

# Consolidated Update

The Consolidate Update will add new material as required.

## Errata

- Page 19 – Sector 33 – amend ‘36’ to ‘35’
- Page 54 – Sector 28 – amend ‘26’ to ‘24’
- Page 90 – On the chartlet – amend ‘wpt 39’ to ‘wpt 37’
- Page 97 – Sector 33 – amend ‘34’ to ‘35’ (all spotted by a kind reader)
- Page 46 – On the chartlet – amend ‘wpt 27’ to ‘wpt 25’
- Page 89 – In the Title – amend ‘Colne’ to ‘Crouch’.

**Update: Page 11 – List of waypoints** – in consequence of a movement of the SW Barrow WCB, amend the description of location for Wpt 20 to ‘bears 114°(T), 0.37nm’. Also amend the description of location of Wpt 23 to ‘096°(T), 0.56nm’.

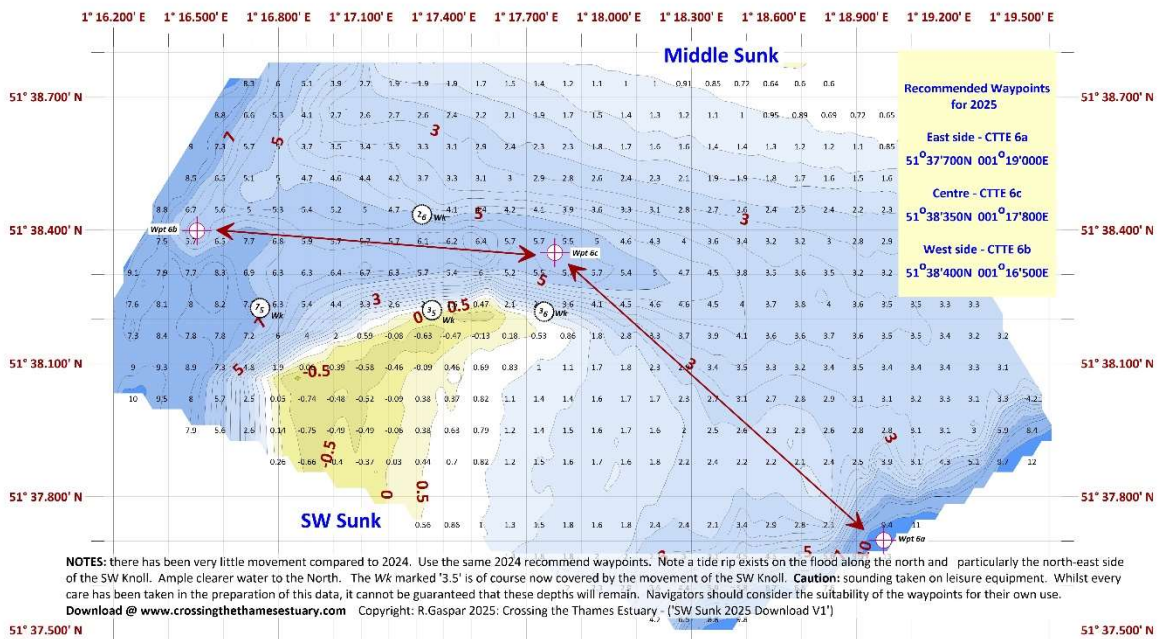
Dated 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2025

## The SW Sunk swathway (Pages 26. 42-43):

On Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2025, we conducted a survey of the SW Sunk swathway on a day with perfect conditions. We can be brief. There was very little change compared to 2024. We therefore recommend using the same three 2024 waypoints. As before on a flood tide a tide rip runs in front of the north and north-east face of the knoll and can be quite agitated. We found as much as 4 kts of tide close by the edge of the knoll – but that was very localised! Using the waypoints keep you well clear.

You can download the 2025 chartlet at <https://www.crossingthethamesestuary.com/page29.html> (first item).

## SW Sunk Swathway 2025



**New Survey 2025 - Retain the 2024 recommended waypoints**

This survey was conducted on Friday, 13th June 2025. 8495 soundings were used for the drawing of this chartlet. Grid system is WGS84, Mercator Projection EPSG3395. This chartlet incorporates UKHO NIM 2753 of 2024

### The Black Deep (Pages 33, 37, 113):

The Port of London Authority now has a Regulation (which has the effect of law) which requires any user with a vessel with 6m draft (i.e. us!) to have permission to use or cross the Black Deep.

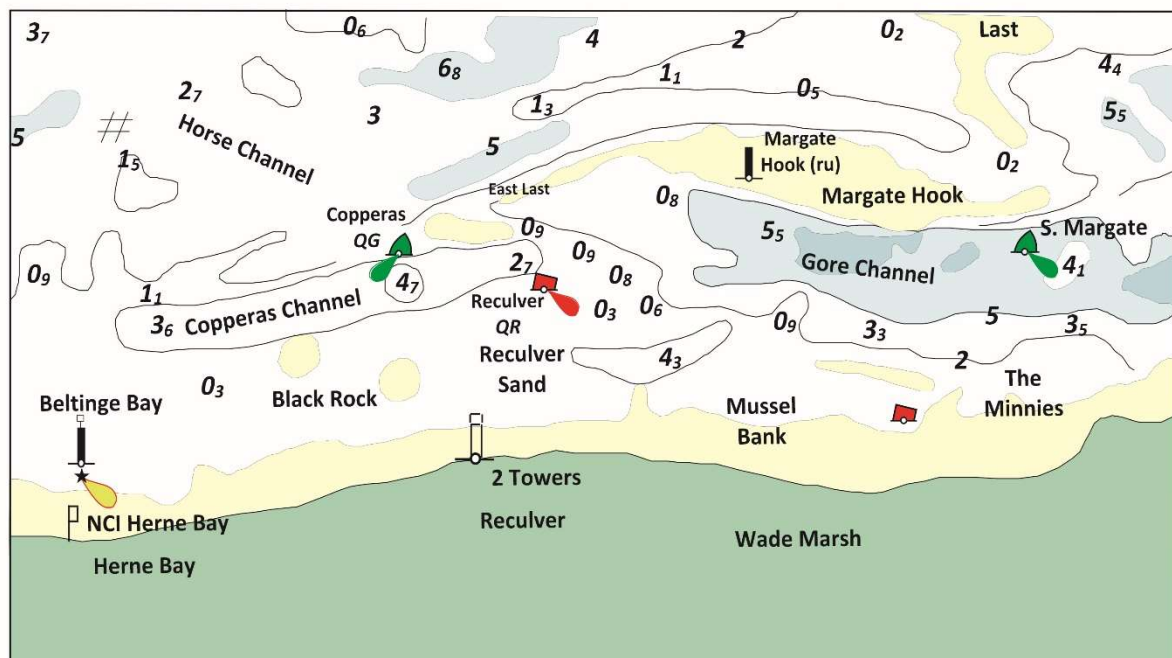
This might seem a little draconian but I believe the point of the Regulation is to minimise risk. With the London Gateway terminal now open using large container ships, the channel is inherently challenging. Typically container ships travel along the Black Deep at 19-20 kts and the Deep Water channel has no 'wiggle' room. While crossing the Black Deep under sail, a container ship can travel 6 or 7 nautical miles and approach very quickly.

I believe the PLA really just want to know your intentions – e.g. from the SW Sunk swatchway to Fisherman's Gat or across from the Little Sunk into Foulger's Gat – and are very unlikely to refuse permission unless they are aware of something developing. Of course in poor visibility using the VTS is valuable. All you need to do is call up London VTS on VHF 69 requesting permission. If you have AIS, the PLA will be 'seeing' you. You could call in to Port Control Centre on 01474 562215.

The Black Deep affects the 'Essex' Routes, routes 1 to 4, 6 to 9 and 11 to 14. See Page 37 and the 'Suffolk' Routes, routes 22 – 31. If you wish, cut out the boxes below to paste into pages 33, 37 and 113 (overleaf).

### The Copperas Channel /Reculver Sand (Pages 22 and Routes 16 and 18. Image page 92):

On 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2025 the UKHO issue a new edition of SN Chart 1607 – Thames Estuary – Southern Part. There had been no recent Notice to Mariners but I notice that the Reculver Sand has less depth as currently illustrated on Page 92. The Source data on the SN Chart shows a recent survey in 2024 and the edition revised depths over the Reculver sand down to 0.9m. So there is a 'bar' right across the eastern end of the Cooperas Channel. The reduction of depth is not huge but the height of tide now need to be considered more should you use routes 16 and 18. Revised image:



### **Insert Page 33**

The Port of London Authority now regulates the Black Deep and we are required to have permission from the PLA to use the channel laterally or crossing to and from Fisherman's or Foulger's Gat. Use VHF channel 69 to call up London VTS to seek permission on approach. (Port Control Centre 0147 456 2215). Refusal is probably very unlikely unless immediate busy traffic needs to be cleared.

### **Insert Page 37 - This affects Routes 1 to 4, 6 to 9 and 11 to 14**

The Port of London Authority now regulates the Black Deep and we are required to have permission from the PLA to use the channel laterally or crossing to and from Fisherman's or Foulger's Gat. Use VHF channel 69 to call up London VTS to seek permission on approach. (Port Control Centre 0147 456 2215). Refusal is probably very unlikely unless immediate busy traffic needs to be cleared.

### **Insert Page 113 - This affects Routes 22 to 31**

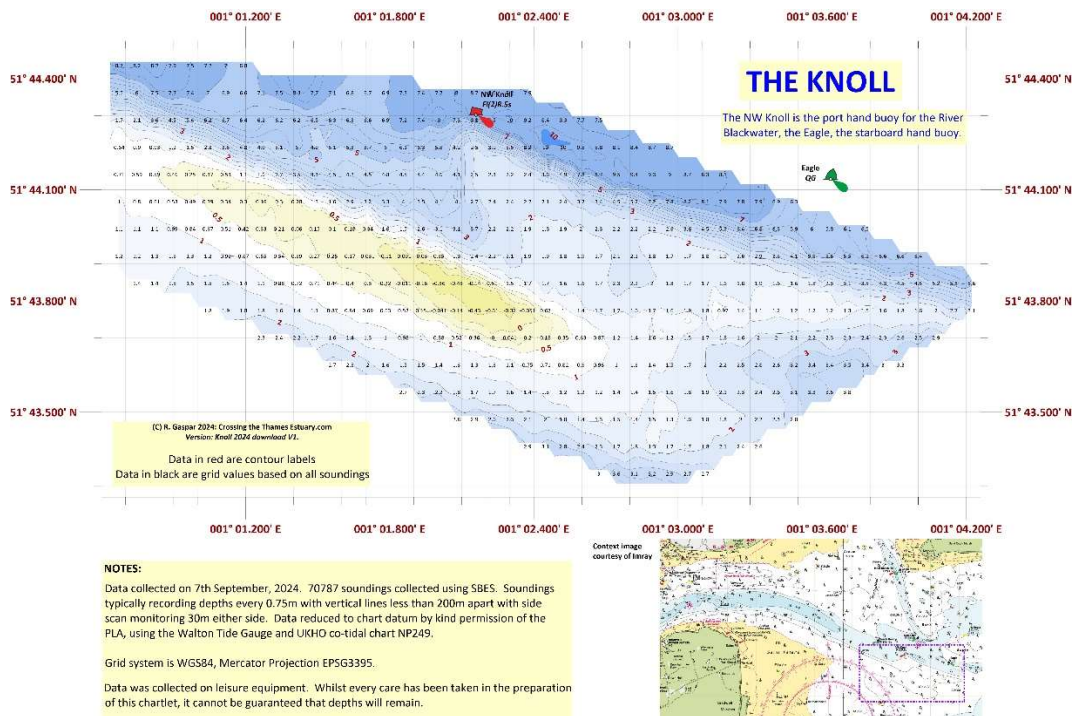
The Port of London Authority now regulates the Black Deep and we are required to have permission from the PLA to use the channel laterally or crossing to and from Fisherman's or Foulger's Gat. Use VHF channel 69 to call up London VTS to seek permission on approach. (Port Control Centre 0147 456 2215). Refusal is probably very unlikely unless immediate busy traffic needs to be cleared.

**Dated 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2024**

#### **The Knoll (Pages 43-44 and image 28):**

On 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2024, we conducted a survey of the Knoll. The Knoll is a sand bank on the south side of the entrance of the River Blackwater and it is marked (as reported in the book) by the NW Knoll port hand buoy. Earlier in September we had been down there doing a technical experiment and we noticed less water than expected. We had not been conducting a survey but we were able to report to the UK Hydrographic Office who issued a Notice to Mariners (4208/2024), warning of 'Less Water Reported (2024)' in August.

As the UKHO advised us that no survey there had been conducted since 1985, we decided to go back for a survey. On the day, conditions were ideal and we collected 70787 soundings which is the largest collection that we had conducted. The data was reduced to chart datum and we have now issued a chartlet.



We have submitted the data to the UKHO and we have been advised that a new edition of Chart 1975 (Thames Estuary – Northern Part) will incorporate the data. The new edition is planned for early in 2025 and will include the product of the major 2023/24 Civil Hydrography Programme which has covered a significant part of the northern part of the Estuary.

The result is the drying part of the Knoll has moved. The advice in the book on Page 43 remains correct – this about Sector 8 between wpt 8 (mid-point of the Spitway) and wpt 9 (River Blackwater Landfall). The point of the survey is justified in the plan on Page 44

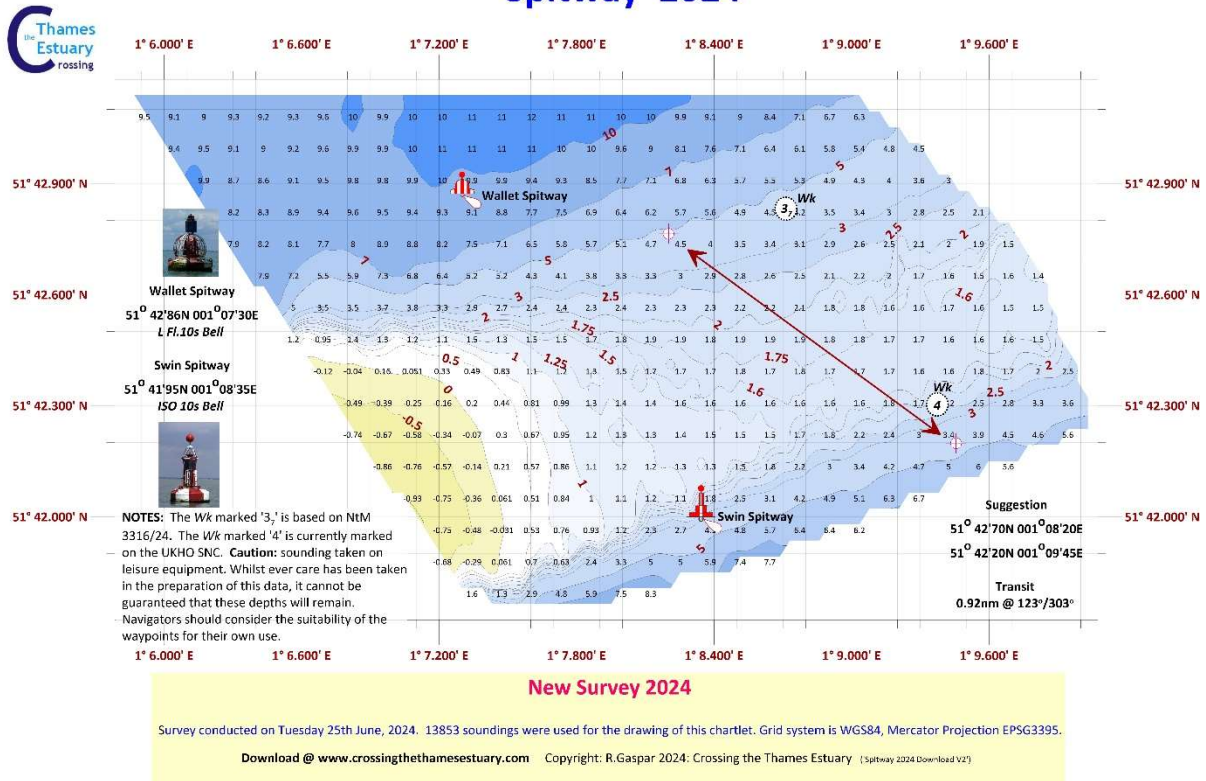
The chartlet is updated and can be downloaded at: <https://www.crossingthamesestuary.com/page29.html>

**Dated 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2024**

### 1. The Spitway (Pages 27-28. 43):

On Friday 28<sup>th</sup> June, the UK Hydrographic Office issued a Notice to Mariners (3316/2024) reported a second wreck adjacent to the Spitway. This is on the north side and has ample water for us with 3.7m. This should not hinder us.

# Spitway 2024



The chartlet is updated and can be downloaded at: <https://www.crossingthethamesestuary.com/page29.html>

## Dated 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2024

### 1. The Spitway (Pages 27-28. 43):

On Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2024 we completed a survey at the Spitway. Conditions were perfect with a light 5 to 11 kts easterly wind so we were able to collect over 13,000 soundings which of course have been reduced to chart datum. The profile of the Spitway has not changed but there is slightly less water generally and the east tail of the Buxey Sand has very gently crept to the east. The direct impact is that we found only 1.1m CD in the south end of a line between the two safe water buoys. As before there is better water towards the east.

The Spitway is very regular so if you can pick up the London VTS tidal height broadcast on Ch.69, 15 minutes before and after the hour you can hear the live height of tide (HoT) at Walton. Given Walton's tide is 18 minutes earlier than at the Spitway but the Spitway has a greater range of 1.12, the live HoT at Walton is a good rule of thumb. Add the current live Walton HoT to the CD at the Spitway for the water you should encounter.

## Dated 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2024

### 1. The SW Sunk swatchway (Pages 26. 42-43):

Updated above.

### 2. The Long Sand Head (Page 119):

The anticipated changes explained below were completed on 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2024. The new buoy is in place and the North Cardinal buoy has been moved as expected.

Dated 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2024 – St George’s Day

### 1. The Long Sand Head (Page 119):

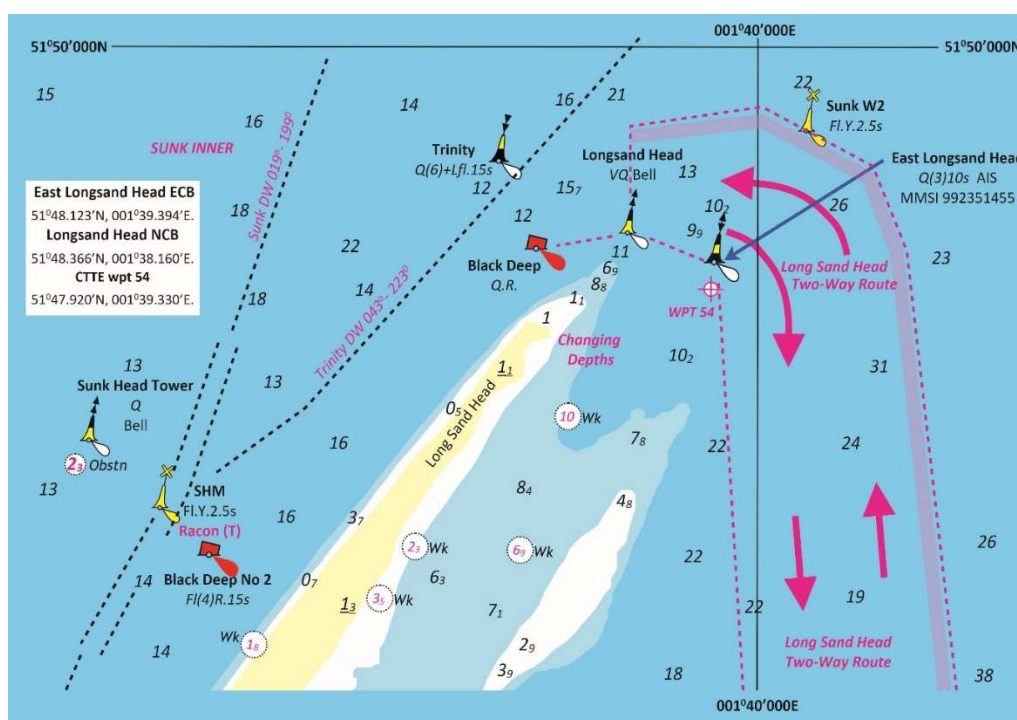
Trinity House have just issued a Notice to Mariners providing us advance notice of changes at the Long Sand Head. The changes are planned to be actioned “on or around 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2024”. In the past 12 months, the Long Sand Head has continued gently, but persistently, to creep more to the northeast. For us there is no crisis but heed the warning not to ‘cut the corner’. For shipping using the Two-Way Route in and out of the Black Deep two changes have been necessary.

The changes are:

The creation of a new east cardinal buoy. This will be positioned very close to current position of the Longsand Head north cardinal buoy. The new buoy will be designated ‘East Longsand Head’. Characteristics are shown in the chartlet. Note it will have AIS.

The Longsand Head north cardinal buoy will be moved west and a little north. As you will see in the chartlet the effect is to make the corner clear for shipping. Characteristics for this buoy will remain as at present.

The only CTTE routes involved are Routes 26 and 31 (Page 119): the ‘Outside’ routes between Ramsgate and Harwich Harbour or the Deben. At the Long Sand Head, CTTE has Waypoint 54. I consider that, at present, there is no need for the waypoint to be moved. As you will see the waypoint is located clear of the Two-Way Route TSS yet has ample water for leisure craft.



The chartlet is drawn by me based on Imray charts. You are able to download this chartlet at: <https://www.crossingthethamesestuary.com/page29.html> either as a jpeg or pdf file.

Dated 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2023

### 1. Some general observations about the Estuary:

In terms of the Estuary it has been a good season. Except as noted in the update on 14<sup>th</sup> July and in item 3, there have been no changes affecting us.

The Port of London Authority has been very busy with surveys, principally about the main channels but early in the year they were also commissioned by the Crouch Harbour Authority. That has confirmed that our chartlet of the Ray Sand is correct, subject of course to the usual proviso that things can change. The PLA have told me that they shortly intend to survey the Whitaker area.

A major professional survey is also being conducted, to be finished by the end of this year, that will update the Naze, Wallet and Spitway areas. Of course I will be monitoring Notices to Mariners. Note that NtM do tend to just report 'bad' news. Good news such as deeper water tends to be updated by new chart editions. But better water at the Spitway might be notified by a move of the safe water buoys. We did not re-survey the Spitway this year but each time we passed through we checked and found no change. Several readers also reported no change, particularly in the 'best' part.

The London Array wind Farm has had a busy season. Some cabling has been uncovered but none will affect leisure craft. Some cabling was replaced within the Farm area and some large equipment used has by and large not affected Foulger's Gat. It is absolutely clear that wind farms need constant maintenance and can need to respond quite quickly. The Co-ordinators provide an excellent NtM service so we are always told. The Coordinators as all leisure craft to call up any Array boat on CH16 before entering.

## 2. The Ray Sand (Page 212/213):

Finally a brief addition to the comments below about the Ray Sand. Here is an image of the Ray Sand North



The Ray Sand North: Special Yellow Unlighted Pillar Buoy at **51°40'.81N., 001°00'.57E.**

I suspect Trinity House required the Crouch HA to change the buoyage to a special mark rather than a safe water buoy. We did find in some daylight, spotting the mark was not quite as easy.

Note the CHA are marking the 'best' water for obvious reasons but using the chartlet on the right tide and with the right draught, it is possible to 'cut the corner' subject to your responsibility.

**Dated 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2023**

## 1. The Ray Sand (Page 212/213):

On 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2023, the Crouch Harbour Authority reported changes for the buoyage for the Ray Sand.

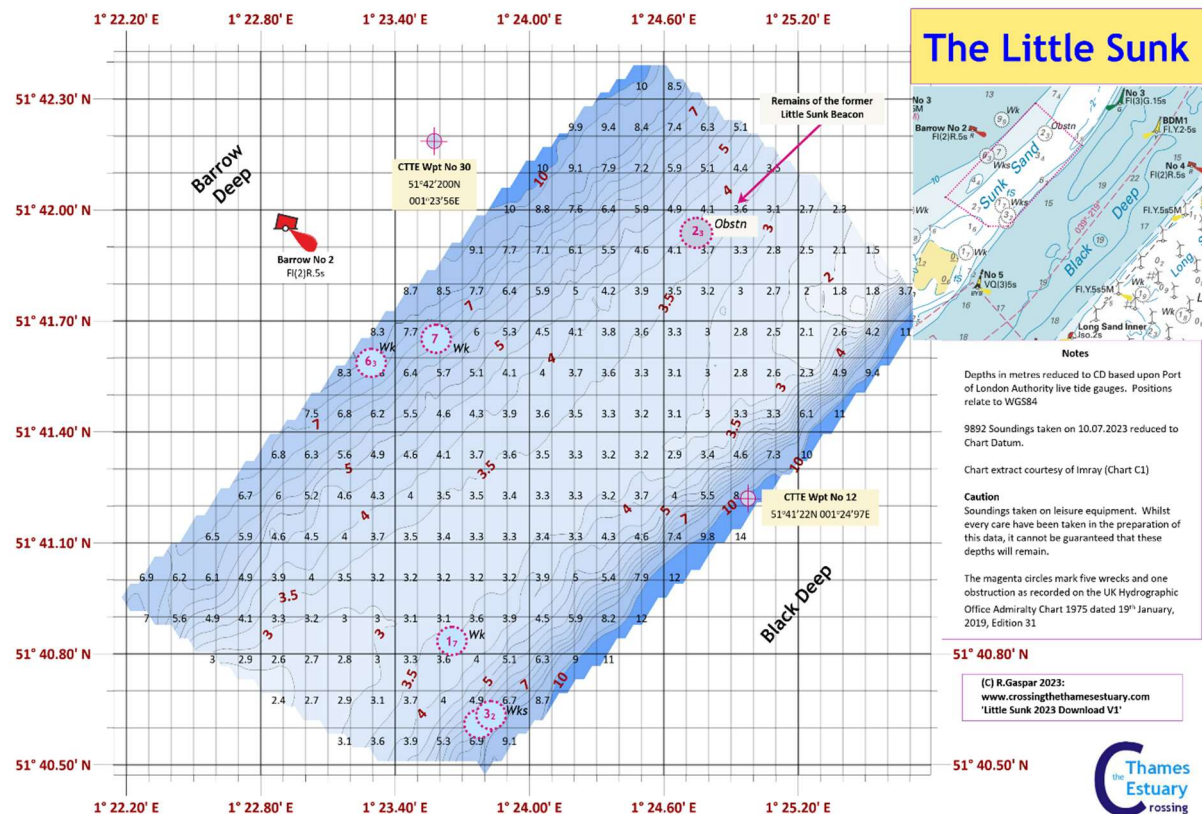
- ⊕ The Ray Sand Middle safe water buoy is permanently withdrawn.

- ⊕ The Ray Sand North is now a Special Yellow Unlighted Pillar Buoy and is located at **51°40'.81N., 001°00'.57E.**
- ⊕ The Ray Sand unlighted yellow buoy is now located at **51°39'.84N., 001°00'.57E.**

The buoyage now reflects the recommended crossing place (i.e. the shortest and least drying heights over the sands). I have updated the Ray Sand chartlet to reflect the changes. You can download it at:

<https://www.crossingthethamesestuary.com/page29.html> (scroll down to item 4)

## 2. The Little Sunk crossing point (Page 24):



On 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 we completed a successful survey at the Little Sunk. We thought conditions might be unsuitable but to our surprise locally we had 4 to 7kts of wind and was perfect. The results are good, little change; in the central area there is 3.2m CD minimum.

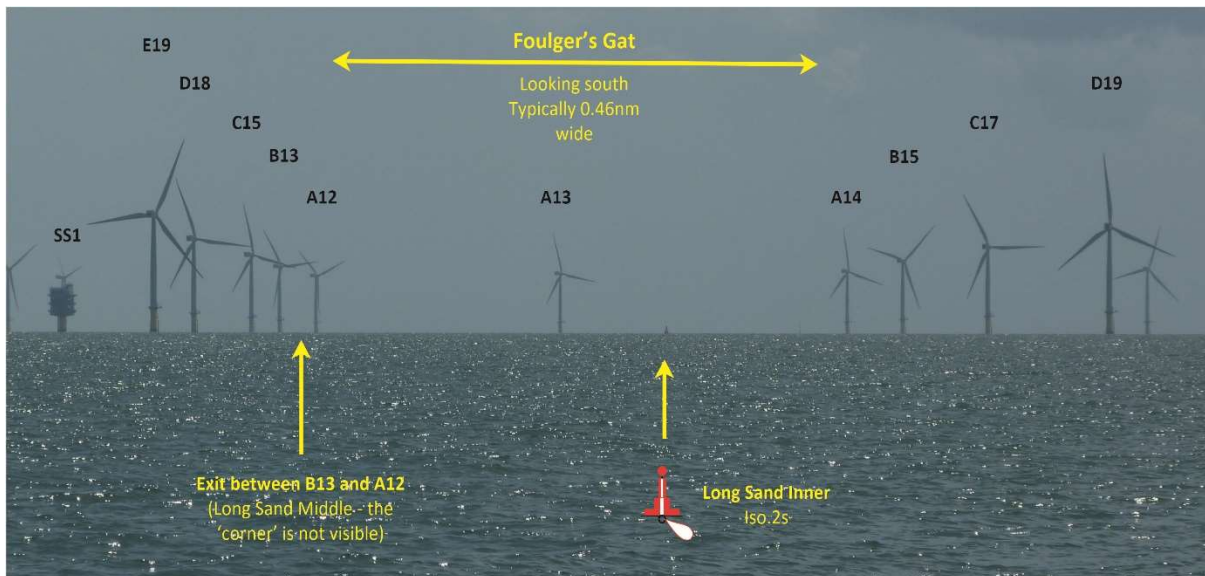
Waypoint 12 is positioned to use either to or from the Essex or Suffolk Rivers but when you studied the chartlet you can there is plenty of 'room' to adjust where exactly you cross. Download the new chartlet at:

<https://www.crossingthethamesestuary.com/page29.html> (scroll down to item 5)

## 3. Foulger's Gat (Page 46):

While we were 'criss-crossing' over the Little Sunk I took the image of Foulger's Gat. Images of Foulger's Gat at water level is quite difficult. Close-to the Gat cannot be fully included, if it can be included, the camera is too far away.

For this image (and the technical), the camera is on the Little Sunk and was 3.067nM from the Long Sand Inner Safe Water Buoy, bearing 175°(T), Turbines A13 is 6.742nM from the camera. Obvious the Long Sand Middle could not be visible. The camera was pointed at 174°(T). As you can see the conditions were great for a survey!



**Dated 14<sup>th</sup> September, 2022**

**1. The Ray Sand:** We have completed two surveys of the Ray Sand in August and September. As a result I have completed a new chartlet you can download at: <https://www.crossingthethamesestuary.com/page29.html> (scroll down to item 4)

The chartlet is largely as the image Page 213 but the scale has a lot more detail. The sands have not changed significantly but our surveys extended further to the west and east of the line of buoys. The 1° degree meridian remains, in my view, the best 'water' and the survey shows that staying east of the 1° degree meridian is good.

I have sent the data into the Crouch Harbour Authority but they have commissioned the Port of London Authority a survey in that area and obviously the CHA will be waiting for the results of the professional work before they make any changes.

~~BUT, please note: the position of the Ray Sand buoy is currently stated as 51°39'080N, 000°59'284E but we found its longitude as 000°59'500E. Visually, not much difference but I suggest you annotate the change on Page 212. I will of course notify any changes as they occur.~~

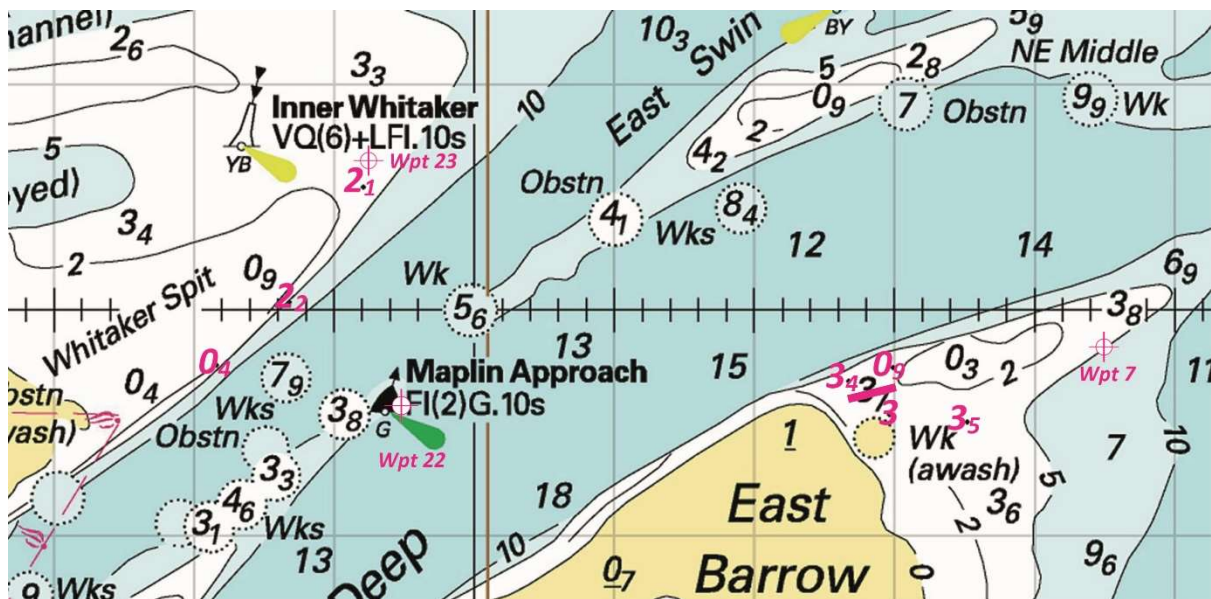
**2. The SW Barrow west cardinal buoy:** Trinity House notified a move for the SW Barrow buoy on 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2022 to 51° 31'950N., 000° 59'900E in consequence of a recent survey; the West Barrow sands appears to continue to move to the south west and the buoy had last been moved in 2019.

Waypoint 20 is adjacent but does not need to be moved; only the description of the waypoint on page 11 needs amendment to "SW Barrow bears 114°, 0.37nm". The image shows the location.



Note that this change is only notified by Trinity House at the moment. UKHO will issue a Notice to Mariners in due course and as a consequence Navionics and C-Map (and others) will not yet have made the change.

**3. Whitaker Spit and the East Barrow Sand:** As a result of a Port of London Authority survey earlier this year, the UKHO issued a Notice to Mariners two weeks ago notifying reduced depths at the Whitaker Spit (3) and the East Barrow Sands (4). The image shows the results and waypoints 7, 22 and 23:



If passing either direction between waypoints 22 and 23 bear in mind the height of tide over the edge of the Whitaker Spit. If heading to and from the SW Sunk swathway bear in mind that waypoint 7 remains fine. Some have cut the corner of the East Barrow Sand between the 'north east finger' and the main sands. It remains feasible with care. NOTE that Navionics have not yet updated their chart (as at 14.09.22). I am unable to say where C-Map or others have updated these changes.

**Dated: 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2022**

**1. Middle Sunk crossing:** My recommendation at present is not to use the Middle Sunk subject to a re-survey as soon as possible this year. At the end of last season we did an exploratory on the Middle Sunk. As a result of that, the UKHO issued a block using part of our data and part of a Port of London Authority survey. The result is:



used. If your electronic chart is not updated for several years, just following the deepest water at the SW Sunk could bring you over the drying areas. Please do follow the recommended waypoints.

The UKHO have told me that there will be a new edition of the relevant SNC later this year so we will ensure they get the 18<sup>th</sup> May data very shortly.

I should add a final rider: the Little Sunk crossing has no concerns. Several readers have used this already this year without any concerns.

Happy season

**Roger Gaspar**