

Dive Planning Information Sheet

Dive Planning and Management

A successful and enjoyable dive is a planned dive. Planning means arranging things in advance – and that is what you should do. Leaving things to the last minute invites problems. Planning requires time; at the last minute, there is none left. Dive planning starts by asking questions concerning the following subject areas:

- Why – dive? What are the objectives?
- Who – is to be in charge? – can participate?
- Where – will it take place?
- When – will it take place?
- What – is required? Boats, equipment, accommodation, etc.
- How – is it to be carried out? Dive plans, diving rota, etc.

All can be planned well in advance, even months ahead. Details can be sorted out in the weeks leading up to the event and finalised on the day. These notes give some ideas/guidelines on the planning process.

Why Dive?

Objectives should be defined: is it to be a wreck dive, a scientific project, a search, a night dive, a training dive, or just an enjoyable day at the coast where Branch Members' interests can be fulfilled. Members enjoy the day more and are likely to be more enthusiastic if they know what they can and will be able to do.

Once the objectives are defined, the Dive Manager can plan the event/choose the site conditions that favour their achievement.

The Dive Manager

Which comes first – the dive objective or the Dive Manager? The Branch D.O. could decide on the objectives, then appoint a Dive Manager. Alternatively, the Branch D.O. could appoint the Dive Manager and ask him to set dive objectives, choose the site and date and organise the dive. It is a variable depending on Branch policy and the existence of a regular Branch diving programme.

Branches are recommended to draw up an annual Dive Programme, and announce dates/venues early in the year, so Members can plan their own affairs/availability to take part. BSAC expects all Branch diving activities to be in the charge of a Member who is an Advanced Diver (or above). Someone must be in charge to avoid conflicting instructions and confusion.

The Branch D.O. should appoint, or invite, suitably experienced Members, including trainee Advanced Divers, to serve as Deputy Dive Managers. These appointments should be made well in advance. This gives the Manager much more chance to succeed than if appointed at the last minute.

The Dive Manager should be the sort of person who is known/liked/respected as a diver within the Club, and who is willing to take on the job. The Manager needs to be popular, tactful and able to exert authority if necessary. Avoid “press-ganged” Managers – their lack of interest can result in a poorly organised dive!

The appointed Dive Manager is in charge. He can only be over-ruled by the Branch D. O. who appointed him and not by other senior Branch Members. The Dive Manager may exclude Members from the dive as appropriate.

Deputy Dive Managers

Dive Managers may choose to delegate various duties to Deputy Managers – usually Dive Leaders requiring this experience for the Advanced Diver qualification. Deputy Managers may be given responsibility for specific aspects of the dive – Boat Manager, Equipment Manager, Safety Manager, Records Manager etc.

The Dive Manager may wish to hold planning meetings with his Deputies early in the season and shortly before each event. These meetings can be used to cover plans in detail/allocate jobs to be done/set timetables for completion/chase up/finalise/allocate dive leaders etc.

Who Will Be Diving?

It is the Dive Manager’s job to provide the sort of diving/training/assessments which members want. He needs to know present grades, training and assessment requirements; their interests, etc. so that he can choose the most suitable dive site and arrange a programme of dives so everyone is catered for and goes home happy. A tall order!!

Try to find out in advance who will take part in the dive – there will always be others who turn up on the day, but if members let you know in advance, it is easier to plan the dives they want.

What will they want to do?

- Members will want to enjoy themselves
- Do their own thing
- Club Divers will want training dives and early experience dives
- Experienced divers will want more advanced diving

Announce dive details and objectives at Branch Dive Meetings. Use a Branch Dive Notice-board on which Members list their intention to take part, their grade, interests, training needs etc., or delegate someone to draw up a list. If you have a Branch web site you can use this as an electronic version of the more traditional Board.

Consider the following ideas when planning a Branch dive where various interests are to be met:

- Experienced divers do an advanced dive in the morning so they can be available to help with experience/training dives later in the day.
- Run “experienced divers only” dives/training only dives.
- Team up divers who share similar interests.
- Availability of suitable instructors, dive leaders, boatmen etc.

It may not be possible to meet every need if suitable support is not available. Tact is required when breaking news to an eager Club Diver – try to provide an alternative interesting activity.

Appoint Deputy Managers to take charge/develop abilities within special interest groups – develop diving with a purpose. Advanced Divers can gain experience of Advanced Diving via the Regional Expedition Scheme – contact your Regional Coach.

When, Where, and How to Dive

When and where to dive is best considered at the same time because they are so interrelated. The questions are best answered by study of a calendar and Tide Tables. The best diving conditions are found at neap tides. Plan coastal dives at weekends closest to neap tides and inland dives when sprint tides prevail.

Consider:

- Availability of Managers, dive leaders, Members
- Holiday Seasons
- Winter Diving Programme
- Availability of charter boats – book early
- Weather – always unpredictable, but in some seasons more predictable than others.
- Make alternative dive site plans
- Are you going to dive both days of a weekend?

Ideally, the chosen site should provide diving to meet all interests: beginners, trainees, experienced divers, and non-divers.

Consider suitability/accessibility:

- Distance from Home – can Members come out for a day or will an overnight stay be required?
- Adequate car parking
- Good beach for children
- Shops/attractions for non-divers
- Safe entry/exit points
- Safe boat launching *at all states of the tide*
- Suitable water/diving conditions for planned dives/divers
- Air
- Boat hire

- Accommodation
- Camping
- Night dive
- Minimum disruption to locals and fellow beach users
- Likely crowding at holiday times
- Overall safety of the site – remote sites require greater provisions for safety

Consider how diving is to be conducted:

- Shore or boat dive?
- Number of divers – diving by rota or in waves?
- Decompression requirements
- Air Requirements
- Use of a Dive Planning Slate

Sources of Information

Consult:

- This website
- Tide Tables to determine the best day and time of day for dives
- Charts to determine the times of slack water, rates and directions of flow, depths of water on site
- Use local tidal predictions
- Decompression tables
- OS Maps, local guides
- Wreck Registers
- Local Knowledge

This area of the web site contains links and sources for most of the information referenced above.

Seek local knowledge – speak to BSAC Branches, schools, local dive shops, tourist information offices, Regional Coach, local coastguard in advance or on the day. If the event you are planning is a large expedition, it may be worth visiting the site in advance with a small reconnaissance party to fact find.

On site, visit the Harbour Master and/or Coastguard to discuss availability/access to emergency services, proximity of recompression facilities, means of summoning help. If permission is needed to dive or gain access to a site, obtain it in advance. Phone the site/local contacts for information and booking procedures. Don't leave vital matters to the day.

Weather – watch trends in the newspaper/TV weather/web site links. Listen to Shipping Forecasts. Phone the Coastguard at the site before leaving home for a report on the present weather conditions. If they are bad, use the alternative dive plan. The scope of the alternative plan may not be so exciting, but the day will not be wasted.

Material Requirements

Once numbers and interests are known and the site and date chosen, what equipment needs to be checked out/provided? Consider the following:

- **Diving Equipment:** Members are responsible for their own. Remind them in advance to check if special items are needed. For example, a good torch for a night dive. If Branch equipment is to be provided a Member needs to be responsible for bringing it to the site. Remember the equipment needs to be returned in time for the next training session.

Ropes, weights, buoys etc. if needed for shot lines. Air – check on availability and business hours of filling stations. Is a local dive shop open in case of equipment emergency? Are you taking a portable compressor.
- **Boats:** Is the Branch boat available? Will other boats provided by Member be available? Are all boats correctly equipped and serviceable? Will large boats have to be chartered? Discuss with the skipper the range of vessel and sites he can get to. Provisionally plan and agree with charter boat skipper which sites are to be dived. Liaise with Branch E.O. Delegate transport of boats to and from site, fuelling, checking to the Boat Manager. Appoint boathandlers for the day.
- **Transport and Accommodation:** Does anyone need transport to the site? Arrange lifts/minibus hire/meeting places etc. If overnight stops are involved, find out about available accommodation - hotels, boarding, camping and advise Members. Do they book or does the Manager take/make bookings for them? Give plenty of time and advance notice to avoid disappointment.

Announce Final Plans

Hold a final planning meeting to check with those who have been delegated to do things, that they have been done/will be done in time. Chase up as necessary.

Announce final details/plans at Branch Dry Meetings/on Noticeboard/on website/by email. Get a final list of names and interests so that dive groups can be made up/dive leaders chosen. Issue an information sheet and map/timetable to all those who intend to dive.

Make final confirmation of bookings i.e. charter boat. Watch weather and trends. Remind Members that the charter boat leaves at a pre-arranged time – may be forced to do so by tides. Tell everyone to be there early or risk missing the boat.

Set up a 'check in' procedure for the evening before so that Members can find out if all is "go" or about last minute changes to plans.

On the evening before get a weather check from the Shipping Forecast/Coastguard/Web forecasts. If arranged, receive and answer calls from Members to confirm go/no go/alternative arrangements and exactly where to rendezvous on the way to the dive site.