

Title: NDSAC Ferry Bridge Project notes:



The Ferry Bridge Dive Site Notes

Tidal ranges: It is important, when diving to understand that because of the complexity of its position between the lagoon and the harbour, tides vary from those published for Portland.

For the purposes of diving, slack water is necessary due to the potential strength of the currents draining through at Ferry Bridge. Slack water is generally calculated as Portland plus 1 ½ hours and Portland high water minus 4 hours but the tides can be very unpredictable. The Fleet itself is very shallow with depths of 7 meters but often less than 2 meters and the tidal range is only around 1.5m, very small when compared to the tidal range in nearby Chesil Cove. It is also much influenced by wind strength, direction and atmospheric pressure changes due to the shallow profile of the Fleet and the narrow entrance to Portland Harbour at this point. Depth can be 6-7 meters.

Environment:

With minimal freshwater input and percolation of seawater through the shingle bank, the Fleet lagoon remains saline for much of its length, although salinity becomes lower and more varied toward the north western end and sea water seeps or is forced through the shingle bank of Chesil Beach at high water and during storm events when canns are formed. Occasionally seawater enters by waves over-topping the beach. At Ferry Bridge the less saline water is beginning to mix with the saline water of the harbour. The base, dug out in the 1980s varies between clay, shingle, silt and sand.

Ingress and Egress.

The site is usually dived from the North Bank under the bridge where a concrete slope can be reached from a rough path leading from the road on the left lane facing Portland. The Ferry Bridge Inn is currently being demolished so that there is no access from the other lane at present. It can also be entered from the Ferry Bridge Boat Yard slip if using the yard.

Parking

Parking on the verge is very limited but not restricted. However, the cycle and footpaths should not be obstructed either by vehicles or equipment. A DCC paying car park is available across the road at the Portland Beach Car Park. Rates vary between summer and winter. This has a JustPark payment option.

Amenities

Toilets are available at Portland Beach Car Park where there is also a café and the Dorset Wildlife Trust Information Centre. The Fleet Lagoon Ranger is based here.