

# The Lantern at Low Tide

120-minute plan | 4 players | No combat

The harbor lantern has gone dark. The keeper is missing, a repair crew is stranded, and the last ferry waits beyond the shoals.

Content notice: Rising water, people temporarily stranded; danger can be narrated from a safe distance.

## What is really happening

Keeper Mira closed the tide gate to protect a trapped repair crew. A burnt fuse, unrelated to the gate, extinguished the lantern. Opening the gate fully would flood the crew; the marked side channel or a slow service path gets them out.

## Prepare and play

Use your own rules or play without dice. State the goal, choose an approach, explain a reasonable cost and let the players decide. Plausible careful actions succeed; uncertain actions can succeed with delay, spent supplies or a favour owed. Evidence is always available through its described action. Each player creates an ordinary person with a useful skill, a reason to help, and an item. No character sheet, monster statistics or proprietary rulebook is needed.

Take 10 minutes to introduce characters, read the premise and discuss the content notice. Anyone may say "pause", pass on a description, or ask to move an uncomfortable moment offstage. Agree on no combat and on treating consequences as delay or repair, not permanent harm. Give one player the route map and another the time sheet.

## Time plan

120-MINUTE PLAN

0-10: Opening agreement

10-20: Arrival

20-35: Records and tools

35-50: An independent trail

50-55: Break

55-75: The immediate problem

75-95: The final choice

95-110: Home and aftermath

110-120: Closing and epilogues

Follow both investigations; take the break before the immediate problem.

At 75 minutes, settle the immediate problem using a safe approach without another roll. At 95 minutes,

finish the final method and begin the return.

With 10 minutes left, first secure the immediate goal: Keep the main gate closed and escort everyone along the slower service path. Mark the immediate goal safe only once the people or resource are secured. Then, if no final method was used: Arrange the three-lamp shore signal and wait for a careful return. Mark the fallback method and read the cost ending. Give each character an epilogue; do not bypass the safety step.

#### 4 PLAYERS

Bring the crew off the raised ledge before the water reaches their tools.

Two pairs take observation and action tasks. Resolve them in two short alternating turns.

Give the ferry a recognizable safe return signal.

Work in two pairs, one following the method and the other preparing a fallback or record.

## Arrival - 10 minutes

Place: Harbor

### Read aloud

Wet ropes creak against the quay. Across the black water, the ferry answers with a single waiting light. Oren holds a log open beneath a sheltered candle.

### Run this scene

The lamp failure preceded the protective gate closure. A temporary shore signal can bring the ferry home. Begin with the concrete request in the premise. Ask each character why they care and give them one ordinary useful item. Read both public observations without requiring a roll. Explain that the marked routes are safe to investigate, and offer a choice of the records or the visible trail. Let the group appoint a map reader; do not use hidden travel rolls to block the first lead.

### Choices

1. Visit Workshop
2. Follow the trail to Dock

### If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Tide gate. A missing method can be found again at Lantern; no character skill is required.

### People and evidence

Oren: Bring the ferry home without risking its passengers Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome. Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Timeline record: 19:10: lamp failed. 19:15: gate closed. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The lamp failure preceded the protective gate closure.

Fallback instruction: Three lamps, raised together from shore, mean a safe delayed return. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: A temporary shore signal can bring the ferry home.

## Records and tools - 15 minutes

Place: Workshop

### Read aloud

An empty tool case sits beside a diagram. Tess lifts a glass fuse carefully, as if it were a bird egg. A note is pinned to the door.

### Run this scene

The spare repairs the lamp without a spell or specialist test. Mira went to rescue workers, not to flee. Put the method card and destination note on the table. Ask what the two objects suggest, then answer direct practical questions from their wording. The maker can trade tools for help carrying or recording them, but refusal never removes these public documents. The trail remains another route. A check, if your rules use one, changes the time or tidiness of the work rather than whether this evidence exists.

### Choices

1. Proceed to Tide gate
2. Compare evidence at Dock

### If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Tide gate. A missing method can be found again at Lantern; no character skill is required.

### People and evidence

Tess: Repair the lantern and be trusted with its maintenance Lends supplies if a character helps carry or catalogue them. Public instructions remain available. Voice: Quick, exact words; point at tools while speaking.

Method diagram: The burnt fuse and spare carry the same square mark. Disconnect the lamp, exchange the fuse, close the case. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The spare repairs the lamp without a spell or specialist test.

Destination note: Find us at the tide gate. Bring dry rope. - Mira Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Mira went to rescue workers, not to flee.

## An independent trail - 15 minutes

Place: Dock

### Read aloud

Work boots have printed a trail through wet sand. Ivo is counting ropes, and keeps starting again at four.

### Run this scene

A visible alternative route reaches the crew. The witness independently locates the keeper. Describe the physical trail before asking for a decision. The witness tells what they actually observed and admits what they did not see. If the group refuses conversation, the physical route supplies the destination. Let a character compare the timeline and another trace the map. For a divided group, take one short turn per side, then reunite at the meeting; do not add another travel encounter.

### Choices

1. Proceed to Tide gate
2. Compare evidence at Workshop

### If the group gets stuck

If conversation or a test fails, give the public card anyway. A clear sign points to Tide gate. A missing method can be found again at Lantern; no character skill is required.

### People and evidence

Ivo: Bring the stranded crew home Guides the party if they share a plan. If refused, points to the visible trail. Voice: Cautious, distinguish observation from assumption.

Physical trail: Boot prints follow the signed service path toward the gate. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: A visible alternative route reaches the crew.

Witness statement: Ivo saw Mira carry rescue ropes toward the tide gate. Give it: Ask any direct question, or read the witness's signed statement if conversation is refused. GM inference: The witness independently locates the keeper.

# The immediate problem - 20 minutes

Place: Tide gate

## Read aloud

Beyond the gate, three workers stand on a raised ledge. Mira raises a hand: "Keep the big wheel still. There is another way."

## Run this scene

Keeper Mira closed the tide gate to protect a trapped repair crew. A burnt fuse, unrelated to the gate, extinguished the lantern. Opening the gate fully would flood the crew; the marked side channel or a slow service path gets them out. State the immediate stakes and offer both listed approaches. Before resolving action, ask who observes, who acts and who helps. Make any cost visible before a player accepts it. Avoid demanding a special ability or spell. When a plan fails, use the slower listed route and mark its time cost; people remain recoverable. Once the goal is safe, mark the immediate goal safe and continue. A refusal by the keeper cannot hide the marked safety instructions.

## Choices

1. Release the marked side channel, tie a guide rope, and escort the crew across the lowered water.
2. Keep the main gate closed and escort everyone along the slower service path.

## If the group gets stuck

Keep the main gate closed and escort everyone along the slower service path. Explain a five-minute delay before they accept it; mark the immediate goal safe when the people or resource are secured.

## People and evidence

Mira: Keep the crew above the rising water Explains both solutions when the party agrees to protect the immediate goal; the marked instructions are available regardless. Voice: Calm under pressure; admit the decision and its cost.

Safety marks: SIDE CHANNEL: turn this small lever before touching the big wheel. SERVICE PATH: high ground, slow but dry. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: Release water pressure or escort the crew by the high route.

## Encounter and party adaptation

Bring the crew off the raised ledge before the water reaches their tools.

A delay leaves less time for the final repair or decision. Explain costs before resolving an action.

Release the marked side channel, tie a guide rope, and escort the crew across the lowered water.

Keep the main gate closed and escort everyone along the slower service path.

Two pairs take observation and action tasks. Resolve them in two short alternating turns.

Mark the immediate goal safe after either safe approach; a setback costs time, not access to the next

scene.

## The final choice - 20 minutes

Place: Lantern

### Read aloud

Salt has crusted the housing latch. The dead lamp smells faintly of burnt wire. The ferry light has not moved.

### Run this scene

The spare repairs the lamp without a spell or specialist test. Release water pressure or escort the crew by the high route. Reveal the method and fallback together. Ask the group which tradeoff it accepts and give every character a small contribution. Mark the complete method for the first choice or the fallback method for the second. A risky improvisation should inherit one of these outcomes after its cost is explained, rather than create a third unprepared lock. Keep the immediate goal safe. Return by the known marked route; no new location needs to be invented.

### Choices

1. Disconnect the housing and fit the matching spare fuse.
2. Arrange the three-lamp shore signal and wait for a careful return.

### If the group gets stuck

Arrange the three-lamp shore signal and wait for a careful return. Mark the fallback method, keep the immediate goal safe and read the cost ending. Do not repeat a failed test.

### People and evidence

Tess: Repair the lantern and be trusted with its maintenance Lends supplies if a character helps carry or catalogue them. Public instructions remain available. Voice: Quick, exact words; point at tools while speaking.

Mira: Keep the crew above the rising water Explains both solutions when the party agrees to protect the immediate goal; the marked instructions are available regardless. Voice: Calm under pressure; admit the decision and its cost.

Method diagram: The burnt fuse and spare carry the same square mark. Disconnect the lamp, exchange the fuse, close the case. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: The spare repairs the lamp without a spell or specialist test.

Fallback instruction: Three lamps, raised together from shore, mean a safe delayed return. Give it: Inspect the visible labelled object. Give its full text automatically; a check affects time or extra colour only. GM inference: A temporary shore signal can bring the ferry home.

### Encounter and party adaptation

Give the ferry a recognizable safe return signal.

The complete method preserves the planned service; the fallback preserves the immediate goal at a

visible cost.

Disconnect the housing and fit the matching spare fuse.

Arrange the three-lamp shore signal and wait for a careful return.

Work in two pairs, one following the method and the other preparing a fallback or record.

Mark the complete method for the first approach or the fallback method for the second. Both allow return and an ending.

## Home and aftermath - 15 minutes

Place: Harbor

### Read aloud

Three reply lights appear across the water. The crew gathers on the quay with blankets, and somebody puts a kettle on.

### Run this scene

Choose a complete resolution or a resolution with a cost, then ask the group what happens next. Read the ending matching the selected outcome. Invite each character to add one ordinary detail to the aftermath, then ask the keeper for a concrete next action. Record who accepted the cost and which clues went unused. Spend the last few minutes on one enjoyable moment and one thing to change next time. Characters need not solve every optional inference to earn a resolved ending.

### Choices

1. Describe who follows up tomorrow
2. Ask who helped whom and what it cost

### If the group gets stuck

If no method was chosen, first confirm the immediate goal is safe, use the final fallback method and then read the cost ending. Record the unresolved work and give every character an epilogue.

### People and evidence

Oren: Bring the ferry home without risking its passengers Offers directions and ordinary transport for news of the outcome. Voice: Patient, concrete sentences; ask one practical question.

Mira: Keep the crew above the rising water Explains both solutions when the party agrees to protect the immediate goal; the marked instructions are available regardless. Voice: Calm under pressure; admit the decision and its cost.

# Endings

## Complete resolution

The lantern glows steady gold. The ferry slides into the harbor as the rescued workers cheer from dry ground. Mira asks who will help write a repair rota.

First secure the immediate goal at Tide gate. Use final method A at Lantern before choosing this ending.

## Resolution with a cost

Three shore lamps guide the ferry home late. Nobody is lost, but the lantern remains dark. Tess asks the party to leave the spare fuse with the morning crew.

First secure the immediate goal at Tide gate. Use final method B at Lantern before choosing this ending.

The lantern still needs its housing disconnected and a matching spare fuse fitted.

## Handout answers

h-order: The lamp failure preceded the protective gate closure.

h-fallback: A temporary shore signal can bring the ferry home.

h-method: The spare repairs the lamp without a spell or specialist test.

h-note: Mira went to rescue workers, not to flee.

h-trail: A visible alternative route reaches the crew.

h-witness: The witness independently locates the keeper.

h-safe: Release water pressure or escort the crew by the high route.

## Clue reasoning

The lamp failure preceded the protective gate closure.: c-order

Proceed to Tide gate: c-note OR c-trail OR c-witness

Release water pressure or escort the crew by the high route.: c-safe / marked safety fallback

Give the ferry a recognizable safe return signal.: c-method OR c-fallback

## Map descriptions

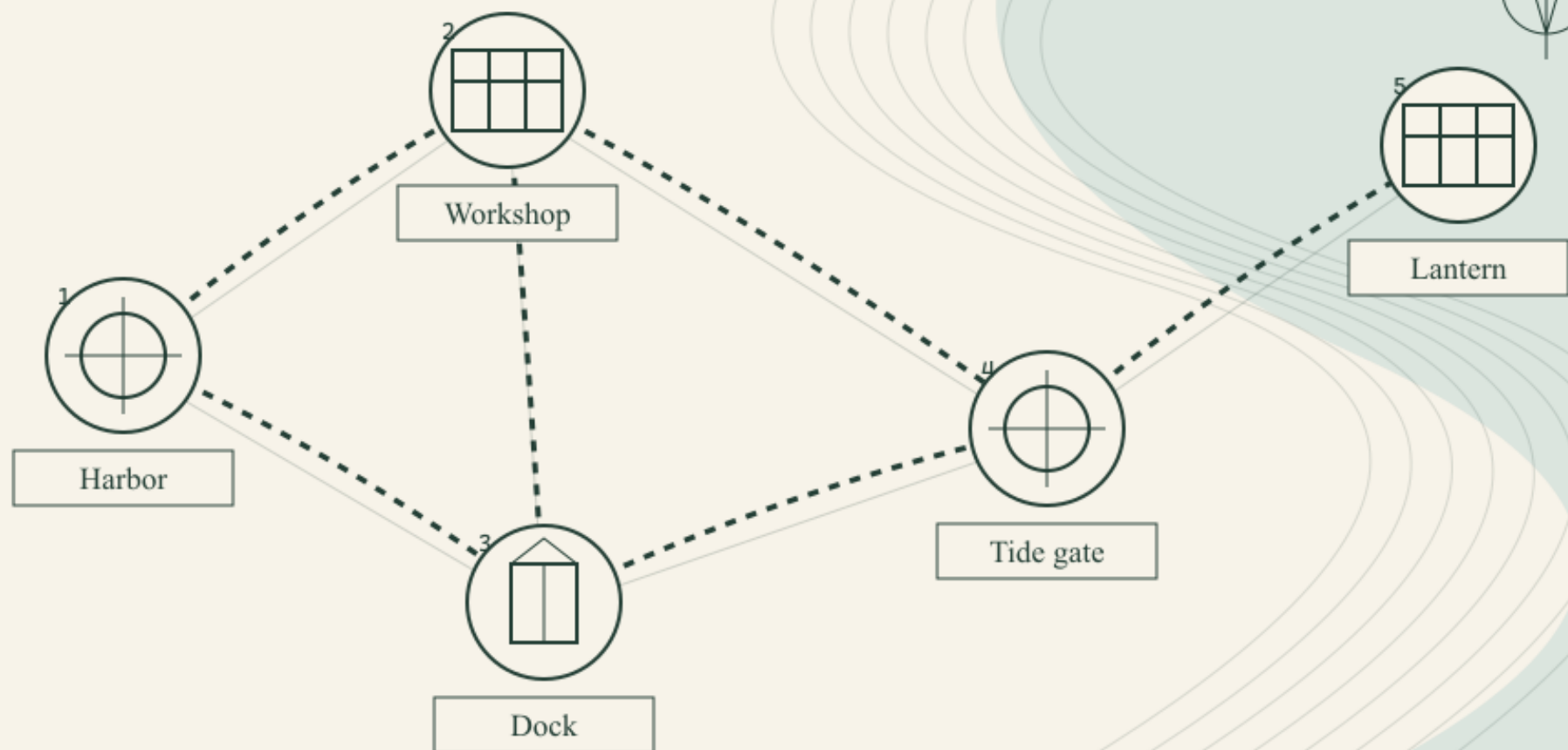
GM route atlas: Start at Harbor. Workshop and Dock are independent investigation routes; both connect to Tide gate, which leads to Lantern. All marked connections are bidirectional. Return uses the known route to Harbor.

Tide gate - approach plan: At Tide gate, the marked entrance reaches the immediate problem. Approach A: Release the marked side channel, tie a guide rope, and escort the crew across the lowered water.

Approach B: Keep the main gate closed and escort everyone along the slower service path. Both reach the onward route. Layout is schematic, with no combat grid or movement scale.

Player route map: Public route map: Harbor connects to Workshop and Dock; either reaches Tide gate, then Lantern. Routes work in both directions. Retrace the route to return. No hidden information is marked.

## GM route atlas

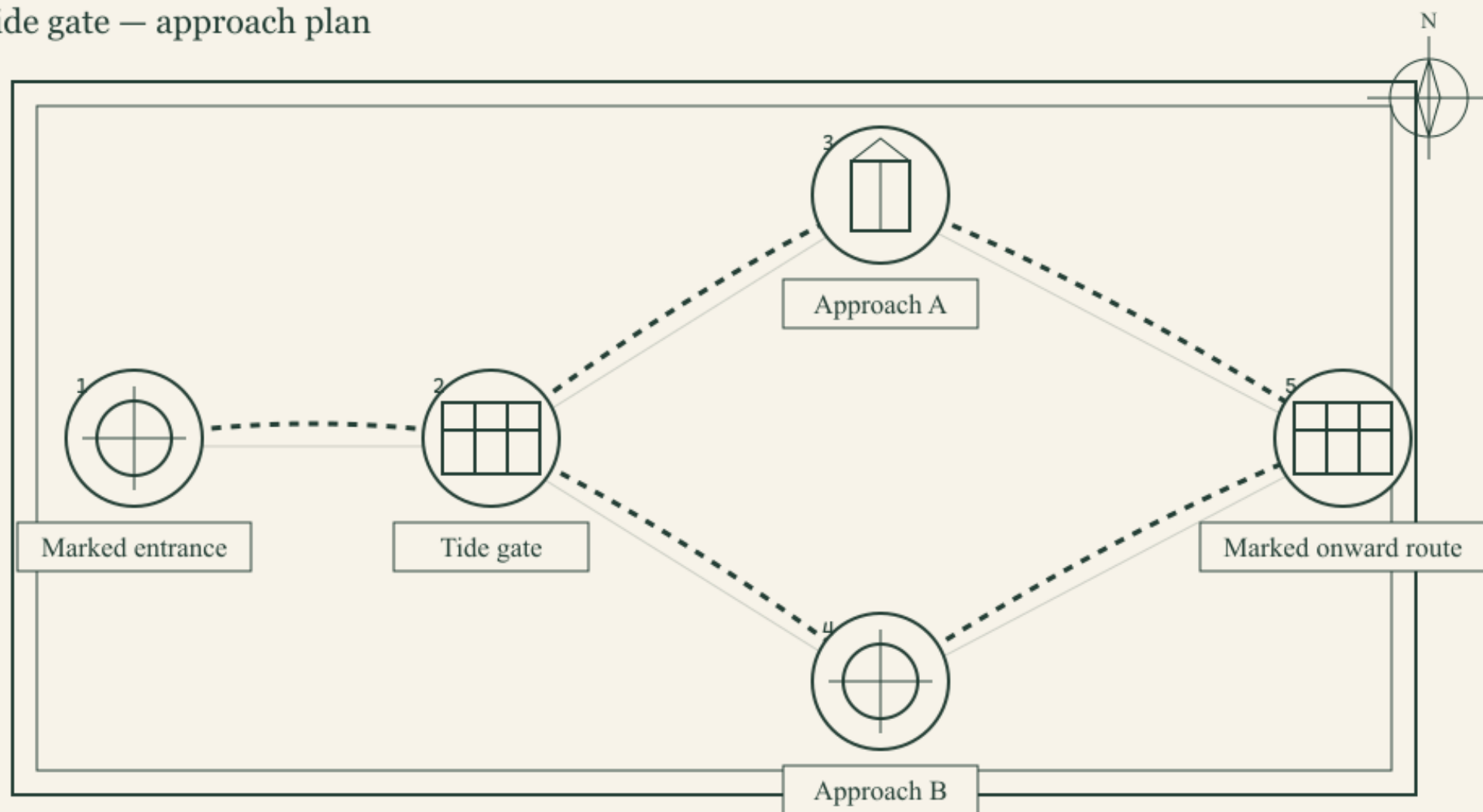


C-SAFE / immediate problem

C-METHOD or C-FALLBACK

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## Tide gate — approach plan



Release the marked side channel, tie a guide rope, and escort the crew across the lowered water.  
Keep the main gate closed and escort everyone along the slower service path.

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