



King's Harbour Master Dockyard Port of Plymouth

Unmanned Marine Systems Policy



Image courtesy of ZeroUSV

Review and Amendment Record

Issue	Date	Amendment Details
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1.1	November 2025	6.1 Updated Operational Areas diagram 6.2 Addition of new Trials Area 'Rame' and new diagram 6.2.1 Detail on operating within Rame, Barn Pool and River Plym trials area 7.1 Prohibition of embarkation onto UMS 7.2 Restricted area requirements relating to large commercial vessels 7.3 Addition of wording to clarify Coding for Support Craft 8.0 Clarity on expiration of registration certificate
1.2	September 2026	2.0 Updated definitions following publication of IMO MASS Code 3.0 Adjust definition of Group A in respects to DSR 3.2 (b) Clarified requirements for Support Craft 5.1 (a) Registration requirement for AUVs 5.1 (b) Insertion of word 'closely' 5.2 Additional requirements for ROV registration and operation 6.0 Removed text relating to variations from policy 6.2 Corrected Trials Area Lat/Long (Barnpool & Jennycliff) 6.2.1 Change to paragraph heading 6.3 Addition of SCXA guidance and FOST Contact Details 6.4 Additional section relating to variation from policy 7.1 Removal of duplicated text 7.1 (i) Requirement to notify VTS of registration number when reporting 7.1 (o) Adjusted guidance for review of Local Navigation Warnings 7.1 (p) Addition of MMO Guidance 7.1 (q) Addition of chart carriage requirements 7.3 Clarified requirements for support craft 7.7 Daily record of UMS Operations 9.1 Updated KHM Contact Details - Ref Updated reference list to reflect recent amendments. Inclusion of Cyber Security specific references - Annex 1 River Lynher Operations [MOD Issue Only]

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(Not for general release - Contact KHM Autonomy Department)

1. Application

This policy supersedes previous versions of Plymouth Local Notice to Mariners (PLNTM) 008/25 and applies to all Unmanned Marine Systems (UMS) activity, military, commercial and leisure, surface and subsea, conducted within the port limits of the Dockyard Port of Plymouth.

This policy does not relieve any UMS, or the remote operating centre, owner, or remote operator thereof from the obligation to comply with all applicable legislation, including applicable environmental legislation, noting that the Dockyard Port of Plymouth (DPoP) limits are within a Marine Protected Area.

2. Definitions

The Uncrewed Marine System ecosystem is, in most cases, relatively new and is very much still evolving, as are the terms and definitions that are in use, with different sectors and countries utilising a varied range of terms to describe similar system types.

The definitions used within this document have been drawn from several different regulatory and industry standards; however, it is appreciated that operators may utilise different terminology depending on their sector. Should an operator have any doubt as to the nature of their system and where it would sit within this policy, they should contact the King's Harbour Master (KHM).

The following definitions are used within this policy and may be updated as industry standards develop.

Automatic¹: process or equipment that, under specified conditions, can function without human control.

Autonomy²: processes or equipment in a ship system which, under certain conditions, are designed and verified to be controlled by automation, without human assistance.

Autonomous³: possessing the property of autonomy.

Autonomous Navigation System (ANS)⁴ means a system which, under specified conditions, is capable of the navigation of a MASS without human intervention.

Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV)⁵ is an unmanned underwater robot, electrically powered by batteries, that operates independently of a surface vehicle.

Deployable Payload is a subsystem, vehicle or asset that is carried by a host platform and intended for external launch, independent or tethered operation, and subsequent recovery, designed to execute specified mission functions (e.g. AUV, ROV).

DSA03⁶ means the Defence Safety Authority's document entitled *DSA03-DMR Guide to Regulation of Maritime Autonomous Systems*.

¹ ISO/TS 23860:2022 - Ships and marine technology — Vocabulary related to autonomous ship systems

² ISO/TS 23860:2022 - Ships and marine technology — Vocabulary related to autonomous ship systems

³ ISO/TS 23860:2022 - Ships and marine technology — Vocabulary related to autonomous ship systems

⁴ IMO MASS Code.

⁵ [JNCC Marine Monitoring Platform Guidelines](#)

⁶ [DMR Guide to Regulation of Maritime Autonomous System](#)

Dockyard Port of Plymouth (DPoP)⁷ is defined by the Dockyard Port of Plymouth Order 2020.

KHM: King's Harbour Master Organisation

Maritime Uncrewed Systems (MUS): Term in use by Royal Marine Operators - See UMS.

Maritime Autonomous Surface Ship (MASS)⁸ means a ship which, to a varying degree, can operate independently of human interaction.

Remote Operation Centre (ROC)⁹ means either a shore-based location which is permanent or mobile or a manned vessel from which a ROUV is operated.

Remote Operator¹⁰ means any person, including the Master, with recognised or certifiable experience who is engaged in the remote operation of a ROUV.

Remotely Operated Unmanned Vessel (ROUV)¹¹ means a vessel with no persons on board, that is operated from a location remote to the vessel.

Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV)¹² is the common term for an unmanned, underwater vehicle that is controlled from the surface by a pilot via a cable and is, in itself, a collection of equipment used in water with an ability to observe the surroundings and, in certain circumstances, intervene/interact with underwater infrastructure.

Uncrewed¹³: Ship with no crew onboard.

Unmanned¹⁴: Ship with no humans onboard.

Unmanned Marine System (UMS)¹⁵ is a surface or submersible system that can be operated without personnel on board.

UUV: Uncrewed Underwater Vehicle

WBC3¹⁶ means the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency's Workboat Code Version 3.

⁷ [The Dockyard Port of Plymouth Order 2020](#)

⁸ IMO MASS Code

⁹ [The Workboat Code Edition 3](#), Section 2

¹⁰ [The Workboat Code Edition 3](#), Section 2

¹¹ [The Workboat Code Edition 3](#), Section 2

¹² IMCA R 004 – The Safe and efficient Operation of Remotely Operated Vehicles

¹³ ISO/TS 23860:2022 - Ships and marine technology — Vocabulary related to autonomous ship systems

¹⁴ ISO/TS 23860:2022 - Ships and marine technology — Vocabulary related to autonomous ship systems

¹⁵ Lloyds Register Unmanned Systems Code

¹⁶ [The Workboat Code Edition 3](#)

3. Remotely Operated Unmanned Vessels (ROUV)

ROUVs operating within the DPoP will be grouped based on their development status and size. This will allow measures to be applied across a group of vessel types.

Group	Vessel Types
Group A	Vessels that comply with WBC 3 or have been added to the Defence Shipping Register and have been certified by an appropriate authority. or Vessels that have been assessed under MGN664 and issued with a Load Line Exemption Certificate. or Vessels that are exempt from complying with WBC 3 but meet the requirements of MGN702 or MGN705 and can provide a declaration of such.
Group B	Vessels that do not meet the requirements of a Group A vessel. or Vessels that are still in a development phase, completing trials or inspections. or New vessel type or vessel operation within the port (See Para 7.6)
Subcategory	
1	Vessel LOA ≤ 4.5m, and Max Operating Speed 6kts
2	Vessel LOA ≤ 4.5m with Max Operating Speed >6kts, or Vessel LOA >4.5m and ≤15m
3	Vessel LOA >15m and ≤25m
4	Vessel LOA >25m

3.1. Group A vessels

This sub-section applies to fully operational vessels that may wish to conduct operations within, to, or from the DPoP, including conducting training or live operations, but does not include vessels in a developmental phase.

When operating a ROUV within DPoP, the following measures will apply in addition to the general requirements stated in section 7:

- The vessel will be permitted to operate freely and untethered within the DPoP in their allocated area(s) unless instructed otherwise.
- The vessel may be operated in either a Line-of-Sight (LoS) or Beyond Visual Line-of-Sight (BVLoS) mode. If operated in a BVLoS mode, there must be the ability to take local control from the support craft if required.
- When operating within the DPoP there must be a crewed support craft in the vicinity, with the means of taking the vessel under tow, at all times. If operating multiple ROUVs, there is to be a ratio of no greater than two ROUV to one support craft.
- The requirement for a support craft may be relaxed with permission from KHM based on vessel size, operational speed, and area of operation.

- e. Support craft will not be required to escort a Group A vessel less than 4.5m LOA (Cat A1), however, there must be a support craft located adjacent to the area of operation that can be effectively deployed if there is a requirement to recover a vessel that has suffered a defect or incident.
- f. A vessel deploying a payload such as a towed array, ROV or other such vehicle shall only do so within an appropriate designated trials area (See section 6.2).
- g. In line with KHM Pilotage and Towage Directions, vessels over 25m LOA (Cat A4) proceeding north of the Narrows will be subject to mandatory pilotage.

3.2. Group B Vessels

It is understood that the DPoP is an area that is at the centre of UMS development, and this is to be encouraged. However, where vessels are still in a testing and trials phase or conducting more advanced operations, additional measures are required to ensure the safety of other water users, the environment, and to maintain the operational capability of the Port. To that end, the following measures will apply:

- a. Group B Vessels are only permitted to undertake operations within designated Trials Areas.
- b. Vessels are to be escorted (at a distance such that they are able to immediately render assistance to the UMS) to the Trials Area by a dedicated support craft capable of taking the vessel under tow should it be required.

Once operating within the Trials Area, the support craft must remain in the vicinity, at all times.

The ratio of ROUV to support craft is to be no more than 1:1¹⁷.

- c. The vessel may be operated in either a Line-of-Sight (LoS) or Beyond Visual Line-of-Sight (BVLoS) mode. If operated in a BVLoS mode, there must be the ability to take local control from the Support Craft if required.
- d. A vessel deploying a payload such as a towed array, ROV or other such vehicle shall only do so within an appropriate designated Trials Area (See section 6.2)
- e. In line with KHM Pilotage and Towage Directions, vessels over 25m LOA (Cat B4) proceeding north of the Narrows will be subject to mandatory pilotage.

¹⁷ Where a Group A and Group B are operated by the same company and are operating in the same waters, a dedicated support craft is required to support the trials vessel, and therefore a second support craft will be required for the Group A vessel.

3.3. Matrix of Permissions

	Group A				Group B			
	A1	A2	A3	A4	B1	B2	B3	B4
Support Craft required in vicinity	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UMS: Support Craft ratio	N/A	2:1	2:1	1:1	1:1	1:1	1:1	1:1
High Speed Operations Permitted in designated areas	No	Yes	Area 1 Only	No	No	Yes	Trial Area Knapp Only	No
Pilotage Requirement	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes

4. Autonomous Vessels

- a. Vessels utilising an Autonomous Navigation System (ANS) for navigation and collision avoidance are not to be operated in this mode within the DPoP outside of the defined Trials Areas stated in section 6.2 unless with explicit permission from KHM.
- b. Vessels using autonomous systems to control other vessel functions, such as machinery, docking, or cargo handling, are not to be operated within the DPoP without prior approval from KHM.

5. Uncrewed Underwater Vehicles

5.1. AUV

- a. All AUVs in use within the DPoP are to be registered with KHM in accordance with section 8.
- b. AUVs are not to be operated autonomously outside of a designated Trials Area and are to be either towed or closely escorted there by a suitable support craft (at a distance such that they are able to immediately render assistance to the AUV), or launched from a support craft on arrival.
- c. AUVs are not to operate submerged within the DPoP, unless within a designated Trials Area.
- d. When submerged, they are to have a support craft with them at all times with the ability to instruct the AUV to surface if required by KHM.
- e. The support craft is to have the facility to track the AUV at all times whilst it is deployed within DPoP.
- f. The support craft is to maintain a listening watch on VHF Channel 14 and deconflict with any diving evolutions.
- g. The ratio of AUV to support craft is to be no more than 1:1.
- h. The AUV is to be clearly marked with details of the operator and vessel ID.

- i. AUVs are to remain clear of charted wrecks and are to be navigated in a way that does not disturb the site.
- j. VTS are to be informed when the AUV is submerged and when it has returned to the surface.
- k. Should contact be lost with the AUV, KHM is to be informed as soon as possible with the AUVs last known position.

5.2. ROV

- a. An operator must inform VTS immediately prior to the deployment of an ROV, and on its recovery. VTS may advise ROV operations are to be delayed or cancelled to align with other port operations, so early engagement with VTS is advised.
- b. If an operator plans to operate an ROV within Operational areas 3 and 4 (Hamoaze North and South), they are to notify FLAG VTS in writing a minimum of 48 hours prior to deployment to allow for Flag VTS to log all ROV operation within the Underwater Activities Log (UWAL).

6. Areas of operation

For the purposes of this policy, and with a view to facilitating and formalising UMS activity, the Dockyard Port of Plymouth (DPoP) is divided into a series of ten general operating areas, containing six specific Trials Areas.

Once registered with the King's Harbour Master (KHM) in accordance with section 8 of this policy, operators will be assigned an Operating Area or Trials Area in which they will be permitted to freely operate without the need to seek further permissions, subject to the restrictions detailed in this policy.

Operating and Trials Areas will be allocated based on the nature and developmental status of the UMS and the nature of operations to be conducted (See sections 3, 4, 5).

6.1. Operating Areas

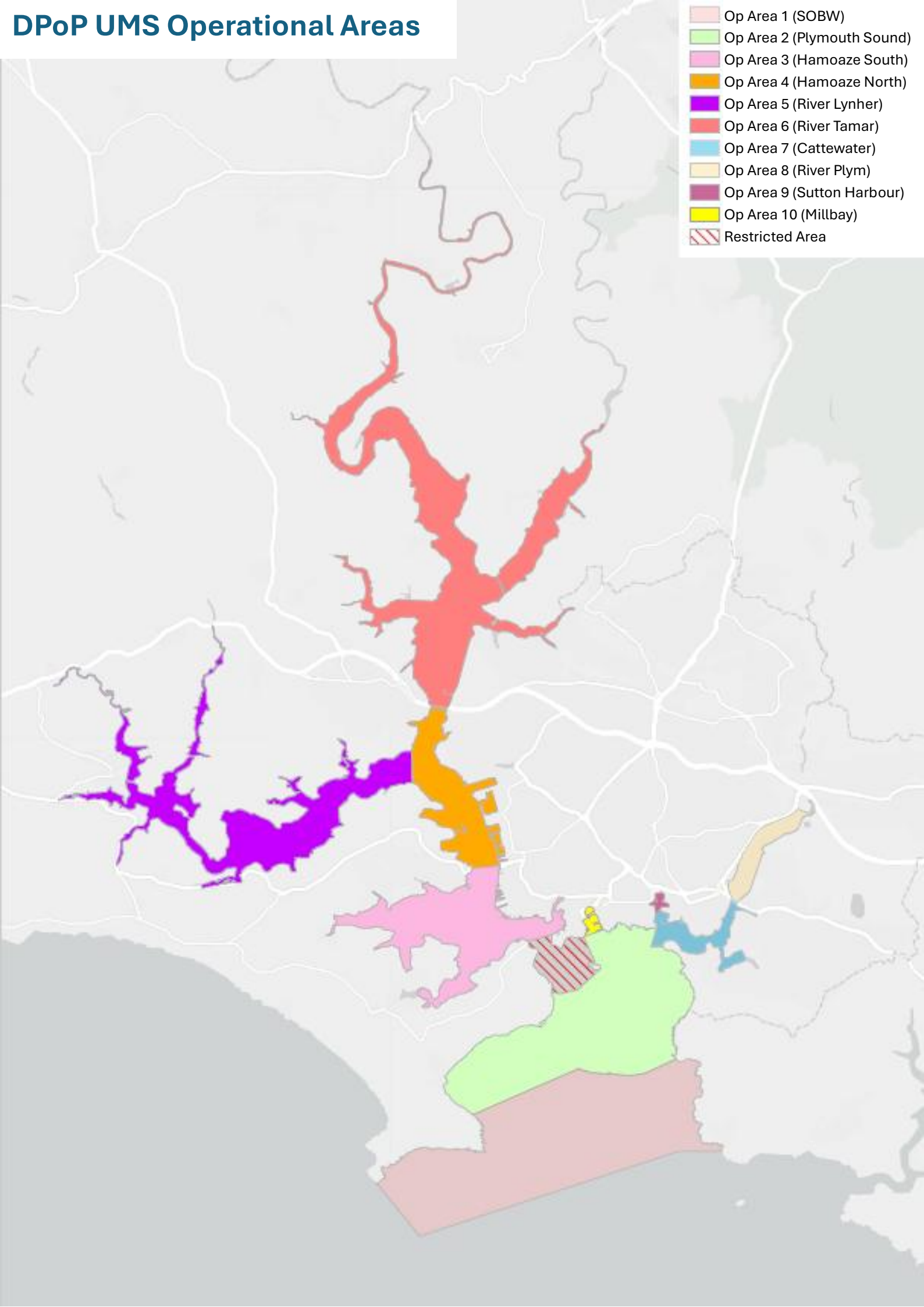
Ten operating areas and one restricted area have been defined within DPoP and are outlined below.

Area Number	Area	Remarks
1	South of the Breakwater (within Port Limits ¹⁸ , north to a line from Cawsand to Breakwater to Staddon)	Contains High Speed Test Area (See 6.2)
2	Plymouth Sound (an area bounded to the south by a line from Cawsand to Breakwater to Staddon; to the north west by a line from the shore to Bridge Beacon, to Bridge Channel Beacon No 1, to the southern tip of Drake's Island; to the north by a line between Drake Island Pier, St Nicholas Buoy and Eastern King Point; and the defined limits of area 7)	
3	Hamoaze (South) (From a line between Cremyll Ferry Hard, Cremyll Beacon and north west Corner of Royal William Yard, north upriver to the line of the Southern Torpoint Chain Ferry, including St John's Lake and Millbrook Lake as far as the tide flows)	Support Craft to escort UMS at all times
4	Hamoaze (North) (From the line of the Northern Torpoint Chain Ferry, north upriver to the Tamar Bridge)	Support Craft to escort UMS at all times
5	River Lynher (From a line joining Henn Point Light and Carew Point Light, to the west as far as the tide flows)	
6	River Tamar (From Tamar Bridge, north as far as the tide flows)	Contains High Speed Test Area (See 6.2)
7	Cattewater (an area bounded by a line to the west joining Mountbatten Breakwater and Fisher's Nose; to the north by Sutton Harbour Lock; and to the east by Laira Bridge. Area includes Pomphlett Lake, Hooe Lake, and Sutton Channel)	To be allocated by CHC Harbour Master
8	River Plym (from Laira Bridge, north to the Marsh Mills Railway Bridge [50° 22'21N 004° 05'05W])	Contains High Speed Test Area (See 6.2)
9	Sutton Harbour (North of, and including, the entrance lock)	<i>General UMS Operations not currently permitted</i>
10	Millbay (within 'ABP Plymouth Port Limits' as depicted on Admiralty Chart 1901)	<i>General UMS Operations not currently permitted</i>
R	Restricted Area (Bounded to north by Area 3, and to south and east by Area 2)	Transit only (See 7.2)

¹⁸ As depicted on Admiralty Chart 1900

DPoP UMS Operational Areas

- Op Area 1 (SOBW)
- Op Area 2 (Plymouth Sound)
- Op Area 3 (Hamoaze South)
- Op Area 4 (Hamoaze North)
- Op Area 5 (River Lynher)
- Op Area 6 (River Tamar)
- Op Area 7 (Cattewater)
- Op Area 8 (River Plym)
- Op Area 9 (Sutton Harbour)
- Op Area 10 (Millbay)
- Restricted Area



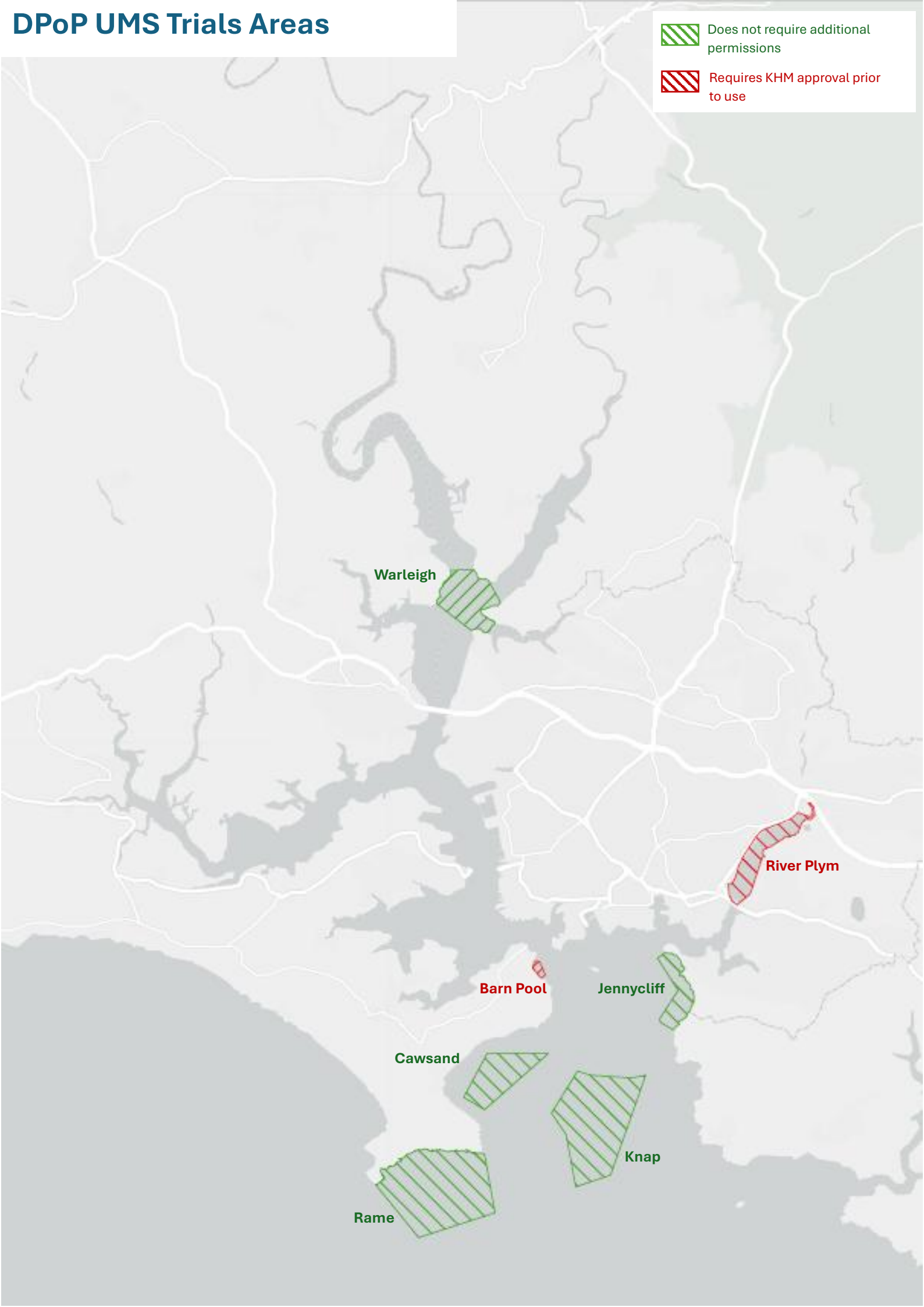
6.2. Trials Areas

Specific trials areas have been defined within the DPoP. These areas and the nature of trials that can be conducted therein are defined below.

Area ID	Trial Area	Permitted Operations
TA1	Rame Area bounded by; 50° 18.68'N 004° 13.38 'W (Rame Head) 50° 18.03'N 004° 12.56'W 50° 18.34'N 004° 11.10'W 50° 19.06'N 004° 11.30'W (Penlee Point)	(See 6.2.1) - General propulsion and steering trials - Deployable Payloads - Autonomous Navigation Systems - High speed trials (Max = 40kts) - Submerged operations
TA2	Knap Area bounded by; 50° 20.07'N 004° 09.52'W (WBW Light) 50° 19.56'N 004° 10.02'W (Knapp Buoy) 50° 19.29'N 004° 09.73'W 50° 18.66'N 004° 09.56'W 50° 18.80'N 004° 08.89'W 50° 20.02'N 004° 08.22'W (EBW)	- General propulsion and steering trials - Deployable Payloads - Autonomous Navigation Systems - High speed trials (Max = 40kts) - Submerged operations
TA3	Cawsand Bay Area bounded by; 50° 20.29'N 004° 11.25'W 50° 19.75'N 004° 11.70'W 50° 19.60'N 004° 11.30'W 50° 20.29'N 004° 10.08'W (Queens Ground Buoy)	- General propulsion and steering trials - Deployable Payloads - Autonomous Navigation Systems
TA4	Jennycliff Bay Area bounded by; 50° 21.54'N 004° 07.87'W (Shore) 50° 21.48'N 004° 08.01'W 50° 21.06'N 004° 07.60'W (Fylrix Buoy) 50° 20.71'N 004° 07.95'W ('F' Buoy) 50° 20.67'N 004° 07.94'W 50° 20.58'N 004° 07.70'W (Ramscliff Point Anchorage Beacon)	- General propulsion and steering trials - Deployable Payloads - High speed trials (in area as defined on Admiralty Chart 1967 and when over 400m from shore) (Max Speed = 20kts)
TA5	River Plym Whole of Area 7 as defined in section 6.1	Requires KHM approval prior to use (See 6.2.1) General propulsion and steering trials
TA6	Barn Pool Area bounded by; 50° 21.42'N 004° 10.35'W (Shore) 50° 21.41'N 004° 10.25'W 50° 21.25'N 004° 10.14'W 50° 21.21'N 004° 10.21'W (Shore)	Requires KHM approval prior to use (See 6.2.1) - Hydrographic Trials & Training - Submerged Operations
TA7	Warleigh Point High Speed Area As defined on Admiralty Chart 871	High speed trials (only in area defined on Admiralty Chart 871) (Max Speed = 20kts)

DPoP UMS Trials Areas

- Does not require additional permissions
- Requires KHM approval prior to use



6.2.1. Trials Areas – Additional Detail

Rame: The Rame trials area contains two Protected Wreck Sites¹⁹ that are indicated on Admiralty Chart 30. UMS operations that involve the deployment of subsea assets or payloads are not to be conducted within the exclusion zones indicated on the chart.

River Plym & Barnpool:

Users who are approved to operate within these areas are to contact *Plymouth VTS* one hour prior to departing their berth to request permission to operate in these areas.

Plymouth VTS will assess other movements and the proximity of other UMS activity and advise if permission is granted to operate within these areas, applying limitations or operating windows as necessary based on conflicting activity.

6.3. South Coast Exercise Areas

The South Coast Exercise Areas (SCXAs) within the English Channel, off Devon and Cornwall, and the associated airspace, are frequently used for military operations and training. The Royal Navy's Fleet Operational Standards and Training (FOST) organisation coordinate, deconflict and notify all dangerous activity undertaken by Ships and Submarines, including Gunnery, Aviation, and Unmanned System operations within the SCXAs.

Operators or Units intending to conduct operations utilising UMS, including USVs and UUVs outside of DPOP Port Limits, within the SCXAs, are strongly encouraged to make an application to FOST for the allocation of areas to adequately deconflict with other SCXA UMS or Military activity²⁰

Operators of Remotely Piloted Air Systems (RPAS) intending to operate within the Special User Areas (SUAs), including D009A and D009B, are also strongly encouraged to contact FOST.

Applications for the use of areas should be made to FOST Duty Ops a minimum of 1 week prior to the activity at NAVYFOST-SHIPSDOPS@MOD.GOV.UK or 01752 557550

¹⁹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/protected-wreck-sites/>

²⁰ Allocation of an area does not give an operator exclusive use of the waterspace, and does not negate requirement for proper observance of COLREGS. It instead serves to manage increasing number of UMS operators within the wider area with a view to deconflict activity and support UMS trials and operations.

6.4. Operational Variation Outside of Policy Direction

Where operators have a specific trial or operational requirement such as;

- a) to operate in either a different Trials Area, or an area not designated as a Trials Area,
- b) for an area to be closed to general traffic for a specific operation or trial,
- c) to undertake a different nature of trial, or,
- d) to exceed the maximum speed limit for an area,

a request is to be submitted to KHM which will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Where KHM deems it appropriate, a Reserved Area²¹ will be directed and published as a general or local notice to mariners.

²¹ [The Dockyard Port of Plymouth Order 2020](#) Schedule 1 Part 1 Para 15

7. General Measures

The following measures will be applicable to all UMS, at all times.

7.1. General

- a. A UMS navigating within the Dockyard Port of Plymouth (DPoP) must navigate with care, caution and reasonable consideration for the occupants of other vessels and must not cause damage or danger to any other vessel, person, mooring or to any other property, in accordance with the Dockyard Port of Plymouth Order 2020²².
- b. All UMS are to adhere to the requirements of the International Rules for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972 (IRPCS) at all times whilst operating within DPoP, taking particular note of Rule 5 (Look-out), Rule 6 (Safe Speed) and Rule 18 (Responsibilities between vessels).

Operators' attention is drawn to the relevant sections of the DPoP Order which states that "a narrow channel" means all the navigable waters of the Dockyard Port north of latitude 50°20'.000N (Plymouth Breakwater)²³.

- c. Whilst operating within DPoP, an Uncrewed Underwater Vehicle (UUV) operating on the surface is to be considered as a Power Driven Vessel.
- d. UMS operations during periods of darkness or poor visibility will be permitted provided that the UMS is fitted with appropriate navigational lights in accordance with IRPCS Part C.
- e. All UMSs operating within the DPoP are to be registered with KHM (see section 8)
- f. All UMSs operating within the DPoP must be covered by an appropriate level of insurance that includes as a minimum; third party cover, and a provision for Wreck Recovery.
- g. UMS operations will not be permitted during periods when the Port is closed or within Exclusion Zones when activated as directed by KHM and notified by Local Notice to Mariners or Special Direction.
- h. All UMSs are to transmit on Class A AIS at all times when operating within the DPoP.

Operators of very small craft, which cannot reasonably achieve the fitment of an AIS transponder, may apply to KHM for an exemption from this requirement, detailing why the exemption is being requested.

In the case of an ROV/AUV, the accompanying support craft shall transmit on AIS and should be easily identifiable.

²² [The Dockyard Port of Plymouth Order 2020](#)

²³ [The Dockyard Port of Plymouth Order 2020, Schedule 2, Part 1, Section 1](#)

- i. The UMS (and support craft if applicable) is to monitor VHF Channel 14 at all times and are to make VHF reports to Plymouth VTS (and Flag as appropriate) as follows:
- On departing from and returning to a berth, stating intended area of operation
 - On passing recognised reporting points as detailed on Admiralty Charts
 - On commencement and completion of trials or deployment of payloads
 - In the case of an UUV, prior to submerging and once surfaced
 - In case of loss of comms, loss of vessel control, or other emergency

When making an initial VHF report, the UMS operator is to inform VTS of the UMS registration number found on the issued certificate (See section 8).

- j. Remote Operators are to be appropriately trained and experienced to operate their UMS and be familiar with all revisionary modes of control. They are to hold a suitable marine qualification and ancillary training as detailed within WBC3, have completed training in remote operations, and are to have completed ROC and vessel specific familiarisation²⁴.
- k. A Remote Operator is not to be responsible for more than one USV at a time.
- l. Vessel launching and recovery should be conducted by appropriately trained personnel who are able to take direct control over the vessel locally.
- m. Whilst underway, no personnel are to embark the UMS unless required in an emergency to affect recovery.
- n. All vessels are to have the vessel name clearly displayed on the vessel. Additionally, there should be some means of identifying the owner/operator, or the local point of contact, annotated on the vessel.
- o. Operators are advised to regularly review Local Notice to Mariners, General Directions and Local Navigational Warnings for all areas of the DPoP, and consider signing up for email alerts (<https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/khm/plymouth>).
- p. Operators are to consider whether the activity they are looking to undertake will involve depositing an object or substance into the marine environment. This includes the UMS itself becoming a deposit. Many activities require a marine licence from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) before the activity occurs, as licences cannot be issued retrospectively.

Further guidance on MMO Marine licencing requirements can be found using the self-service tool.

<https://marinelicensing.marinemanagement.org.uk/mmofox5/journey/self-service/start>

²⁴ Further guidance on the appropriate level of training can be found within WBC3 and MGN703.

- q. The ROC is to hold appropriate and updated charts and nautical publications covering all areas of operation within the DPoP.

7.2. Prohibited Areas

- a. A UMS must not navigate within²⁵:
 - 50m of designated swimming and bathing areas as detailed on Admiralty Charts 30, 871, and 1901;
 - 50m of port infrastructure, including berths, moorings, buoys and beacons (unless berthing at a designated berth). Distance is reduced to 30m within the Cattewater.
 - 50m of a naval or auxiliary vessel at anchor, secured to a buoy, moored or underway which is not directly participating in UMS activity. This distance may be increased when a Moving Exclusion Zone (MEZ) is in effect²⁶;
 - 100m from a submarine secured to a buoy, moored or underway.

These distances may be reduced in order to facilitate specific UMS activity, but only with explicit approval from KHM.

- b. UMSs are not to loiter or anchor within the charted limits of the recognised navigation track and deep-water track.
- c. UMSs are not to anchor in areas where anchoring is prohibited.
- d. UMSs are not to enter the Restricted Area (See section 6.1) whilst a naval vessel, naval auxiliary or large commercial vessel is conducting a passage as detailed in the daily movements signal, or as advised by Plymouth VTS.
- e. The Restricted Area is for transit only unless explicit approval to undertake operations in the Barn Pool Trials area (TA5) is granted by KHM.

7.3. Support Craft

- a. When an UMS is operating within the DPoP there must be a crewed support craft in the vicinity, capable of either recovering or taking the vessel under tow, at all times, so as to recover it back to a safe haven.
- b. If required by this policy, and whilst operating within the Hamoaze (Area 3 & 4) or Cattewater (Area 7), then the UMS must be closely escorted at all times to allow immediate intervention.
- c. The support craft must be coded.
- d. The ratio of support craft to UMS is not to exceed the following;

Vessels undertaking trials – 1:1

²⁵ [The Dockyard Port of Plymouth Order 2020](#)

²⁶ PLYM General Direction 001/25 ([LINK](#))

Vessels completing a passage, training or standard operations – 1:2

- f. The support craft is to maintain a listening watch on VHF Channel 14 at all times whilst operating within the DPoP.

7.4. Speed Limits

- a. Operators are to be aware of the limitations of their systems in building and maintaining situational awareness and should adjust speed accordingly, in line with IRPCS Rule 6.
- b. A UMS operating in the DPoP, regardless of length, must not:
 - i. exceed without permission a speed of 10 knots through the water north of Plymouth Breakwater, including the Hamoaze, River Lynher, and River Tamar, or within 400m of the shore south of the Breakwater;
 - ii. exceed without permission a speed of 8 knots through the water in the Cattewater, or River Plym;
 - iii. exceed without permission a speed of 6 knots through the water in Western Mill Lake;
 - iv. exceed without permission a speed of 4 knots through the water in the approaches to Sutton Harbour north of latitude 50°21'.798W (Fisher's Nose), or within Millbay.

This rule does not apply to a vessel undertaking high speed trials in a designated Trials Area, or within an area directed by KHM through a Local Notice to Mariners.

- c. Within the context of this policy, 'high speed' refers to any speed greater than 10 knots. An upper speed limit within designated high speed trials areas is imposed to safeguard other water users and is defined for each area in section 6.2 and may only be exceeded with prior approval from KHM.

Operators seeking to conduct high speed trials should note their intent to do so on initial registration, stating maximum potential speed, and then request approval from VTS prior to commencement of each trial.

7.5. Remote Operations Centres (ROC)

- a. At all times, whilst the UMS is deployed and is being controlled Beyond Visual Line-of-Sight (BVLoS) from a ROC, the ROC is to be permanently manned by competent and qualified personnel.
- b. The ROC should maintain a continuous radio watch on VHF Channel 14 in the vicinity of the UMS by replicating radiocommunication signals at the ROC.
- c. Where it is not possible for a ROC to monitor VHF Ch14 in vicinity of the UMS (i.e. on very small ROUV or AUV), it is to be monitored by the support craft who must have a continuous means of communication with the ROC to allow VTS instructions to be actioned in a timely fashion

- d. Where the ROC is not located in Plymouth, it is to be based in the UK, and a local point of contact should be made known to VTS who can be readily contacted if required.
- e. There is to be the facility for local control to be taken in order to manoeuvre the vessel as required or directed by VTS.

7.6. Vessel and Operation Review

Where new or novel vessel types are to be operated within the DPoP, or a new type of operation is to be undertaken, KHM reserves the right to require a demonstration of the operation and to review the operating procedures with a view to initially imposing additional measures (such as speed limits, support craft requirements and operating flexibility).

Once KHM, and if required, the Cattewater Harbour Master are content with the safety of the operation, these additional measures may be reviewed.

7.7. Cyber Security²⁷

A UMS's owner/operator are strongly encouraged to implement cyber security measures to protect the vessel, ROC and Remote Operators from risks associated with cyber-attacks. The required extent of cyber security measures should be commensurate with the size, complexity and type of operation of the vessel, and are to be determined by the vessel owner/operator.

Additionally, a UMS's owner/operator are also strongly encouraged to undertake a cyber-security risk assessment to determine the vulnerability of their systems to attack. Threats to be considered should include, but not be limited to;

- Cyber intrusion or manipulation
- Loss or compromise of command/control links
- Insider misuse or unauthorised access
- GNSS denial/spoofing
- Intelligence collection against MOD assets

Such documents may be requested by KHM for review depending on the nature and location of vessel operations.

Where there is potential for collateral intrusion of sensitive information within data collected by an UMS, whilst operating in the DPoP, KHM reserves the right to review this data and require its deletion.

²⁷ Additional guidance on cyber security requirements and the completion of a risk assessment can be found in the reference section.

7.8. Record of UMS Activity

To support the continued review of UMS operational procedures and supporting infrastructure requirements, users are asked to complete a short online form with details of the operations they are conducting each day.

This information will be used to support KHM understanding of the use of waterspace within the Port Limits, and may also be shared with external partners, such as the MCA. Where the information is supplied to outside parties, it will be anonymised.

The Form can be found at this link (<https://forms.office.com/e/VwaX6hUGbt>) or using the QR Code below which could be positioned within the ROC



8. Registration of vessels

The Port & Marine Facilities Safety Code (PMSC) requires Harbour Authorities to ensure that all small commercial vessels used in their harbours are ‘fit for purpose’ for any use with which they are involved.

All commercial and military operators of uncrewed vessels operating within the Dockyard Port of Plymouth (DPoP) are therefore required to register²⁸ their craft with KHM on an annual basis, providing the following information;

- Vessel Name
- Name and Address of owner/operator
- Local POC - Person Name & Contact details
- Vessel Details
 - Vessel Type & Class
 - Length Overall (LOA)
 - Weight
 - Operational speed
 - Maximum speed
 - Communications method (4G/5G, WiFi, SATCOM, IP Mesh Radio, Other)
 - Confirmation that vessel is fitted with appropriate navigation lights
 - Confirmation that vessel is fitted with Class A AIS
 - Fallback state (detail of vessel response when control/comms lost)
 - Details of certification or exemption
 - Details of deployable payload (if any)
 - Details of Autonomous Functionality
 - Confirmation insurance held (incl. third party cover and Wreck Recovery)
- Remote Operation Centre (ROC) details (if applicable)
 - Location
 - Contact Details
- Support Craft Details (Name)
- Statement that Remote Operator(s) are appropriately trained and experienced (Y/N)
- Requested Operational and Trials Area
- Overview of planned operation or trials

Having submitted the above information, KHM will issue a certificate containing details of where the vessel will be permitted to operate (in line with this policy). Please allow up to 5 working days for the processing of a vessel registration.

The registration certificate will be valid for one year and will run until the 1st November whereupon operators will need to re-register their vessel.

8.1. Online Form

The online form for registration of UMS can be found at the following link;

<https://forms.office.com/e/YkDaSUTuH9>

²⁸ This is a local database of vessels operating within the DPoP only and is no way linked with MCA or DMR registers' of shipping.

9. Contact Details

9.1. KHM Plymouth

Plymouth VTS

To be contacted in event of emergency and to complete mandatory reports.

Channel: VHF Ch 14
Call Sign: “Plymouth VTS” or “Flag”
Telephone number: 01752 226 873 (VTS) / 01752 552 416 (Flag)
Email: NAVYNBCD-KHMLongroom@mod.gov.uk

KHM Autonomy point of contact

To be contacted on initial registration, and for general information about UMS operations within the Dockyard Port of Plymouth

Email: NAVYNBCD-KHMAUTONOMY@mod.gov.uk

9.2. Cattewater Harbour Commission

To be contacted for all matters related to berthing and specific operations within the Cattewater (Area 7).

Telephone number: 01752 665 934
Email: info@plymouthport.org.uk

References

The following references are included for easy access. Whilst links are accurate at time of publishing, personnel are to confirm they are reviewing the latest version.

Defence Safety Authority (2024) *DSA03-DMR Guide to Regulation of Maritime Autonomous Systems.*

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MCA (2026) *MGN 705 (M) (Amendment 1) Remotely operated unmanned vessels (ROUVs) of 2.5 metres to less than 4.5 metres in length overall.* Available from

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mgn-705-m-amendment-1-remotely-operated-unmanned-vessels-rouvs-of-25-metres-to-less-than-45-metres-in-length-overall>

MCA (2025) *The Workboat Code Edition 3.* Available from

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-workboat-code-edition-3>

Cyber Security References

IACS (2023) *UR E26 Cyber resilience of ships – Rev. 1*. Available from
<https://iacs.org.uk/resolutions/unified-requirements/ur-e>

IACS (2023) *UR E27 Cyber resilience of on-board systems and equipment – Rev.1* Available from
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IMO (2025) *MSC-FAL.1/Circ.3/Rev.3 - GUIDELINES ON MARITIME CYBER RISK MANAGEMENT*.
Available from <https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/OurWork/Security/Documents/MSC-FAL.1-Circ.3-Rev.3.pdf>

National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) (2025) *Cyber Assessment Framework Version 4.0*. Available
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