

Harbour Master  
Captain P J Jary



King's Lynn Conservancy Board  
Harbour Office,  
Common Staith,  
King's Lynn,  
Norfolk PE30 1LL,  
United Kingdom.  
Telephone: +44 (0)1553 773411  
Fax: +44 (0)1553 763431  
[www.kingslynnport.co.uk](http://www.kingslynnport.co.uk)

Email: [kicb.pilots@btconnect.com](mailto:kicb.pilots@btconnect.com)

## Small Craft Guide, May 2023 edition: King's Lynn

[www.kingslynnport.co.uk](http://www.kingslynnport.co.uk) [www.sailthewash.com](http://www.sailthewash.com)

**Charts:** BA 1200, BA 108, Imray Y9

The Wash is an area of outstanding natural beauty and is a designated European Marine Site. It is England's largest embayment and contains extensive sand-flats and salt-marshes. It is home to a diverse habitat of marine mammals, shellfish, wildfowl and many other migratory birds. All visitors are required to respect the special nature of the area and enjoy the sights and sounds that abound.

It is fed by 4 rivers, which drain a vast hinterland stretching from Bedford, Northampton, Market Harborough upto Grantham. The interlinking inland waterways offer navigation to suitable craft over a wide area and even links into the Grand Union Canal.

The historic Ports of Boston, Wisbech & King's Lynn along with the more modern jetties at Port Sutton Bridge all are busy commercial ports with a range of ships arriving and sailing from all over Western Europe, the Baltic, Mediterranean and West Africa. Modern fishing fleets are based in Kings Lynn & Boston with large shellfish processing plants at Kings Lynn. Recent developments with off-shore windfarms stretching from Skegness to Sheringham make use of the abundance of wind in this area and during the construction and maintenance of these sites, numerous support craft are likely to be encountered, often transiting at high speed.

The MOD maintains an active firing range at Holbeach and low-flying aircraft can arrive very suddenly day or night and flares / smoke / explosions might also be noticed.

The one common feature of the Ports on the Wash is that when the tide is out, access is very restricted, with frequently shifting shoals, often within the channels, and the sandbanks are very hard and high. The tidal flows in the often, man-made, channels can be upto 6 knots on spring tides, but all the main channels are well surveyed and buoyed, and are suitable for navigation day & night for any craft. However, navigating outside of the buoyed channels cannot be advised for any leisure craft.

The Port of King's Lynn offers visitors direct access to short term mooring pontoons with no bridges or locks to negotiate.

Approaching King's Lynn, visiting craft are advised to head towards the No.1 Light Buoy (Yellow Special Mark, Fl Y 3s) then towards the **Bulldog Channel**.

**It is not recommended** to proceed upto to King's Lynn earlier than 3½ hours before high water and only then if the tide reading observed directly from the Bulldog Beacon (Q G), or taken from the on-line tide-gauge ([thewash.port-log.net/live/Display](http://thewash.port-log.net/live/Display)), is more than 1 metre greater than the vessel's draft.

**There are no other surveyed or buoyed routes** to King's Lynn. Any routes across the sand banks should not be attempted without good and current local knowledge with suitable electronic position fixing equipment and only then in a sturdy well founded boat with protected propellers and with a hull capable of drying out.

Commercial shipping could arrive into the anchorage at any time to wait for a suitable tide and will normally meet the fast pilot boat approx. 2 hours before high water in the vicinity of the No.1 Buoy, they may have to alter course to provide a lee, so all leisure craft should proceed with caution when commercial shipping is underway and note that Rule 9 of the Colregs is relevant as ships **will be confined** to the best of the available water. Out bound vessels will normally be clear of the Bulldog Channel by 1 hour after high water. All shipping communications are carried out on VHF Ch. 14 and clarification of shipping activities can be sought from "Lynn Pilots" when operational.

King's Lynn Conservancy Board maintains an informative website: [www.kingslynnport.co.uk](http://www.kingslynnport.co.uk), which has a wide range of information for visiting craft. Downloadable chart extracts can be viewed which show the most recent navigable channel with all the navigation aids detailed and if you wish to plot the buoys into your chart plotter, all the current positions are listed. Please **always check the website just prior to arriving** to ensure that you have the latest positions. The website also has all the latest notices to mariners, tidal data and detailed survey charts for the River from West Bank beacon to Boal Quay. Links to the King's Lynn pontoon booking process and FAQ's are also available.

From seaward the large white grain silo and the 2 large wind turbines on the East side of the River along with the 2 tall power cable pylons indicate King's Lynn, with the spire of St Nicholas Chapel providing a very historic landmark.

As you approach the river mouth it starts to get confined by a stone bank to the west and marshes to the east. The northern end of the stone bank is marked by light beacons, commencing with the West Stones (Q W). At No. 26 buoy the channel turns directly to Kings Lynn and becomes confined between stone banks on each side with the current increasing. It is about 3 ½ miles from here to abeam of the commercial Docks, and good attention should be given to VHF Ch. 14 for any information broadcast by "Lynn Docks" or other craft especially in the period 1½ hours before high-water to just after high-water.

Fishing vessels are likely to be encountered throughout the area, and may enter or leave the channel anywhere north of No.26 buoy, but leisure craft should not be tempted to follow them as they may be heading for an area to run aground and dry out in order to undertake shellfish operations.

The West Bank beacon and tide gauge (FI Y 2s) is an inward reporting position for commercial ships, and apart from the Lower Cut Lt. (Q R) there are no other navigational aids until the Docks. The electricity pylons indicate approx. 0.8 miles to the commercial docks and with the waste treatment plant on the west bank and the industrial sites on the east banks there is normally sufficient light to see the river banks at night. It is recommended that a VHF call (Ch.14) is made to "Lynn Docks" as you pass the under the pylons to advise them of your position and they will, if manned, tell you about shipping movements, (also call before leaving the Pontoons outbound).

Commercial shipping can be encountered on either side of the channel in the Cut depending on the shoals and vessels exiting or entering the Docks **do so at 90° to the channel** and will often be completely blocking the channel until they have swung, so early contact with the Docks will enable you to take the necessary action to avoid passing the docks when shipping is manoeuvring. A flashing orange light exhibited from the Docks flagstaff indicates vessels exiting the docks.

Just north of the Docks is the Fisher Fleet, which is the base to many of the commercial fishing vessels. Leisure craft should not attempt to enter this fleet, and there are no moorings available.

After passing the Docks the town of King's Lynn is evident on the East bank. A small passenger ferry runs Mon – Sat between West Lynn jetty and Kings Lynn, please reduce your wash when passing. Small harbour craft moorings lie on the west side, just upstream of the ferry, these are **not for use** by leisure craft. The Visitor pontoons are located towards the Southern end of South Quay. These are operated by the local Council and all enquiries and berth availabilities must be made through them (see [www.sailthewash.com](http://www.sailthewash.com) )

Always ensure your craft is moored sufficiently to cope with the strong tidal flows which on big spring tides will reach upto 7 knots for a while. Commercial ships may come very close to the pontoons as they swing during busy tides and fishing craft heading to / from Boal Quay (approx. 0.1 miles upstream) may be encountered at speed well before & after high water.

There are **no moorings** available alongside any of the quays in King's Lynn for any leisure craft and craft **should not attempt** to moor to any of the quays as non are suitable for small craft to moor against nor take the ground. The quay immediately to the south of the pontoons is an emergency lay by berth for ships upto 85m long, as well as for use by commercial survey & support vessels, and the Boal Quay is a dedicated quay for commercial fishing vessels to moor and land their catch round the clock.

Vessels wishing to continue upriver to Denver or Salter's Lode and entering the inland rivers systems should have an agreed arrival time with the appropriate Lock keeper, and time your departure accordingly. There are no facilities on the river upstream of King's Lynn.

Due to the low bridges and often featureless riverbanks nobody should attempt navigation upstream of King's Lynn during darkness. Visitors are reminded that they **must refer to tidal information published by KLCB to ensure they make the correct air-draft calculations prior to heading upstream.**

