










# Visual and Sounds Signals

Whilst out on the waterway it is common to hear the commercial vessels signalling using sound signals. It is also likely that you will see these vessels displaying Code Flags and shapes when moving, anchored or alongside terminals. The signals and flags used are part of an internationally recognised system which can be used by any vessel to communicate with those around it. It is important that users of the waterway are aware of the meaning of and importance of signals commonly used within the Haven.

## Flags

You may have seen Code Flags being displayed on commercial vessels but it is more likely that they have been seen during regattas and races or used as bunting at shoreside events. It is important that you understand that the code flags principal use is communication between vessels. The use of the same Code Flags during regattas and races is secondary and the flags will have different meaning specific to the event.

Some of the commonly displayed International Code Flags and their meaning when flown individually are:

Flag	Code letter	Meaning
	<b>A</b>	I have a diver down; keep well clear at slow speed. (More details on diver markers below.)
	<b>B</b>	I am taking in, discharging, or carrying dangerous cargo
	<b>D</b>	I am manoeuvring with difficulty; keep clear
	<b>E</b>	Altering course to starboard
	<b>I</b>	Altering course to port
	<b>P</b>	About to sail
	<b>S</b>	Engines going astern

As a recreational users you like many others may fly flags design for land use on your vessels to indicate your nationality. This is a practise that should be discouraged. Flying the Red Ensign at the stern of the vessel indicates a UK registered Vessel. Flying land based national flags could present a danger to other vessel if misinterpreted as their appearance is the same as some Code Flags. For example the St Andrews Cross is the same as Code Flag M and the St George Cross is the same as Code Flag V.




**M** I am stopped and making no way through the water



**V** I require assistance

## Diver Flags and surface marker buoys

The waterway and surrounding coast offer many opportunities for recreational divers and is a popular destination particularly in summer months. Vessels accompanying divers in the haven are required to display the Code Flag 'A'  when divers are in the water.

When you see a vessel displaying this flag give it a wide berth and pass at an appropriate speed. Remember divers may be some distance from the vessel so you should also keep a good watch on the water around you. Look for rising bubbles and surface markers which can indicate a diver is close to the surface.

Surface marker buoys can take many shapes. Unlike fishing pot markers they are usually constructed of plastic or flexible material and are inflated each time they are used. The most common styles are shown below but it is recommended that you avoid close quarters situations with any float or marker you encounter in the waterway.










The 'A' Flag is most commonly used by dive vessels, however it should be noted that a Red flag with diagonal white strip (shown opposite) is also an internationally recognised flag to indicate that divers are in the water. It is more commonly used on Surface marker buoys as shown above.

## Sound Signals

The following sound signals are in regular use in the Haven. Recreational users should be aware of sound signals so that they are able to understand the intentions of larger vessels.

Sound signals are given in a combination of short and or long blasts on a ships whistle or horn. As a general rule a short blast will last 1 second and a long blast between 4 and 6 seconds.

One short blast		I am altering my course to starboard (right)
Two short blasts		I am altering my course to port (left)
Three short blasts		I am operating astern propulsion (going backwards)
Five short blasts in succession		I do not understand your intentions
One long blast		Made to make vessels aware of the presence
Four short blasts, a short interval and one short blast		I intend to turn about to starboard (turn vessel over 135 degrees)
Four short blasts, a short interval and two short blasts		I intend to turn about to port (turn vessel over 135 degrees)