



PoA-MSMS-04-VTS-GUI-001

**Vessel Traffic Services –
Guidance for Masters &
Navigating Officers**

Revision 2 – November 2025

Marine Safety Management System

Aberdeen Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) – Guidance for Masters & Navigating Officers

Aberdeen VTS

Aberdeen VTS is sited and is stationed in the Marine Operations Centre (MOC) in the North Harbour (North Pier Breakwater) and is operated 24 hours a day, 365 days per year.

Purpose of Aberdeen VTS:- interact with vessel traffic and respond to developing situations within their designated area, to improve safety and efficiency of navigation, contribute to the safety of life at sea and support the protection of the environment.

Aberdeen VTS service levels and provision:

- Information Service (INS);
- Navigational Assistance Service (NAS);
- Traffic Organisation Service (TOS).

Participation in the VTS scheme is compulsory for all vessels and watercraft operating and navigating within the VTS area and port jurisdiction / district.

Further details are available in:

BA Chart 146	Aberdeen Harbour Berths
BA Chart 1446	Port of Aberdeen
Admiralty List of Radio Signals	Volume 6 (1)
Admiralty List of Lights	Area 1 & 2
Admiralty Sailing Directions	NP 54

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Communications & Surveillance

Aberdeen VTS monitors the latest weather information and forecasts, tidal data and local meteorological conditions and is equipped with the following:

- VHF radio equipment monitoring VHF channels 12 & 16;
- RADAR and AIS monitoring equipment;
- CCTV system – monitoring quayside and port estate areas.

VTS may be contacted using the call sign identification 'Aberdeen VTS' on VHF Channel 12.

Vessels operating and navigating within the port district and harbour limits should continuously monitor VHF Channel 12.

VTS may also be contacted by:

Telephone: + 44 (0) 1224 597000 (request to be connected with VTS);

Email: vts@portofaberdeen.co.uk

Mariners and Navigating Officers are advised that in accordance with the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) Guidelines (G1132 – VTS Voice Communications and Phraseology) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP), Aberdeen VTS will use SMCP message markers, as per IMO Resolution A.918(22), when communicating with vessels within their jurisdiction and port limits.

The seven (7) message markers Aberdeen VTS will use are:

- Information;
- Advice;
- Warning;
- Instruction;
- Question;
- Answer;
- Request.

Message markers are to increase the probability of a message being understood in shore-to-ship and ship-to-shore communications.

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Message Marker	Meaning
Information	Indicates that the following message is restricted to observed facts, situations etc.
Advice	Indicates that the following message implies the intention of the sender to influence others and may include a recommendation.
Warning	Indicates that the following message implies the intention of the sender to alert others to potential dangers.
Instruction	Indicates that the following message implies the intention of the sender to direct the action of others. <i>(In a VTS area, ships should comply with instructions given by VTS unless contradictory safety and / or marine environment protection reasons exist. Masters may be required to report on their actions should they disregard any instruction given by VTS).</i>
Question	Indicates that the following message is of an interrogative character.
Answer	Indicates that the following message is the reply to a previous question.
Request	Indicates that the following message is asking for action from others with respect to the ship and signals that something is to be arranged or provided.

Note:

All forms of communication and monitoring equipment within the Marine Operations Centre (VTS) and within the port district are recorded.

Navigation and marine related memoranda and information, including the latest Notices to Mariners, may be found on the Port of Aberdeen website
<https://www.portofaberdeen.co.uk/port-information/marine>

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Traffic Clearance & Operating within Port Limits & District

It is a requirement that all vessels or watercraft entering and navigating the district report to Aberdeen VTS; vessels or watercraft should state and confirm their intentions.

All vessels or watercraft must receive 'Traffic Clearance' from Aberdeen VTS prior to:

- Entering and transiting navigational channels (North / South Harbour);
- Carrying out any manoeuvre such as letting go mooring lines, operating engines / thrusters whilst alongside, moving along the quayside using ropes, and launching any small craft (including ROVs) or deploying shipboard deck equipment such as cranes / davits / A-frames outboard.

Vessels intending to reduce speed and / or stop making way for the purpose of lowering or recovering Daughter Craft (DC) / Fast Rescue Craft (FRC) must report to Aberdeen VTS and advise their intentions in advance.

Vessels intending to reduce speed and / or stop making way for the purpose of lowering or recovering manoeuvring thrusters must report to Aberdeen VTS and advise their intentions in advance.

Reporting Points within Port Limits & District

Five (5) reporting and holding points have been designated.

These reporting points are:

Alpha: transition point between the Tidal Harbour & Albert Basin – (Atlantic Quay) (North Harbour);

Bravo: the vicinity of the Fairway Buoy;

Charlie: transition point between the Tidal Harbour & Victoria Dock – (The Cut) (North Harbour);

Delta: transition point between the Turning Basin & the River Dee (North Harbour);

India: Three (3) miles from the Fairway Buoy.

All vessels must report when passing points **India** and **Bravo**.

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Reporting points Alpha, Charlie and Delta within the North Harbour should be carried out as maybe required and instructed by Aberdeen VTS.

Vessels are required to contact Aberdeen VTS at least one (1) hour prior to arrival declaring the following information:

- Maximum draft;
- Last port of call (or location);
- Any known defects on board (navigational / manoeuvring or propulsion equipment);
- Pilotage / towage requirements / PEC number.

Port Arrival Documentation

Prior to arrival at Port of Aberdeen VTS should be in receipt of the following documentation (submitted via vessels appointed agents (or operators) – as / where applicable):

- Port of Aberdeen Pre-Arrival Notification Form;
- MCA CERS 3 Workbook (fully completed & validated);
- UK NMSW FAL 5 and / or FAL 6 Forms (as required).

Please note that entry into the port may be delayed or refused if documentation has not been received or has been submitted with omissions and / or errors.

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Masters / PEC Holders / Navigating Officers – Responsibilities within Port Limits & District

Masters and Navigating Officers will continue to have absolute responsibility for the safety and conduct of their vessel and crew at all times.

Aberdeen VTS does not relieve Masters or Navigating Officers of their responsibilities; **N.B.** *The International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (COLREGs) (as amended)*.

Masters or Navigating Officers must ensure that excessive thrust / engine power is avoided unless absolutely necessary to avoid obstructing another passing vessel.

Masters or Navigating Officers must ensure they have sufficient height of tide to enter / leave the harbour, for transiting the navigational channels and for remaining safely alongside and afloat at all times.

A vessel should notify Aberdeen VTS prior to and upon completion of any hot work activities or hydrocarbon / noxious liquid substances bunkering and transfer operation.

Any intended and planned maintenance that may hamper a vessels manoeuvrability must be discussed with Aberdeen VTS prior to commencing the work.

Vessels must not immobilise without prior authorisation from Aberdeen VTS; an immobilisation permit should be issued.

A vessel must not conduct diving operations without a dive permit which has been authorised and issued by Aberdeen VTS.

It is entreated that the latest version of the following documentation and policies be made readily available and accessible on board visiting and frequenting vessels, and should be read and understood prior to arrival and undertaking port operations within Port of Aberdeen:

- Port of Aberdeen – Handbook;
- Port of Aberdeen – Visitor Induction Video;
- Port of Aberdeen – Environmental Code of Practice;
- Port of Aberdeen – Code of Conduct for Contractors;
- Port of Aberdeen – Code of Safe Practice (North & South Harbour);
- Port of Aberdeen – Port Access Policy / Procedure;

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Said documents may be found and are held on the Port of Aberdeen Website – www.portofaberdeen.co.uk

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