



PORTS
OF JERSEY

Towage Operations in The Port of St Helier (Towage Guidelines)

Code of Practice

COP 1 - Version 7 – May 2026

Contents

Section 1: Introduction	3
Section 2: Communication	4
Section 3: Visibility	4
Section 4: Tug Operations	5
Section 5: Risk Assessments	5
Section 6: Routine and Non-Routine Towage Procedures	5
Routine Towage Operations	5
Non-routine Towage Operations	5
Annex 1: Checklist for compiling towage risk assessment	7
Annex 2: Routine Operations	8
Conventional Ferries at Elizabeth Harbour, tug used to push-on only:	8
Regular High-Speed Ferries at Elizabeth Harbour:	8
Tankers Arriving or Departing La Collette Tanker Berth.....	9
Ships Operating Within St Helier Inner Harbour	9
Annex 3: Non-Routine Towage Application	11
Annex 4: Tug Positions	13

This COP is subject to review as soon as reasonably practicable in the event of the occurrence of any incident, or series of incidents, related to this activity; and in any case at intervals of 2 years.

Date of issue:	28 th February 2014	Page	2/ 13
Revision Edition / Date:	VERSION 07/ 11 MAY 2026	File reference:	VESSEL COP 001 TOWAGE GUIDELINES V7 05-2026

Section 1: Introduction

1. For the purposes of this document “towage” refers to assistance provided to ships, barges and other floating plant calling at St Helier by tugs, whether towing with ship’s own lines or tug’s lines, pushing or standing by.
2. The Harbour Authority will continually risk assess activities within its areas of responsibility and apply appropriate safety control measures to vessel movements; this could include a requirement to use of towage.
3. The prime consideration in developing these guidelines is to enhance the safety of those that operate in the port and to prevent accidents, to encouraging good communications and foster teamwork between towage operators, harbour authorities, Pilots and shipping companies.
4. In compiling these guidelines Pilots, Tug Masters, LOLO and RORO Operators have been consulted.
5. These guidelines are made up reflecting the content of the PMSC Guide to Good Practice 2024.
6. MAIB accident reports involving towage are assessed as to their relevance and where appropriate amendments made to these guidelines to reflect any recommendations.
7. Notwithstanding anything contained in these Guidelines, the towage requirement for an individual vessel remains the responsibility of the Master. The number of tugs required may be increased when unfavourable conditions exist or when the handling characteristics of the vessel are in doubt. The Master may, in appropriate circumstances, and with the prior approval of the Pilot and / or Harbour Master, decrease the number of tugs recommended. It should be noted however, that in cases where the vessel’s Master refuses to accept the Pilot’s, or in advance of the Pilot being embarked, the Duty Pilot’s advice in respect of the number of tugs required to facilitate a safe operation, the Harbour Master may impose the required number of tugs by special direction. These tugs will be for the ship owner’s account.



This COP is subject to review as soon as reasonably practicable in the event of the occurrence of any incident, or series of incidents, related to this activity; and in any case at intervals of 2 years.

Date of issue:	28 th February 2014	Page	3/ 13
Revision Edition / Date:	VERSION 07/ 11 MAY 2026	File reference:	VESSEL COP 001 TOWAGE GUIDELINES V7 05-2026

Section 2: Communication

Initial communication between the tug and tow should be on VHF channel 14 then change to a working inter-ship channel, normally VHF channel 11. Whilst towage operations are on-going, the VTS VHF channel 14 must also be monitored throughout.

In the event of a failure of communications, or other emergency, requiring the tug to break away from the vessel being assisted, a sound signal consisting of Morse Code X-RAY () shall be made.

Tug control orders should be kept short, clear and concise using closed loop communication.

An example of closed-loop communication follows three basic steps:

Step	Role	Message	Purpose
Instruction	Pilot	“Tug Devout, push on starboard bow 50% ”	Clear directive from sender
Repeat-Back	Tug Master	“Copy, push on starboard bow 50% ”	Confirms understanding
Verification	Pilot	“Confirmed, Push on starboard bow 50%”	Closes the loop and validates correctness.

Standard Orders for Manoeuvring

- Standby, at (tug location relative to ship), no contact.
- Rest on,(tug position) no weight.
- Push on,% (percentage of bollard pull).
- Stop Pushing, rest on, no weight
- Re-locate to (new tug position)
- All stop, breakaway.

Section 3: Visibility

1. Minimum visibility for all towage operations is such that the Master/Pilot can see the tug and the Tug Master can see the towed vessel's wheelhouse. This is considered to be:
 - For ship assist towage in St Helier Inner Harbour – 150m
 - For ship assist towage in the Elizabeth Harbour - 300m
 - For ship assist towage in La Collette Tanker Berth – 500m
2. In restricted visibility conditions or where a reduction in visibility is probable. A decision should be made between vessels Master and Pilots as to whether to proceed. Consideration should be made to remaining on berth or clearing port limits and awaiting improved conditions.
3. Should visibility fall below the minimum once a towage operation has commenced, the Master/Pilot shall immediately reduce speed to a minimum safe speed and, if safe to do so, take all way off the vessel. Following discussion with the Tug Master, the contingency plan agreed at the planning stage should be implemented.

This COP is subject to review as soon as reasonably practicable in the event of the occurrence of any incident, or series of incidents, related to this activity; and in any case at intervals of 2 years.

Date of issue:	28 th February 2014	Page	4/ 13
Revision Edition / Date:	VERSION 07/ 11 MAY 2026	File reference:	VESSEL COP 001 TOWAGE GUIDELINES V7 05-2026

Section 4: Tug Operations

1. When a tug is involved in towage all her watertight and weather tight doors must be closed and secured.
2. When charter tugs are used for specific operations, or to relieve the port's own tug, the charter tug's capability will need to be fully assessed, including its certification and manning, prior to it being used. Risk assessments and procedures must also be reviewed, and the charter tug's Master must be fully familiar with these guidelines. Due to the navigational hazards on the approach to the port and the large range of tide experienced, the charter tug may be required to carry a Pilot or suitably experienced, Local Knowledge Endorsement certificate holder, as determined by any risk assessment.
3. All towage within the jurisdiction of The Harbour Authority is undertaken in accordance with the Port Marine Safety Code Guide to Good Practices.
4. Given the exposed entrance and confined layout of St. Helier Harbour, it is the normal, and preferred, practice that towage is provided by pushing the vessel without making fast.
5. For details about the range of Ports of Jersey towage assets available, visit our website: [Jersey Harbour vessels](#) | [Ports of Jersey](#)

Section 5: Risk Assessments

1. Risk assessments exist for routine towage operations and are available on request.
2. All other and non-routine towage operations are to be risk assessed on a case-by-case basis. The checklist provided in Annex 2 should be consulted in the production of such as risk assessment.

Section 6: Routine and Non-Routine Towage Procedures

Routine Towage Operations

The towage operations which are conducted most frequently are considered routine operations. The typical procedures for these operations are in annex 2 of these guidelines and include:

- Pushing regular conventional ferries arriving at the Elizabeth Harbour in strong winds.
Pushing tankers (all sizes) arriving and departing La Collette Tanker Berth.
- Pushing ships operating within St Helier Inner Harbour
- Assisting high speed vessels arriving or departing in adverse weather conditions.

Non-routine Towage Operations

These guidelines shall apply to vessels, barges etc. requiring non routine towage including but not limited to Dead Tows (cold move), towing of unusual or large objects and subject to compulsory pilotage.

- All non-routine towage operations must be risk assessed as detailed above and planned using the Checklist for Tug Assistance (see Annex 1). This process would normally be carried out by the duty Pilot & Tug Master. The Maritime Operations Manager should be consulted as to the appropriateness of the planned operation. All planning and risk assessment documentation must be kept for future reference.
- A Pilot should be embarked on a vessel over 35m engaged in a planned, non-routine towage operation to facilitate the execution of the plan and assist with communication.
- If the nature of an operation changes whilst it is in progress, the Tug Masters must use their experience and training to ensure the safety of their vessel and crew as well as continuing to provide assistance where possible.
- When the Harbour Authority are advised that a "new" ship is expected, the ship's Agent and/or Owners are required to provide the port with a copy of its Pilot Card and to complete

This COP is subject to review as soon as reasonably practicable in the event of the occurrence of any incident, or series of incidents, related to this activity; and in any case at intervals of 2 years.

Date of issue:	28 th February 2014	Page	5/ 13
Revision / Edition / Date:	VERSION 07/ 11 MAY 2026	File reference:	VESSEL COP 001 TOWAGE GUIDELINES V7 05-2026

a “New Ship Arrival Form”. This is to allow a formal navigational risk assessment (NRA) of the ship to be carried out. This NRA could impose towage control measures on the vessel’s movement within the port. Alternatively, a request could be received from the ship for towage during its arrival/departure.

- All NRA’s will be documented and recorded for future reference.
- An updated briefing will take place between the Pilot and the Tug Master prior to the Pilot proceeding to the ship. The RA shall be reviewed to ensure that there is agreement and understanding on the planned towage operation.
- VTS and the Acting Harbourmaster should be briefed prior to the operation taking place so that they are aware of the proposed plan, and they can provide input on other commercial vessel movements.

This COP is subject to review as soon as reasonably practicable in the event of the occurrence of any incident, or series of incidents, related to this activity; and in any case at intervals of 2 years.

Date of issue:	28 th February 2014	Page	6/ 13
Revision Edition / Date:	VERSION 07/ 11 MAY 2026	File reference:	VESSEL COP 001 TOWAGE GUIDELINES V7 05-2026

Annex 1: Checklist for compiling towage risk assessment

Item	Checked
Bollard pull versus vessel's displacement and windage	
Size, type and manoeuvrability of ships assisted, e.g. tankers, gas carriers, container vessels, ferries etc.	
Communication, Standard Orders & means of communicating (Working channel usually CH11 VTS, redundancy and backup)	
Historical evidence and experience, including past reports and incidents	
Physical and environmental limitations including tidal streams, wind speeds and directions, and restricted visibility	
Passage planning with reference to weather forecasts	
Redundancy and back up of equipment	
The geography of the port and its approaches, i.e. its navigational complexity	
Environmentally sensitive areas	
Abort options and positions	
Dead-ship or declared manoeuvring difficulties	
Unmanned Tow - transfer arrangements for personnel making fast moorings & additional tug/tugs	
Rendezvous position and time	
Tug Safety	
Method for securing tug, ship's lines or tug's lines from the tow hook or use of the tug's tow winch	
SWL of Tow lines	
SWL of Bollards	
Tug positions	
Tug assist methods	
Tug type, limitations and safety	
Safe Speed	
Contingency, including lay berths, anchorages and turning areas	
Tug manning	
Number of pilots involved in the operation, on the ship and on tug or tugs	
Other relevant port and emergency procedures and legislation	

This COP is subject to review as soon as reasonably practicable in the event of the occurrence of any incident, or series of incidents, related to this activity; and in any case at intervals of 2 years.

Date of issue:	28 th February 2014	Page	7/ 13
Revision / Edition / Date:	VERSION 07/ 11 MAY 2026	File reference:	VESSEL COP 001 TOWAGE GUIDELINES V7 05-2026

Annex 2: Routine Operations

Conventional Ferries at Elizabeth Harbour, tug used to push-on only:

Typical assistance routine:

- Vessel Master to provide 1.5hr Notice Via St Helier VTS
- Tug Master to confirm readiness
- Prior to committing to small roads, the Pilot or PEC holder & Tug Master to establish comms & conduct exchange to include but not limited to:
 1. Vessel & Tug rendezvous position
 2. Berth
 3. Planned Manoeuvre
 4. Tug positioning throughout
 5. Contingency/Abort considerations
- Special consideration must be given to the dangers of interaction and the hazards caused by the flare at the ship's bow & stern
- Tug to make contact in a safe and controlled manner in position as requested
- Tug to advise the ferry when in position & push as requested by the Pilot/PEC
- Pilot/PEC holder should communicate vessel course changes, engine changes and manoeuvres
- Tug must communicate any issues immediately
- Tug to keep sufficient room astern and keep an abort/escape route, if space is reducing, the tug should report to the vessel as early as possible the potential need to abort
- Consideration should be made for the tug to break away from the ship especially on departure or any time the ship is conducting a turn

Regular High-Speed Ferries at Elizabeth Harbour:

This routine is for the tug to provide the high-speed vessel with effectively a mobile dolphin.

This is due to the structure and design of the high-speed craft.

It is essential to keep the speed low to allow the tug to safely land.

Typical assistance routine:

- Prior to committing to small roads, the Pilot or PEC holder & Tug Master are to establish comms & conduct exchange to include but not limited to:
 1. Vessel & Tug rendezvous position
 2. Berth
 3. Planned Manoeuvre
 4. Tug positioning
 5. Tug No-go zones
 6. Contingency/Abort considerations
- Tug to position accordingly
- Care should be taken not land heavily and to use power as necessary to hold ferry in required position

This COP is subject to review as soon as reasonably practicable in the event of the occurrence of any incident, or series of incidents, related to this activity; and in any case at intervals of 2 years.

Date of issue:	28 th February 2014	Page	8/ 13
Revision / Edition / Date:	VERSION 07/ 11 MAY 2026	File reference:	VESSEL COP 001 TOWAGE GUIDELINES V7 05-2026

- Tug must communicate any issues immediately
- The ship is to keep a maximum speed of 3 knots or below if the tug is in contact
- Tug to keep sufficient room astern and keep an abort/escape route, if space is reducing, the tug should report to the vessel as early as possible the potential need to abort
- Consideration should be made for the tug to break away from the ship especially on departure or any time the ship is conducting a turn

Tankers Arriving or Departing La Collette Tanker Berth

Recommendations on wind speeds for tug use are found in: [Pilotage directions | Ports of Jersey](#)

Special consideration should be made for the amount of power used accounting for the type of ship and limited space.

Typical assistance routine:

- Prior to committing to small roads, the Pilot & Tug Master are to establish comms & conduct exchange to include but not limited to:
 1. Vessel & Tug rendezvous position
 2. Planned Manoeuvre
 3. Tug positioning throughout
 4. Tug No-go zones
 5. Contingency/Abort considerations
- Tug to standby in position accordingly and assist as requested
- Tug to keep sufficient room astern and keep an abort/escape route, if space is reducing, the tug should report to the vessel as early as possible the potential need to abort
- Consideration should be made for the tug to break away from the ship especially on departure or any time the ship is conducting a turn

Ships Operating Within St Helier Inner Harbour

When determining tug use consideration to the following should be made:

- Vessel windage
- Tug bollard pull tonnage
- Likely requirement for tug to re-locate
- Available space

Special consideration should be made for the amount of power used accounting for the type of ship and limited space.

Typical assistance routine:

- Prior to committing to small roads, the Pilot or PEC holder & Tug Master are to establish comms & conduct exchange to include but not limited to:
 1. Vessel & Tug rendezvous position
 2. Berth

This COP is subject to review as soon as reasonably practicable in the event of the occurrence of any incident, or series of incidents, related to this activity; and in any case at intervals of 2 years.

Date of issue:	28 th February 2014	Page	9/ 13
Revision / Edition / Date:	VERSION 07/ 11 MAY 2026	File reference:	VESSEL COP 001 TOWAGE GUIDELINES V7 05-2026

3. Planned Manoeuvre
4. Tug positioning
5. Tug No-go zones
6. Contingency/Abort considerations

- Tug to standby in position accordingly and assist as requested
- Tug to keep sufficient room astern and keep an abort/escape route, if space is reducing, the tug should report to the vessel as early as possible the potential need to abort
- Consideration should be made for the tug to break away from the ship especially on departure or any time the ship is conducting a turn

This COP is subject to review as soon as reasonably practicable in the event of the occurrence of any incident, or series of incidents, related to this activity; and in any case at intervals of 2 years.

Date of issue:	28 th February 2014	Page	10/ 13
Revision Edition / Date:	VERSION 07/ 11 MAY 2026	File reference:	VESSEL COP 001 TOWAGE GUIDELINES V7 05-2026

Annex 3: Non-Routine Towage Application

Complete form below and email to stheliervts@ports.ie at least 24hrs prior to intended move.

In addition to this form a copy of the method statement and risk assessment should be attached.

PORTS OF JERSEY - NON-ROUTINE TOWAGE APPLICATION	
PART 1 TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PROJECT MANAGER / AGENT	
Date/Time of intended move:	Agent Name:
Agency:	Contact Number(s):
DETAILS OF THE TOW	
Type of Towage Operation: Dead Ship / Barge / Unusual Object / Other _____ Towage From: Towage To : Name / LOA (m) / Breadth (m) / Draught (m) Brief Description of Tow: Is the tow manned: Are safe boarding arrangements available on each vessel requiring a pilot / crew transfer: <i>(Please provide details of arrangements if applicable)</i> What functioning propulsion /steerage does the tow have: Propeller(s) Thruster(s) Rudder(s) None Additional Manoeuvring Information / Restriction	
DETAILS OF THE TUG(S)	
Name(s) / Type (ASD/VS) / LOA / Draft / Power / Bollard Pull / Arrangement	

This COP is subject to review as soon as reasonably practicable in the event of the occurrence of any incident, or series of incidents, related to this activity; and in any case at intervals of 2 years.

Date of issue:	28 th February 2014	Page	11/ 13
Revision Edition / Date:	VERSION 07/ 11 MAY 2026	File reference:	VESSEL COP 001 TOWAGE GUIDELINES V7 05-2026

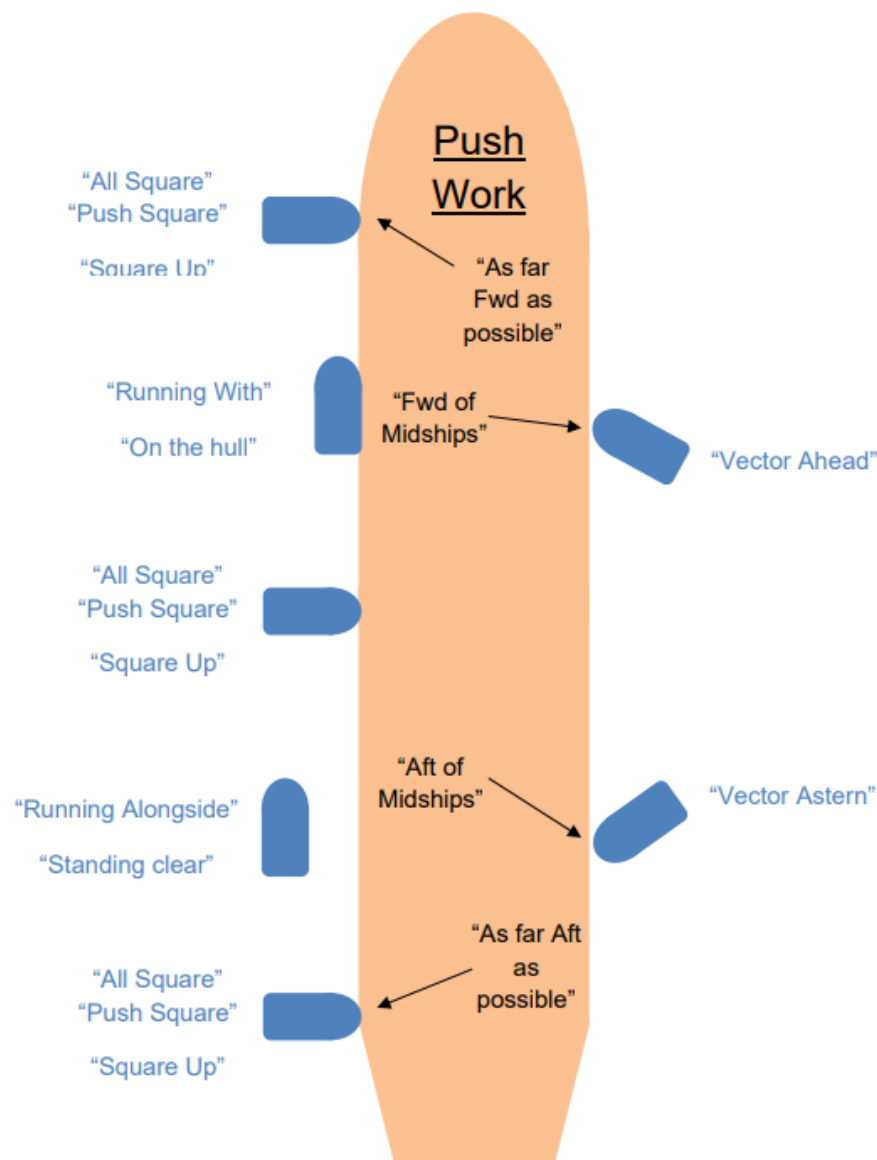
<i>Attach Specification</i>	
TOWING MASTER (RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PLANNING OF THE MANOEUVRE)	
Name :	Rank or Position:
Organisation / Vessel:	Contact Number(s):
METHOD STATEMENT (HOW WILL YOU ACHIEVE THE TOW / TRANSFERS – E.G. PUSH, TOW FROM AHEAD)	

This COP is subject to review as soon as reasonably practicable in the event of the occurrence of any incident, or series of incidents, related to this activity; and in any case at intervals of 2 years.

Date of issue:	28 th February 2014	Page	12/ 13
Revision Edition / Date:	VERSION 07/ 11 MAY 2026	File reference:	VESSEL COP 001 TOWAGE GUIDELINES V7 05-2026

Annex 4: Tug Positions

Below is a diagram showing various tug positions and phrases used for communication:



Pushing tugs can be asked to adjust position beyond what's shown above by requesting them to "Move towards the Bow" or "Move towards the Stern". It often works well to give visual targets for the tugs. For example: "Just forward of the accommodation" "In line with the aft deck crane" "Below the funnel"

Pushing tugs will of course still be limited by the flare of the stern, the flare of the bow and "No Tug" marked weak spots.

This COP is subject to review as soon as reasonably practicable in the event of the occurrence of any incident, or series of incidents, related to this activity; and in any case at intervals of 2 years.

Date of issue:	28 th February 2014	Page	13/ 13
Revision / Edition / Date:	VERSION 07/ 11 MAY 2026	File reference:	VESSEL COP 001 TOWAGE GUIDELINES V7 05-2026