



## General Information

### LAUNCH SITES FOR DIVING THE FARNE ISLANDS

G.8

There are two main launch sites for diving the Farne Islands area of Northumberland: **Seahouses Harbour** and **Beadnell Bay**. Divers are welcomed in the area but boat launching is controlled at both sites. In order to preserve the good relationships which have been established with the local and harbour authorities, divers are asked to note and comply with the following:

#### Seahouses Harbour

- Visiting divers wishing to launch at Seahouses should check in with the Harbour Master, at his office at the top of the slipway.
- Launching is permitted on any day, but only between the hours of 08.30 and 18.00. All vessels leaving the harbour during the day must return by 18.00. Times vary - check on 01665 720033. There are no tidal restrictions on launching.
- A maximum of 40 boats per day may launch at Seahouses.
- The Launching Fee is currently £7.50 per vessel inclusive of two persons. A further £1.50 is payable for each other person on board.
- The Harbour Master will record details of the boat and its occupants, towing vehicle number etc., and will issue a numbered Registration Board which must be carried on the vessel while at sea, and returned to the Harbour Master at the end of the day when the boat is recovered. This is for your safety: it lets the authorities know who is still at sea and who is safely ashore.
- Divers must load / unload at the slipway and not from the jetties used by passenger launches.
- After launching, cars and trailers must be cleared from the slipway area. There are adequate car parks nearby.

#### Beadnell Bay

- Visiting divers wishing to launch at Beadnell Bay should check in with the Site Supervisor/tractor driver (01665 721259), at the office adjacent to Beadnell Car Park entrance.
- The launch facility is generally available every weekend (Fri/Sat/Sun) between March and October. Weekday launch facility is available in July and August as well as Bank Holidays. Launch times are between 08.00 and 18.00, at which time a barrier is closed and locked. **There will be an enforced closure of the boat launching from Monday 4th April until Friday 15th April 2005.**
- Currently there is a limit on the number of launches to six per hour. Pre-bookings can be made for specific time slots in advance (up to two hours before, on the day).
- Access to the beach is from the Car Park. Private vehicles are not allowed onto the beach, but a tractor is available to tow heavy boats from the car park to the water and back again.

- The track through the dunes is narrow and only vessels less than 3.9m (12'10") wide can be launched at this site - if wider, go to Seahouses. Launching can take place at any state of tide - it's just a longer walk at low tide!
- There is (at present) no limit to the numbers of boats that may launch in any one day.
- The daily launching fee is £20 per vessel, including the use of the tractor to launch / recover the boat. An annual launching permit is available at £125.00. Neither include car parking, extra £3 per day, half year car park permit is also available.
- The Site Supervisor will record details of the boat and number of occupants, towing vehicle number etc., and will issue a numbered Registration Board which must be carried on the vessel while at sea, and returned to the Supervisor at the end of the day when the boat is recovered. This is for your safety: it lets the authorities know who is still at sea and who is safely ashore.

**Note 1.** Those launching boats are strongly advised to carry with them current evidence that the vessel is insured for liability risks, as launch facilities have been withheld in the past for boats unable to produce insurance documentation.

**Note 2.** Vessels **must** return to the same site from which they launched, except in genuine emergencies. The seasonal nature of access at Beadnell, and the closing time of the barrier, should be borne in mind.

## ***Out at the Farnes . . .***

Numerous pleasure launches operate from Seahouses Harbour to take bird watchers and tourist to and around the islands. There are places where the pleasure launches have to pass close to the islands or through confined navigable channels, especially at low tide - and some of the more popular dive sites are close to the routes the pleasure launches are obliged to take. It is important that divers understand this; that the International Code Flag A is displayed while divers are down; and that divers should use an SMB if at all practical. The recommendation of the pleasure launch operators is that dive boats should not anchor in or close to the confined channels but rather, deploy divers (with SMBs) and then stand off clear of the channel until divers surface are ready to be picked up.

Find out from the Harbour Master before leaving harbour where the busy areas are and avoid diving them if you possible can. They include the 'San Andeas' wreck / Pinnacles area, Longstone End, Bluecaps and Knifestone. Avoid anchoring / 'rafting up' at these 'hot spots' and know where your divers are! Observe strict radio discipline and note that the VHF radio Channel 8 is the one normally used by the pleasure launches.

Relevant reading: 'The Diver's Comprehensive Guide to The Farnes and Holy Island', by Ron Young. £16.39 inc. P/P. Contact Ron Young, PO Box 69, Houghton-le-Spring, County Durham DH4 5YJ

Fees shown are correct for the 2003 season at the time of publication, but may be subject to change.

***For up-to-date information and maps etc, go to:***

<http://www.boatlaunch.co.uk/> and search for Seahouses or Beadnell