

Falmouth Harbour Beach Safety Zone - Gyllyngvase Beach FAQs

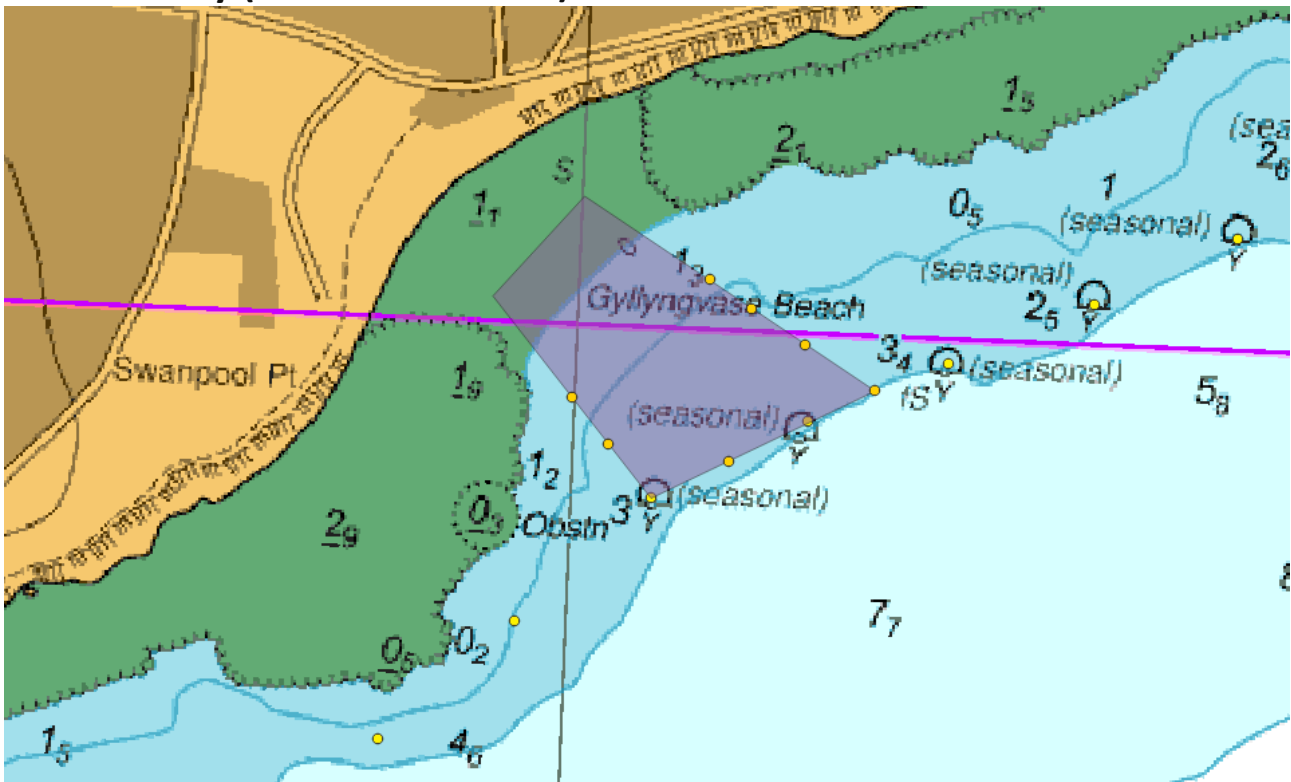
Introduction

Gyllyngvase Beach is becoming an increasingly popular destination for an ever-wider diversity of water users. This inevitably has raised the potential for conflict between different types of water-based users their enjoyment and safety. This changing level of potential conflict poses a risk to the quality of the environment of this beautiful asset in Falmouth Harbour. We also want to create a situation where all users can safely enjoy the beach area.

To address this safety issue, Falmouth Harbour is looking to introduce a new Harbour Direction under its statutory powers granted by The Harbour Directions Order 2015 and the Harbour Act 1964.

Falmouth Harbour, through the Harbour Users Group (HUG) has been working with local groups and activity representatives to develop a new approach to water safety and environmental management at Gyllyngvase Beach. This new Beach Safety (Restricted Vessel) Zone will be implemented through powers available to Falmouth Harbour and will be subject to review over time.

Beach Safety (Restricted Vessel) Zone Plan



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The “Zone” will be called the “Falmouth Harbour Beach Safety (Restricted Vessel) Zone” and the conditions area fully outlined within the attached draft Harbour Direction.

The approach to the “Zone” is explained through the following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and these FAQs the “Zone” will be called the Beach Safety Zone.

1. What is being proposed?

A new zone that restricts vessels from entering an area at Gyllyngvase Beach to establish a safe area for water users (as described in permitted users below), while also maintaining an area to the east of the zone for vessels, who wish to access the beach. The Beach Safety Zone will be marked by marker buoys and supported with appropriate signage to ensure vessels are aware of the zone.

2. What is the purpose of the Beach Safety Zone?

The primary purpose of the Beach Safety Zone is to enhance safety and reduce the risk of accidents involving vessels and people near Gyllyngvase Beach, by separating water users.

3. Who can enter and use the Beach Safety Zone?

Those permitted to use the Beach Safety Zone (“permitted users”) are water users that are accessing the area using “human” propulsion; this would include swimmers, kayakers, Stand Up Paddleboarders, rowing boats and dinghies, surfboarders and body boarders. Human powered small watercraft should use the Beach Safety Zone with caution and safety in mind.

4. Who cannot enter and use the Beach Safety Zone?

Those prohibited from entering and using the Beach Safety Zone (“prohibited users”) are those that are accessing the area using Motorised or powered vessels or watercraft (over 2.5m long); this would include all vessels are prohibited including sailing yachts/dayboats/dinghies, racing or cruising, all motorboats (including fishing boats and other commercial vessels), hovercraft, jet skis, Ribs and other powered watercraft.

All those vessels prohibited can use the area to the east of the BSZ to reach the beach. Lifeguard, all 1st responders and official Harbour vessels are exempt.

This would include craft powered by wind, electricity or other fuels or anything not mentioned that could pose a safety threat to the permitted users of the Beach Safety Zone due to speed or wake and or injury from propellers, hull collision at speed or foils.

Other, personal watercraft are advised not to enter or enter with extreme caution, the Beach Safety Zone to maintain safety, these include powered body boards/Stand-Up Paddleboards, small dinghies with outboards, windsurfers, kite surfers, wing foilers, and all other foiling craft.

5. Can I anchor my yacht or powerboat in the Beach Safety Zone?

Vessels are not permitted in the Beach Safety Zone when it is active.

6. How will these changes make beach users safer?

The Beach Safety Zone will minimise interactions between the permitted users and boats/vessels, which can lead to accidents such as collisions or injuries from propellers. By clearly delineating where each activity should occur, the Beach Safety Zone reduces potential conflicts, whilst allowing for safer navigation to and from the beach.

7. What about the Lifeguard Flags?

The Lifeguard Red/Yellow, Black White Chequer and Red flags system will remain in place. The zone is being used alongside the existing Lifeguard support and users should follow the safety flag system in conjunction with the rules of the Beach Safety Zone i.e. Red & Yellow area being for Swimming & Bodyboarding while the Black & White is for surfboards, stand-up paddleboards, kayaks and other non-powered craft.

8. Why is this change being proposed now?

Recent incidents, increases in year-round swimming at Gyllyngvase Beach and a busier harbour with more, faster, smaller watercraft, has heightened the potential for conflicts between different water users and raised safety concerns. The timing also reflects Falmouth Harbour strategy to modernise the way the harbour is used and make things safer for diverse water users.

9. What are the pros/cons of the proposed changes for swimmers, fishers, vessel owners, and the wider community?

Pros:

1. Water users including swimmers gain a safer, dedicated area free from vessel traffic, reducing the risk of accidents.
2. Vessel owners still benefit from beach access.

Cons:

2. Fishers and vessel owners may face restrictions on access to areas within the Beach Safety Zone, which could require adjustments to their activities. However, alternative areas for fishing and boating remain available and the area can be used during hours of darkness, they also have access to the beach.

10. Will there be any fees to use the Beach Safety Zone?

No, the Beach Safety Zone will remain freely accessible for all swimmers and beach users. Vessels will not be charged to access the beach.

11. What costs are associated with maintaining the Beach Safety Zone?

The main costs include installing and maintaining the buoys, signage, and any enforcement or monitoring activities required to ensure the Beach Safety Zone operates effectively. While these expenses represent an investment in safety, they are considered proportionate and essential for protecting all users.

12. Are Falmouth Harbour funding this and how?

Yes, Falmouth Harbour is funding the Beach Safety Zone through its operational budget and statutory Harbour conservancy role, which is primarily supported by harbour due revenues. The Harbour receives no local public or national HM Gov money to support its day-to-day operations. Where possible, external funding, such as buoy sponsorship or funding may be sought to support specific aspects of the project. The seagrass buoys which will make up some of the signage are already funded by the Blue Meadows project link here: [Falmouth's new "Blue Meadows" buoys protecting seagrass fields - Falmouth Harbour, Cornwall.](#)

Safety

13. Will the Beach Safety Zone improve swimmer safety?

The Beach Safety Zone will improve swimmer safety and other human powered water users by separating vessel traffic from the beach area, significantly reducing the risk of collisions or propeller-related injuries. The Beach Safety Zone will also reduce wake caused by vessels, providing a calmer and safer environment. Although permitted users need to be aware that vessels will still operate outside the BSZ.

14. How will the Beach Safety Zone be marked or delineated?

The Beach Safety Zone will be clearly marked with floating buoys positioned at regular intervals, indicating the boundaries of the area and vessel channel - see plan. The buoys will be orange coloured and visible from both the water and the beach/shore. In addition, clear signage will be installed on the beach and nearby locations to inform users of the designated areas and rules. Local navigational charts will also be updated to reflect the exclusion Beach Safety Zone, ensuring vessels are aware of the changes before entering the area. The Beach Safety Zone and Harbour Direction will be published on the FH website here: [Notices to Mariners - Current Archives - Falmouth Harbour, Cornwall](#) Coordinates of the buoys will be published.

15. What impact will this have on the Lifeguards zones when Lifeguards are on duty?

The normal Lifeguard Zones will be established within the new Beach Safety Zone and will be positioned depending on prevailing conditions - the Red & Yellow area being for Swimming & Bodyboarding while the Black & White is for surfboards, stand-up paddleboards, kayaks and other non-powered craft.

16. What rules or restrictions will apply to vessels in or near the Beach Safety Zone

All Vessels will be prohibited from entering the designated Beach Safety Zone to ensure the safety of permitted users. Outside of the Zone, vessels must adhere to a strict speed limit (4 knots or slower) and avoid creating unnecessary wake. Vessel operators will be bound by normal collision regulations and required to navigate cautiously and give way to non-powered users, such as kayakers and paddle-boarders, where applicable. Education and outreach efforts will be conducted to ensure boaters understand and comply with the rules. Regular patrols by Falmouth Harbour staff will monitor the area for compliance and address any issues.

17. Will the existing wider 4-knot restricted zone remain?

Yes, the wider 4-knot vessel speed restriction zone will remain in place as an overarching safety measure across the harbour area adjacent to the main town beaches. The new Beach Safety Zone will complement these existing restrictions.

Environmental Impact**18. How will the proposed changes affect the marine environment and wildlife?**

The proposed changes are designed for safety predominately, but there will be some positive impacts on the marine environment and wildlife. By restricting vessel access to the Beach Safety Zone, the initiative will reduce physical disturbances to the seabed, such as those caused by propellers and anchoring. This will help protect sensitive habitats, including seagrass beds, which are vital for marine biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

19. What specific measures will be taken to protect sensitive habitats, such as seagrass beds?

The Beach Safety Zone has been carefully planned to avoid impacts on seagrass beds and other ecologically sensitive areas. Anchoring of vessels will stop in the Beach Safety Zone as they will not be permitted to enter the Zone when it is active, which will prevent impacts to these habitats.

20. Will advanced mooring options be used for the buoys to minimize damage to the seabed?

Yes, advanced eco-friendly mooring systems, will be used where impacts to seagrass beds is envisaged and where this is practical and safe. These systems reduce direct contact of the mooring ground chains with the seabed, preventing damage to seagrass and other sensitive habitats. Unlike traditional mooring systems, which can drag and harm the seabed, these advanced moorings are designed to be low-impact and sustainable.

Enforcement and Monitoring of the Beach Safety Zone

21. Who is doing this and under what powers?

Falmouth Harbour is looking to introduce a new Harbour Direction under its statutory powers granted by The Harbour Directions (Designation of Harbour Authorities) Order 2015 and the Harbour Act 1964 Section 40A. These powers enable the harbour authority to regulate activities within its jurisdiction to ensure safety and manage harbour operations effectively. As part of its responsibilities, Falmouth Harbour needs to balance the needs of diverse stakeholders, including swimmers, vessel users, fishers, and the local community. This Gyllyngvase Beach Safety Zone is a proactive measure under these powers to enhance safety after a number of incidents around Gyllyngvase Beach.

22. What is a Harbour Direction?

A harbour direction is a legal instruction issued by a harbour authority under powers within the Harbour Act 1964 (as amended by the Marine Navigation Act 2013), that allows harbour authorities to regulate vessel movements and activities within its jurisdiction. Harbour directions are legally enforceable and used to enhance safety, improve the efficiency of harbour operations, and protect the marine environment.

23. How will the Beach Safety Zone be enforced?

The Zone will be enforced by Falmouth Harbour staff through regular patrols and monitoring. Whilst undertaking these patrols from the water Harbour personnel will also try and educate water users about the rules and ensure compliance with the restrictions. Public awareness campaigns will also play a key role in promoting compliance, with clear communication of the rules before and during the Beach Safety Zone's implementation. In the 1st year FH will plan to increase the on the water presence at peak times to ensure smooth establishment of the Zone.

24. How should users report any potential violations or breaches of the zone?

People who witness any breaches of the direction should report the incident to the Harbour Office [+44 \(0\)1326 213537](tel:+441326213537) or submit an incident report as soon as is practical after incident. [Report an Incident - Falmouth Harbour, Cornwall.](#)

Please be aware the Harbour has limited resources and will attend and or deal with the incident as soon as is practical.

25. What penalties will be in place for those who violate the restrictions?

Penalties for violations may include fines or other enforcement actions as permitted under Falmouth Harbours statutory powers. The specific penalties will depend on the nature and severity of the incident. For example, entering the Beach Safety Zone with a vessel or exceeding speed limits in the boat channel may result in immediate warnings or prosecution. Repeat offenders or extreme breaches could face stricter consequences. The enforcement approach will always be to prioritise education and cooperation to encourage voluntary compliance. Harbour directions create criminal offences, and prosecution for breaches are usually through local Magistrates' Court.

26. Will there be signage or markers to clearly indicate the new Beach Safety Zone boundaries?

Yes, the Beach Safety Zone will be clearly marked with floating orange buoys to indicate its boundaries. Onshore signage at key access points, including Gyllyngvase Beach, will provide detailed information about the Beach Safety Zone, and applicable rules. Visual aids, such as maps, will also be shared online on the Falmouth Harbour website and in the harbour office to ensure all users are aware of the new boundaries and regulations.

27. Will the Beach Safety Zone be in force 24/7?

No - The Beach Safety Zone will only be in force dawn to dusk. At night the Zone will not be in force and fishers and other vessels will be permitted to enter the whole Zone but the 4knot restriction will be in force 24/7 alongside the voluntary ask to not anchor in the area due to the sensitive seabed.

28. Will the Beach Safety Zone be in force all year?

Yes -it will from force dawn to dusk all year. During winter (Nov-March) the number buoys may reduce, or all of the buoys may be removed due to the exposed nature of the beach. The Beach Safety Zone will remain. The Harbour notice will include location coordinates for the principal buoy locations.

29. What is meant by dawn to dusk?

We would only recommend use of the Beach Safety Zone for swimming and other permitted uses in daylight hours, where there is good visibility. Users of the Zone should make their own assessment of this and safe use, but “Dawn to dusk” is often defined as the period of natural daylight each day, starting from the first light of morning and ending with the last light of evening. The precise times vary depending on the time of year and are published online. Times are also published here. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-nautical-almanac-office>

Fishing

30. How will the proposed Beach Safety Zone affect fishing activities?

The proposed Beach Safety Zone aims to balance safety with continued access for fishers outside of daylight hours. fishing activities will be restricted within the Zone to ensure Beach Safety Zone user safety, nearby areas of the harbour will remain accessible for fishing. To maintain safety we will expect all fishing gear and nets to be removed when the zone is active. These measures are designed to minimise disruption to fishers whilst improving safety.

31. Will fishing vessels be allowed in or near the Beach Safety Zone?

Fishing vessels may operate in the Beach Safety Zone from dusk to dawn, near the Beach Safety Zone, provided they adhere to speed limits and other regulations.

Community Engagement

32. What consultation has taken place so far, and who has been consulted?

Falmouth Harbour has engaged with a range of stakeholders during the planning process, including local councils, beach user groups, vessel operators, and the fishing community. The initiative is also being consulted with and coordinated through the Falmouth Harbour Harbour Users group. Initial feedback was collected through meetings, workshops, and discussions to ensure all viewpoints were considered. This FAQ is part of the ongoing consultation to inform and gather input from the wider public.

33. What is the Harbour Users Group (HUG)?

Falmouth Harbour is a “Trust Port”: an independent statutory body run on a commercial basis by an independent harbour board – Falmouth Harbour Commissioners – for the benefit of its stakeholders comprising marine users, both commercial and leisure, and local interests and communities. A trust port is accountable to the HUG and those stakeholders. The Harbour Users Group exists to consult stakeholders. More here: [Governance and the Harbour Board - Falmouth Harbour, Cornwall](#)

34. How can members of the public provide feedback on the proposals?

Members of the public can provide feedback via, email submissions HUGChair@falmouthharbour.co.uk, and a community consultation event planned for Thursday 13th March 14:00 to 19:00 at Gylly Beach Cafe, On Gyllyngvase Beach, Cliff Road, Falmouth, TR11 4PA. Details of feedback options are available on the Falmouth Harbour website and through local announcements. Feedback will be reviewed and used to refine the proposal where necessary.

35. How long is the consultation period?

The consultation period will last for 28 days, beginning Monday 24th February 2025 at 09:00 and closing 17:00 Monday 24th March 2025. This is in accordance with the legal minimum required and we believe this period allows sufficient time for all stakeholders and to review the proposals and share their views.

Implementation

36. When will the proposed changes be implemented?

Subject to the outcome of the consultation, the changes are planned to be implemented by 1st April 2025, in time for the Easter break. The timeline will also allow for any adjustments based on consultation feedback.

37. Is this a temporary or permanent Beach Safety Zone?

The Beach Safety Zone is a permanent safety measure. However, its performance and effectiveness will be reviewed, and adjustments may be made as necessary to respond to evolving needs. During winter the number and configuration of physical markers may change so that loss or movement of these buoys are reduced when increased storminess associated with winter may impact on the marks. Exemptions may be made for certain vessels from time to time (at HM’s absolute discretion) or for special events and restrictions changed or removed (by HM direction); these will be well publicised.

38. Will there be an opportunity to review the changes after implementation?

Yes, the Beach Safety Zone will be subject to periodic reviews, with input from stakeholders and the public. We will undertake a review at the end of 2025 and feedback any issues encountered to the HUG. FH may consult on adjustments if significant issues are identified.

39. Will there be any temporary disruptions during the setup of the new Beach Safety Zone?

None are envisaged.

40. Are more Beach Safety Zones expected in the future elsewhere in the harbour?

At present, this is a standalone initiative. However, Falmouth Harbour will monitor the effectiveness of the Beach Safety Zone and consider similar measures in other areas if there is a demonstrated need for improved safety. Any future Beach Safety Zones will follow a similar consultation process.