Wellington Regional Council
Harbourmaster's Direction 4B/2024
Changes to entrance channel and approaches

To: Pilots and PEC Masters of vessels over 500GRT using Wellington Harbour entrance.

I, **GRANT NALDER**, Wellington Regional Harbourmaster, issue the following Direction pursuant to section 33F(1)(c)(i) of the Maritime Transport Act 1994 upon the grounds that the Direction is necessary for the purpose of ensuring maritime safety.

BACKGROUND

In 2021 Greater Wellington and CentrePort commissioned South Maritime Services to assist in reviewing how vessels enter and depart from Wellington harbour and identify any risk areas and provide recommendations. This was further refined with a risk review meeting in September 2024.

The resulting report and recommendations were shared in December 2024 for further consultation. As sections of the report are considered and changes are introduced this Direction will be amended to give effect to those changes.

Changes will be introduced in a staged manner where possible, with prior warning and opportunity to comment. These changes (and this Direction) can be reviewed and modified as/when required. Once all changes are implemented there will be a period of time before review and either further modification or the start of a process to review and change the Navigation and Safety Bylaws 2021 (the Bylaws).

Initial steps have already been implemented:

- Moving the Pilot Boarding Grounds slightly south to increase separation between inbound PEC vessels and Piloted ships.
- Alteration to 6.1.5 to allow inbound PEC vessels to join the leading line further north.
- A 'no passing' zone for vessels over 500GRT in the channel, this is increasingly slightly to cover the between the Front Lead to abeam of Pencarrow light.
- The previous west of Falcon shoal outward route for vessels over 500GRTwas stopped in August 2025.

From 24 May 2026 the red Falcon Shoal red light will transfer to the new navigation mark at 41° 18.28' S 174° 50.79' E. The old Falcon Shoal pile will have a yellow light with the same flash character.

From 12 June 2026 the inward and outward tracks will change in line with the details below and the introduction of a precautionary zone. The precautionary zone is of similar length to the narrow channel defined in Schedule 6 of the Navigation Safety Bylaws, however it is wider to include the new Falcon Shoal beacon. The Precautionary zone is shown on the chartlet below.

This zone is intended to address the issue of small passing distances at the pinch point near the Front lead and Steeple rock, as identified in previous risk assessment. Feedback around this area resulted in a range

of views of the risk and mitigation options. Support was shown for a 'Precautionary zone' where the Master's awareness is raised of the concerns and then they may manage this as they see fit on the day. However once one of the passing vessels exceeds 210m it will be a requirement that the two vessels do not meet in the area between Hinds Point and the Front lead.

A single direction deep draft route is in place established by Harbourmaster direction 2/2026.

In the short term the old Falcon shoal pile will remain in place, the new standard outward track sits between the two piles. This will be reviewed before the end of 2026.

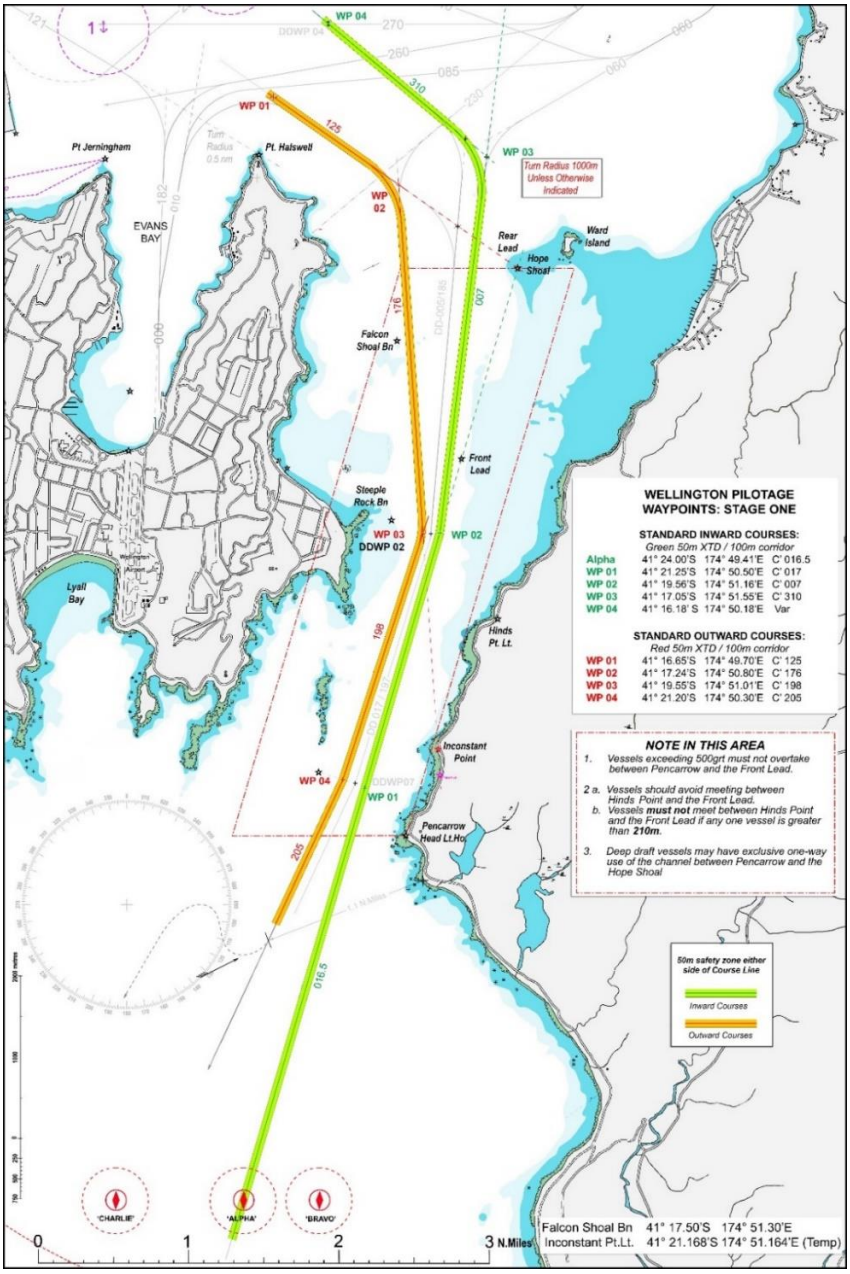
At times, to accommodate significant sailing events hosted at Worser Bay, outward-bound vessels may be directed to pass east of the old Falcon Shoal marker. Currently this is likely to be fewer than twelve days over summer, during daylight only, and will be notified in advance.

APPLICATION

This Direction applies to PEC and Piloted vessels over 500GRT entering or departing from Wellington Harbour.

DIRECTION

- PEC vessels entering Wellington Harbour must be steady on the leads by the time their vessel reaches a point 1.5nm south of the charted position of Barrett Reef Buoy. This amends Bylaw 6.1.5. that currently requires joining before 2nm.
- There is to be no overtaking between applicable vessels on the standard routes, in the area between the Front leading light and the Pencarrow lighthouse, in either direction. This means that any overtaking manoeuvre must be started after, or completed before, entering the into this part of the channel.
- No vessel departing Wellington Harbour is to proceed west of the new Falcon Shoal beacon, position: 41° 18.28' S 174° 50.79' E.
- From 24 May 2026 the two Falcon Shoal Piles will display lights different to the chart; the existing pile will have a yellow light and the new Pile a red light, both with the same character.
- From 12 June 2026 vessels may use the Inward and Outward tracks as indicated in figure one below. These replace the relevant waypoints in Schedule 5 of the Bylaws.
- By Monday 29 June all applicable vessels are expected to be using the new standard tracks as indicated in Figure one below.
- Vessels of 500GRT should avoid meeting an opposing vessel between Hinds Point and the Front Leading Light.
- Where one of the vessels above is over 210metres overall, they shall not meet between Hinds Point and the Front Leading light.
- From time to time, with prior notice, a deep draft channel may be declared that will grant a deep draft vessel exclusive one-way use of a deep draft channel between Pencarrow light house and Rear Leading Light. This will restrict use of the standard tracks in that area. The process is found in Harbourmaster Direction 02/2026.
- From time to time outward bound vessels may be asked to travel outwards passing east of the location of the old Falcon Shoal pile. This will be notified at least a week in advance and will only apply to daylight sailings.



This direction will be reviewed either to incorporate additional changes or to resolves issues arising from changes, as required.

DATED at Wellington this 22 May 2026.

Grant Nalder
Regional Harbourmaster
Wellington Regional Council