

## Waiting for Weather Windows

This summer (like many recently) has been characterised by strong winds often associated with fronts and apparently unreliable forecasts. We spent a couple of weeks in the Solent facing inshore forecasts of F 5-7 on several days where we needed to move to keep appointments (one of them to have a splendid day with old club members Kath and Lawrence Thompson).

How to find the weather windows that do occur in our otherwise gusty, highly variable weather conditions? We took advantage of the Met office local three hourly Internet forecasts e.g. for Cowes in the Solent (and later for the East Coast: Ipswich or Harwich). These can be found on the Met office regional pages e.g. for our area:

[http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/ee/harwich\\_forecast\\_weather.html](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/ee/harwich_forecast_weather.html)

These local forecasts have the advantage over the inshore forecasts of a much higher temporal and geographic resolution. They give three hourly forecasts and updates plus 4 days ahead and as local as Harwich, Brightlingsea, Lowestoft etc. In addition they give both average **and** gusts strengths for each three hours. The inshore forecast on the other hand has to be expressed over a 24-hour timescale and over a large geographical area (e.g. Gibraltar point to North foreland). An average over the time and distance would be worthless; the forecasters therefore post the most serious predicted events over the 24H period and distance, which will not necessarily be representative of all of the whole period and geographical region.

In the Solent, we took advantage of these local forecasts on two occasions: one allowing an easy sail from the Beaulieu River to Yarmouth before dawn, and the other an overnight passage from Yarmouth to Chichester harbour (with no wind at all!). On both occasions the inshore forecast was F5 –7.

The cost? I use a cheap mobile phone with a PAYG gprs connection and a laptop. Downloading the inshore forecast, the local forecasts and the four-day synoptic charts costs less than £1. It is worth it!

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