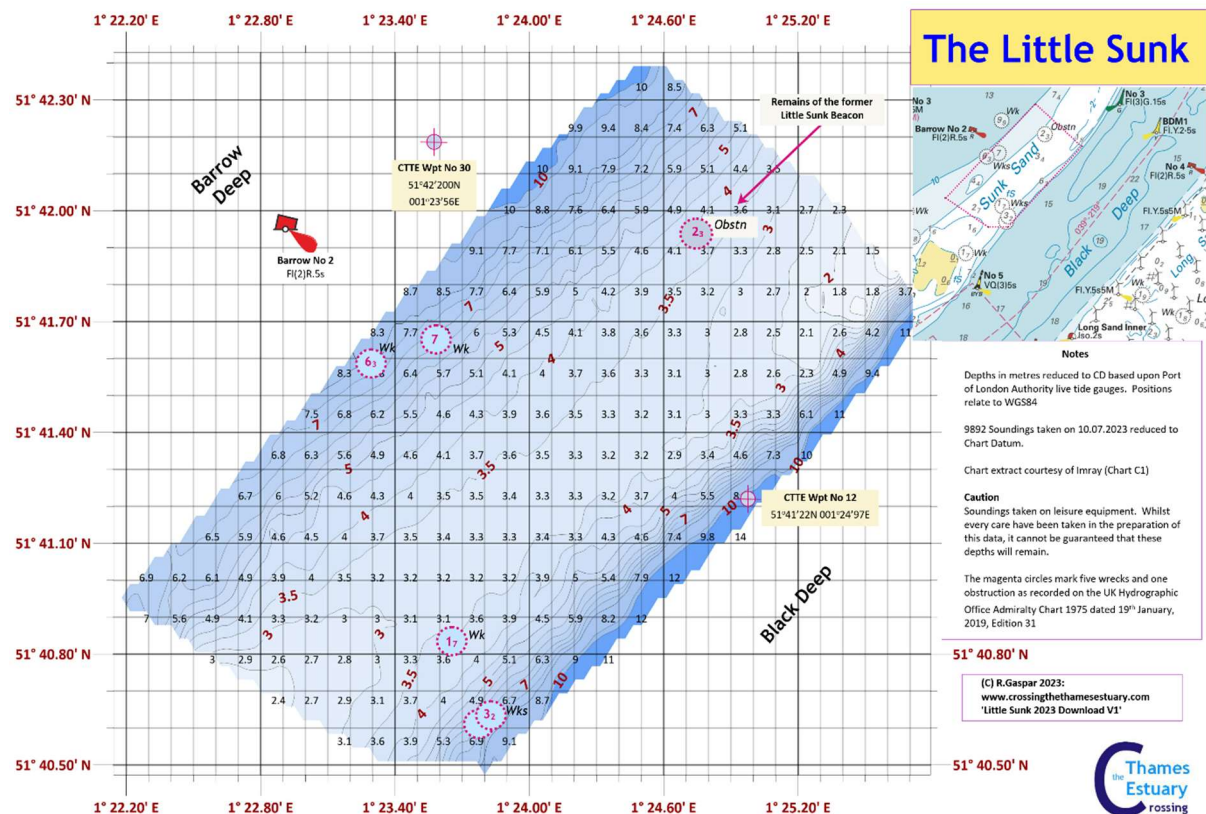
On 13th July, 2023, the Crouch Harbour Authority reported changes for the buoyage for the Ray Sand.

- ⊕ The Ray Sand Middle safe water buoy is permanently withdrawn.
- ⊕ The Ray Sand North is now a Special Yellow Unlighted Pillar Buoy and is located at **51°40'.81N., 001°00'.57E.**
- ⊕ The Ray Sand unlighted yellow buoy is now located at **51°39'.84N., 001°00'.57E.**

The buoyage now reflects the recommended crossing place (i.e. the shortest and least drying heights over the sands). I have updated the Ray Sand chartlet to reflect the changes. You can download it at:

<https://www.crossingthethamesestuary.com/page29.html> (scroll down to item 4)

2. The Little Sunk crossing point (Page 24):



On 10th July, 2023 we completed a successful survey at the Little Sunk. We thought conditions might be unsuitable but to our surprise locally we had 4 to 7kts of wind and was perfect. The results are good, little change; in the central area there is 3.2m CD minimum.

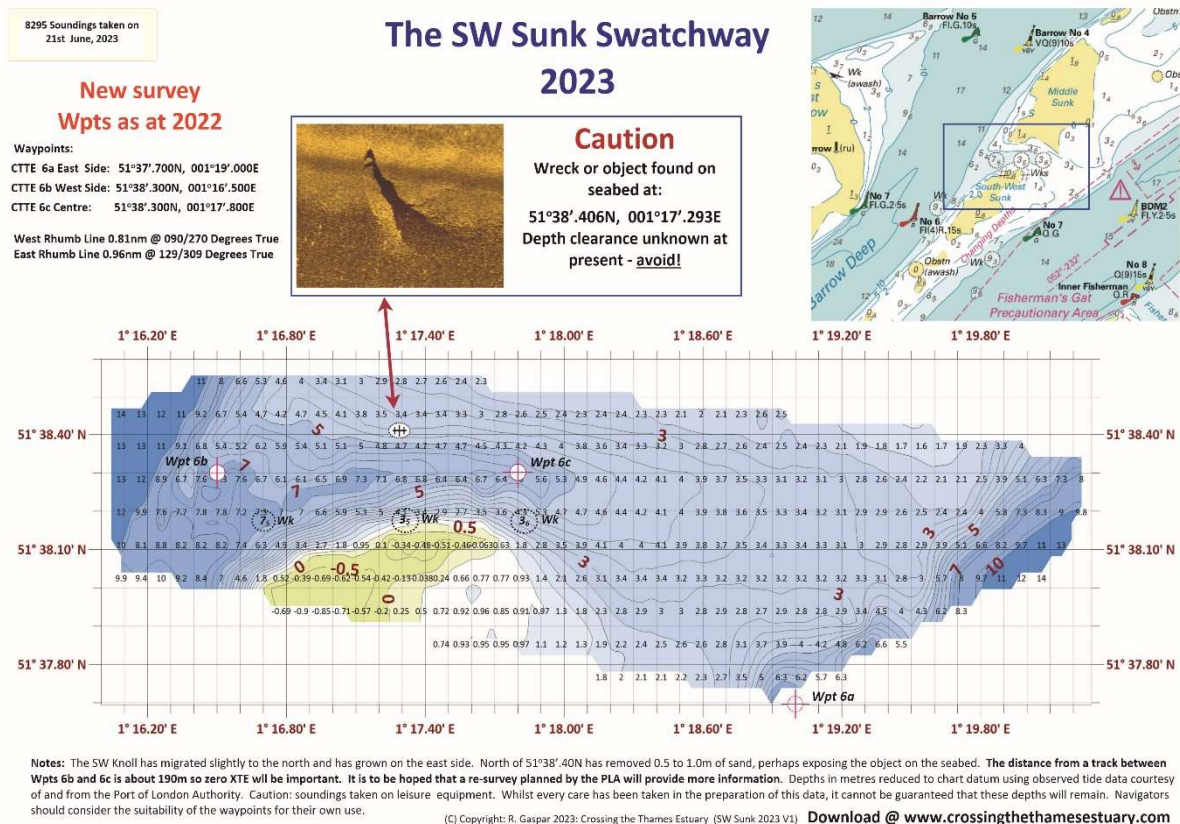
Waypoint 12 is positioned to use either to or from the Essex or Suffolk Rivers but when you studied the chartlet you can there is plenty of 'room' to adjust where exactly you cross. Download the new chartlet at: <https://www.crossingthethamesestuary.com/page29.html> (scroll down to item 5)

3. The SW Sunk Swatchway (Page 26): **UPDATED above**

All who have received the mailshot in June, will be aware of the developments at the SW Sunk. The swatchway is fine and feasible but the new obstruction needs to be avoided. To date there is no additional information about the object.

The survey in June, 2023 found the depths remained good but the SW Sunk knoll had migrated about 50m northeast and the drying area had extended to the east. The Middle Sunk side had also migrated, indeed on the southwest side of the Middle Sunk knoll 0.5m to 1.0m of sand had gone. During the survey the side scan found the object illustrated on the new chartlet. The nature of the object is unknown at present and I regret I am unable to estimate the clearance over the object. It might be that the object has simply been exposed by the removal of a metre of sand or it could be debris that has arrived.

But there is good news that the location of the object is known as shown on the chartlet. Quite a few have used the swatchway, taking care to remain on track between the recommended waypoints. In the right conditions and with reliable GPS kit, the swatchway is fine.

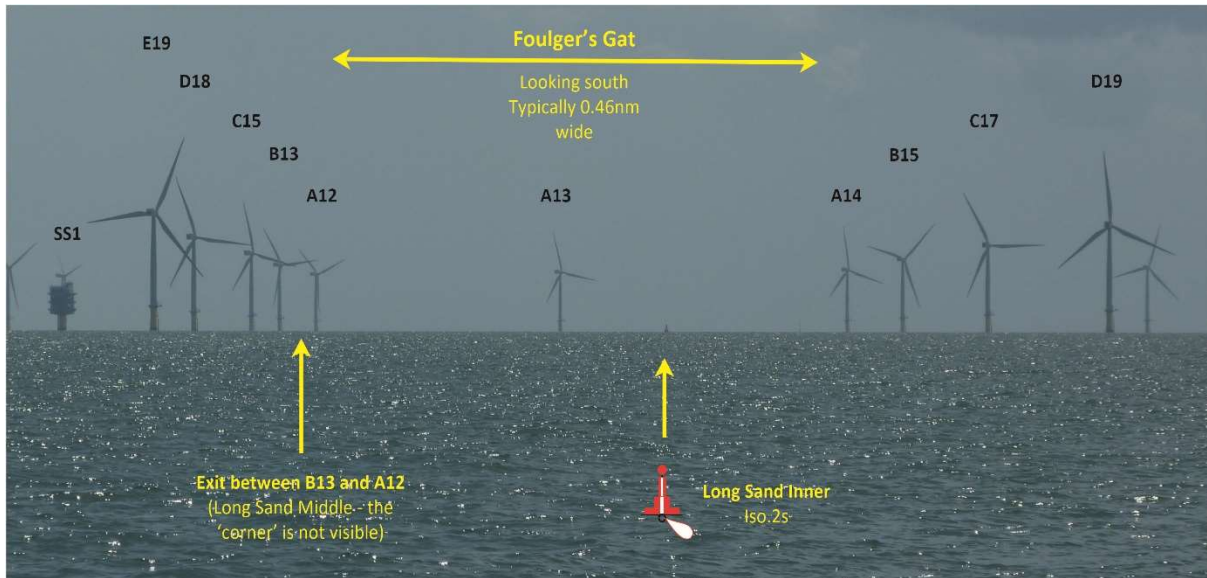


Download the 2023 chartlet at: <https://www.crossingthamesestuary.com/page29.html> (scroll down to item 1)

4. Foulger's Gat (Page 46):

While we were 'criss-crossing' over the Little Sunk I took the image of Foulger's Gat. Images of Foulger's Gat at water level is quite difficult. Close-to the Gat cannot be fully included, if it can be included, the camera is too far away.

For this image (and the technical), the camera is on the Little Sunk and was 3.067nm from the Long Sand Inner Safe Water Buoy, bearing 175°(T), Turbines A13 is 6.742nm from the camera. Obvious the Long Sand Middle could not be visible. The camera was pointed at 174°(T). As you can see the conditions were great for a survey!



Dated 14th September, 2022

1. The Ray Sand: We have completed two surveys of the Ray Sand in August and September. As a result I have completed a new chartlet you can download at:
<https://www.crossingthethamesestuary.com/page29.html> (scroll down to item 4)

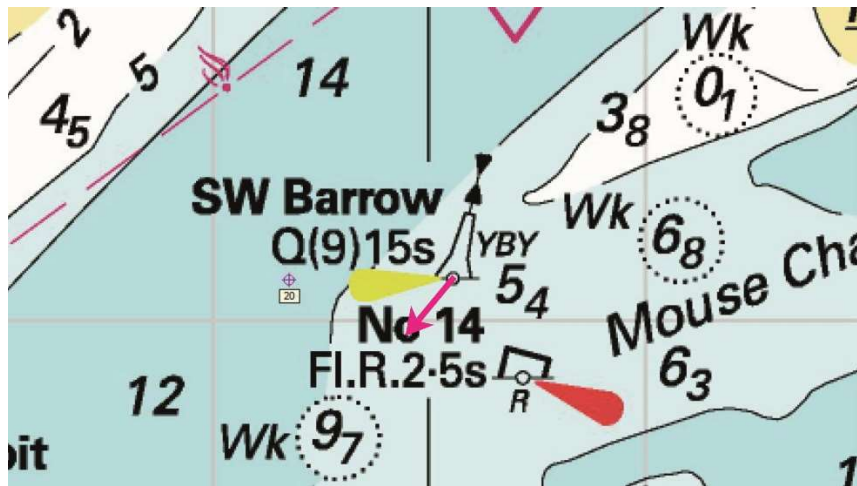
The chartlet is largely as the image Page 213 but the scale has a lot more detail. The sands have not changed significantly but our surveys extended further to the west and east of the line of buoys. The 1° degree meridian remains, in my view, the best 'water' and the survey shows that staying east of the 1° degree meridian is good.

I have sent the data into the Crouch Harbour Authority but they have commissioned the Port of London Authority a survey in that area and obviously the CHA will be waiting for the results of the professional work before they make any changes.

~~BUT, please note: the position of the Ray Sand buoy is currently stated as 51°39'080N, 000°59'284E but we found its longitude as 000°59'500E. Visually, not much difference but I suggest you annotate the change on Page 212. I will of course notify any changes as they occur.~~

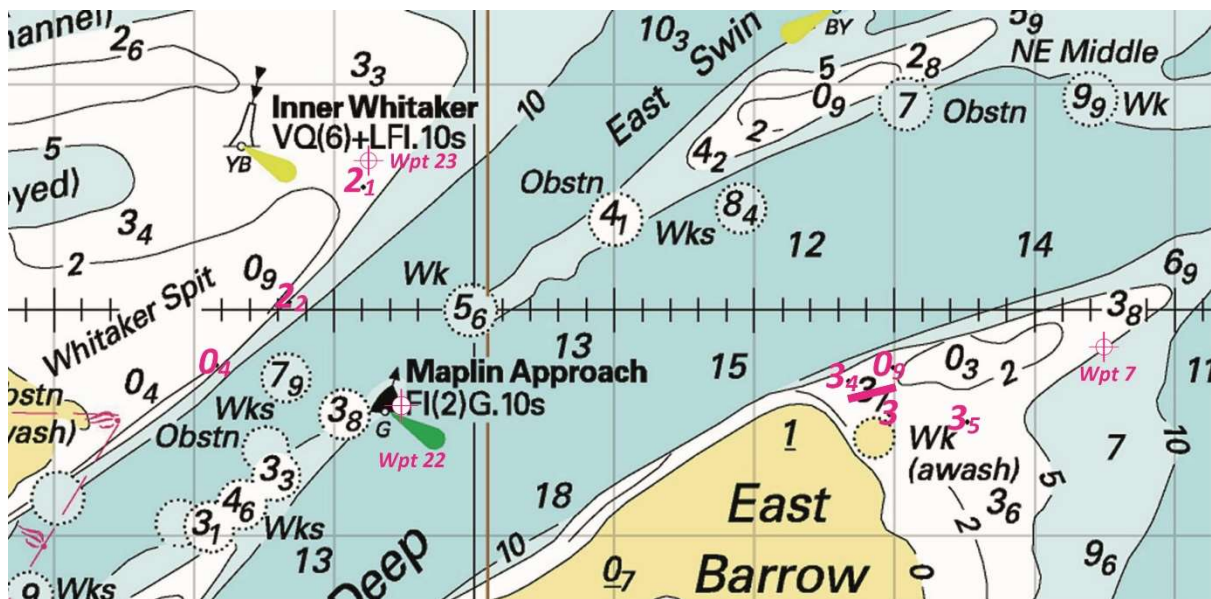
2. The SW Barrow west cardinal buoy: Trinity House notified a move for the SW Barrow buoy on 6th September, 2022 to 51° 31'950N., 000° 59'900E in consequence of a recent survey; the West Barrow sands appears to continue to move to the south west and the buoy had last been moved in 2019.

Waypoint 20 is adjacent but does not need to be moved; only the description of the waypoint on page 11 needs amendment to "SW Barrow bears 114°, 0.37nm". The image shows the location.



Note that this change is only notified by Trinity House at the moment. UKHO will issue a Notice to Mariners in due course and as a consequence Navionics and C-Map (and others) will not yet have made the change.

3. Whitaker Spit and the East Barrow Sand: As a result of a Port of London Authority survey earlier this year, the UKHO issued a Notice to Mariners two weeks ago notifying reduced depths at the Whitaker Spit (3) and the East Barrow Sands (4). The image shows the results and waypoints 7, 22 and 23:

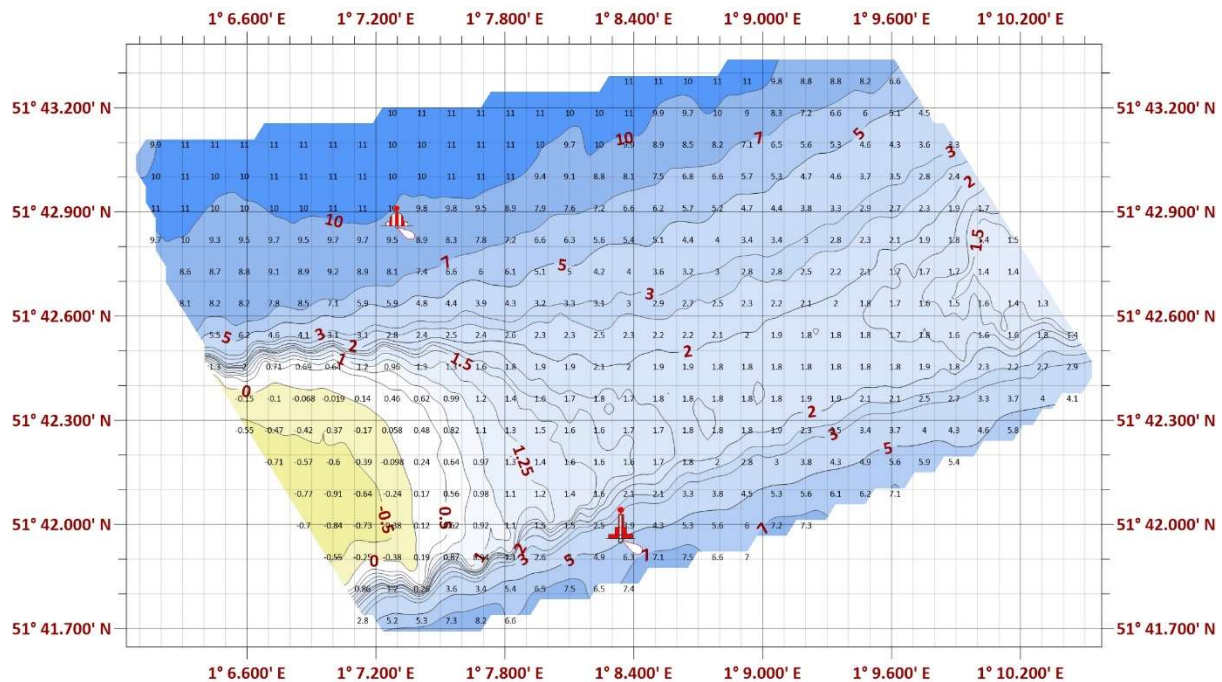


If passing either direction between waypoints 22 and 23 bear in mind the height of tide over the edge of the Whitaker Spit. If heading to and from the SW Sunk swathway bear in mind that waypoint 7 remains fine. Some have cut the corner of the East Barrow Sand between the 'north east finger' and the main sands. It remains feasible with care. NOTE that Navionics have not yet updated their chart (as at 14.09.22). I am unable to say where C-Map or others have updated these changes.

Dated: 3rd June, 2022

1. The Spitway: On the 30th May, we conducted a survey of the Spitway. Lovely flat conditions during the process which was very convenient and makes accuracy simple. The conclusion is that the swathway has changed very little. It remains the best water to the east of the safe water buoys at 1.8m at chart datum. There is a new download comprising the chartlet and some notes and profiles at:

<https://www.crossingthethamesestuary.com/page29.html>



2. The London Array Wind Farm – Foulger’s Gat

The Wind Farm notified a local Notices to Mariners on 1st June about a 3 month maintenance programme that will affect many turbines. The work comprises diving works associated with the cable protection system, using subsea installation tools. Divers will operate from an 8m rib and a support vessel which require a 500m exclusion zone.

There is no advance plan of order as it will depend on conditions and other issues. Some turbines adjacent to Foulger’s Gat may therefore be affected.

There should be sufficient room to still use Foulger’s Gat, perhaps unless work is being undertaken on turbines either side of the Gat at the same time. The Wind Farm prefer you to call on VHF 16 prior to entering as a standard procedure but while this works is under progress and you can see they are obviously working in that area, a call in advance would be important. Also the Duty Marine Coordinator can be called on **01843 855 795** marinecoordinators@londonarray.com.

Full details of the Notice can be seen on: <https://www.crossingthethamesestuary.com/page9.html>

Select the Local Authority list from the menu and scroll down to Week 23.

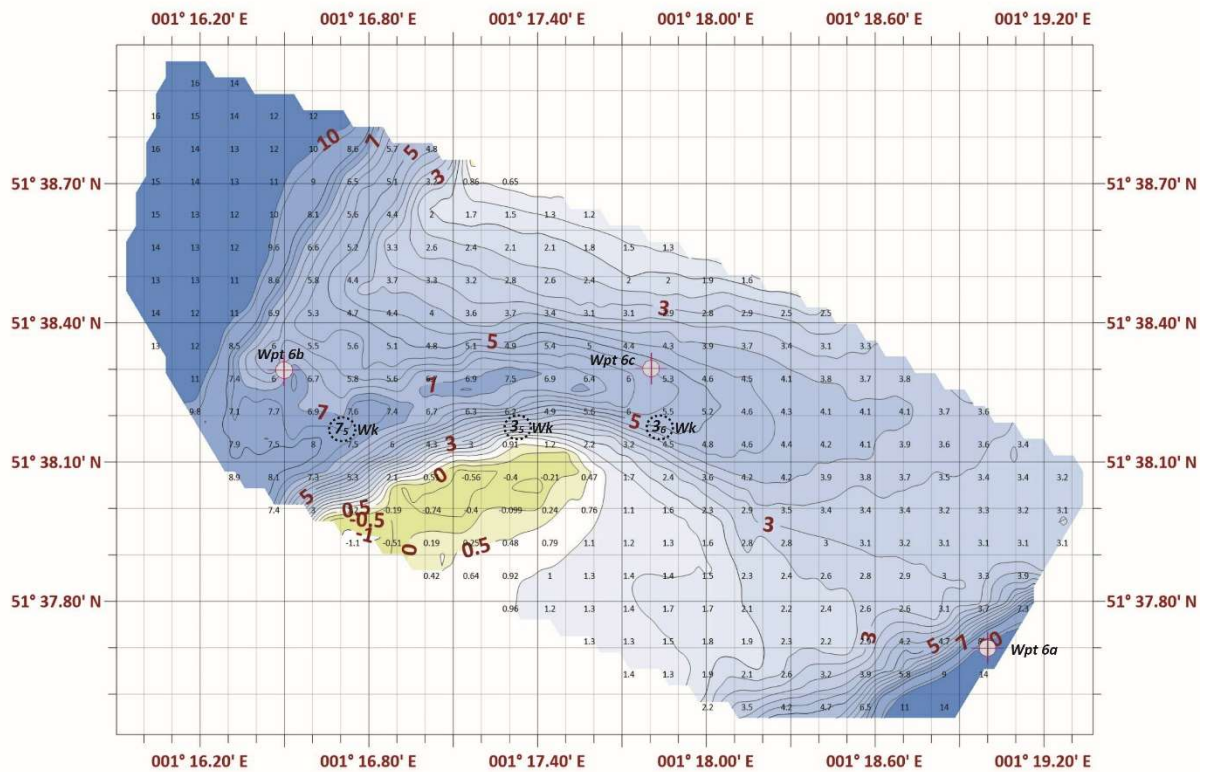
Dated: 20th May, 2022

Four issues: a small correction to the text of the Third Edition, a revised chartlet and waypoint for the SW Sunk swatchway, a recommendation not to use the Middle Sunk crossing at the present, and a warning about electronic charts updates.

1. Correction: Page 11, Table of Waypoints: Wpt 23 Whitaker Spit – amend the description to: “Inner Whitaker bears 96°(T), 0.56nm”. Apologies for the error. The previous description related to the South Whitaker SHM which was removed quite some time ago. The waypoint remains at the same location.

2. SW Sunk swatchway: We completed a re-survey on 18th May, 2022. The swatchway remains entirely useable (and indeed has been).

The swatchway is, though, subject to some changes. The SW Knoll is the most significant feature there and I consider the drying part of the knoll has migrated further to both the north and east. Because of the movement to the east we noticed that the tide rip that occurs in the flood tide did extend further. Because of the north and east movement I am recommending that the mid waypoint should be moved in a similar way.



Revised recommendation – Wpt 6c - 51°38'300N, 001°17'800E. Wpts 6a and 6b remain as before.

You can download and print off the chartlet on the Download page:

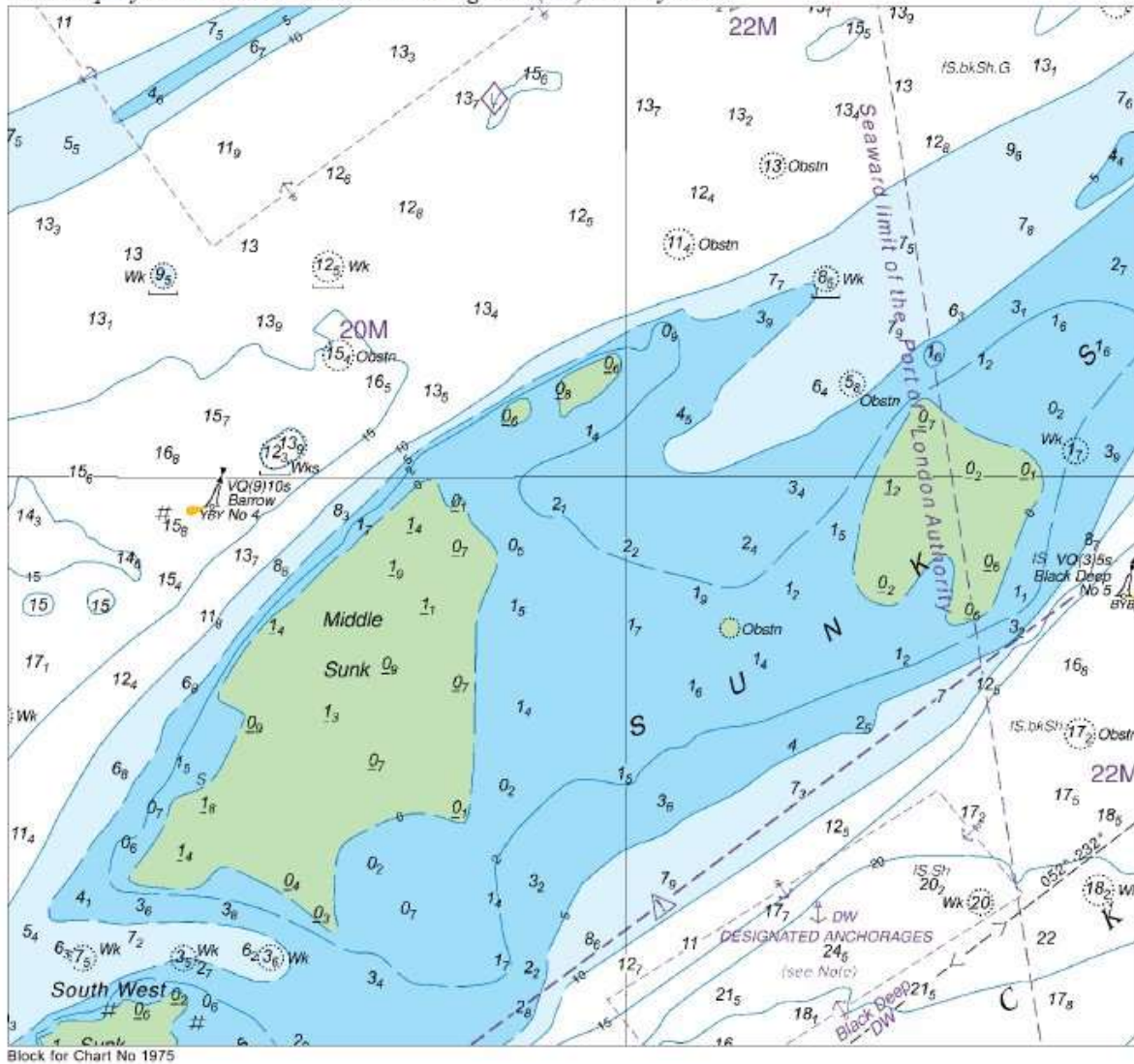
<https://www.crossingthethamesestuary.com/page29.html>

The tide does run quite hard through the swatch. In the last hour of the flood we still experienced a 2 kt east to west tide close to the edge of the SW Knoll – hence the tide rip. Following the track between the recommended waypoints will keep you well clear of the tide rip (which isn't there at all states of the tide). You can see an example of the tide rip taken in 2021: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jimnl_ktjc I do stress though there is ample room to stay well clear of the rip.

I regard the mid point waypoint as fixed but 'frequent' users could moderate wpts 6a and 6b being aware of the depths.

3. Middle Sunk crossing: My recommendation at present is not to use the Middle Sunk subject to a re-survey as soon as possible this year. At the end of last season we did an exploratory on the Middle Sunk. As a result of that, the UKHO issued a block using part of our data and part of a Port of London Authority survey. The result is:

To accompany Notice to Mariners 5173/2021. Image Size (mm) 145.4 by 158.2



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Note the shallow finger extending northeast from the Middle Sunk. It is possible to go round to the northeast clear of that 'finger' but it is also necessary to avoid the marked 'Obstr'. That is the remains of the old 1950's Sunk beacon. Given that while the SW Sunk swatch remains easy and safe, using the Middle Sunk to reach to and from the Essex Rivers really provides no benefit. It may be that the Middle Sunk could be a good route to and from Harwich Harbour but the data need more empirical work.

4. Electronic Charts: A word about electronic charts, indeed a general observation first.

'Up-to-date' typically means 'incorporating or aware of the latest information'. Looking at the above image, the data is up to date BUT you need to look on a Standard Nautical Chart (SNC) at the 'Source' dialogue box to appreciate how recent the latest information is. The block above is adding the September, 2021 data in respect to the 'finger' of the Middle Sunk but the SW Sunk data is using 2020 data. That is because our survey in 2021 was too late for the edition of the SNC.

Electronic charts follow the UKHO SNCs but there is no information available on any electronic charts (as far as I know) as to how recent the data is. I have Navionics and C-Map and both are 'up-to-date'. So I can tell you PROVIDED you updated one of those electronic charts THIS year (I checked in April), you would have the correction for the Middle Sunk BUT the SW Sunk is shown in the position in 2020. Given that the SW Knoll has migrated each year to the NE, you should not rely on the contours at that location on either electronic chart even if it is 'up-to-date'. If it is not up to date, the contours at that location will be worse and should not be

used. If your electronic chart is not updated for several years, just following the deepest water at the SW Sunk could bring you over the drying areas. Please do follow the recommended waypoints.

The UKHO have told me that there will be a new edition of the relevant SNC later this year so we will ensure they get the 18th May data very shortly.

I should add a final rider: the Little Sunk crossing has no concerns. Several readers have used this already this year without any concerns.

Happy season

Roger Gaspar