

Tried & tested

MBM's tough taskmasters put some clever new boating kit through its paces. The result? You can buy with confidence

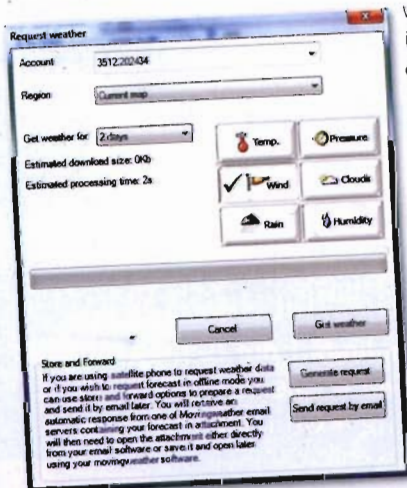
Whatever the weather

Subscription-based weather forecasting software

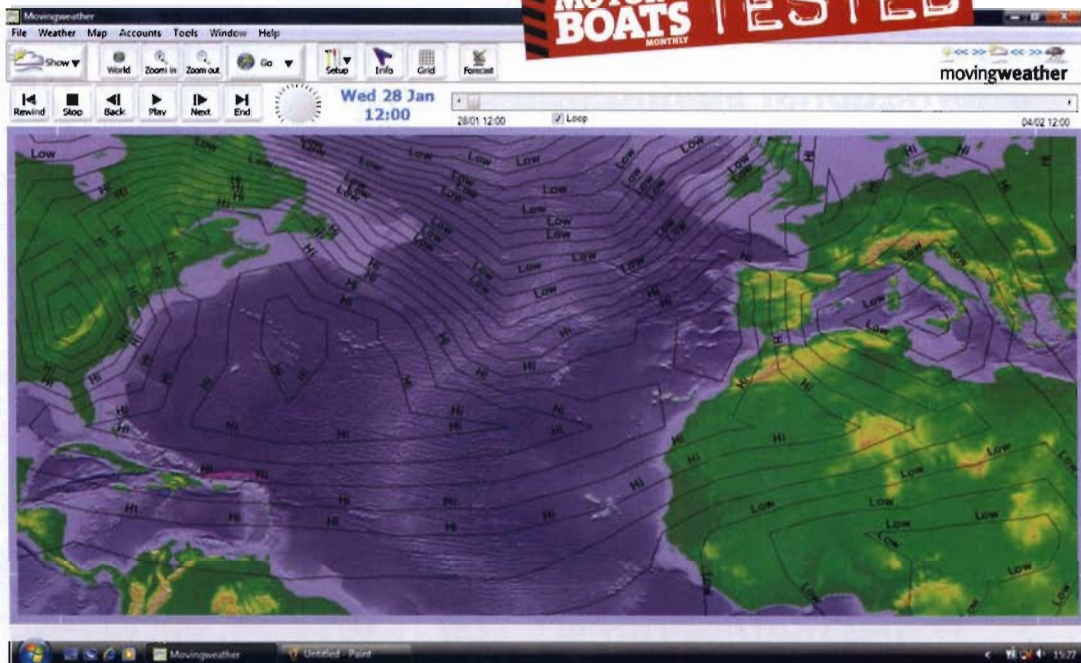
Getting decent up-to-the-minute weather information is a crucial part of any passage plan. Running the Cruising Club, I'm a big advocate of not relying on one individual source of information and gather as much data from different places as possible before deciding to cast off.

As well as the Met Office with its inshore and shipping forecasts, the web is awash with sites dedicated to weather and these, combined with the latest synoptics, form the basis of my forecasting to date. But now I have another weapon at my disposal. **Movingweather** is a software programme that uses the latest weather information provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), the US equivalent to our Met Office.

Once you have added the software to your PC, you just need to decide on the area you wish to receive weather for. This can be as small as the Solent, or as large as the whole world. You then decide what information you would like to see from the list: temperature, wind, rain, pressure, cloud cover and humidity. Lastly, you can decide how many days you wish to receive information for, from as little as the next three hours up to a maximum of seven days.



Deciding what data you require is as simple as clicking your mouse



Movingweather is easy to use and simple to understand whether it's local wind conditions or Atlantic pressure systems

Only once you have made these selections do you need to connect to the internet to download your files. This system has been designed with the mariner in mind so the downloads are kept very small, which is useful if you are paying per mb through a mobile broadband or your connection is very slow.

To give an example, today I downloaded the Thames Estuary weather for the next four days, including wind speed and direction, air temperature, rain and pressure isobars. This would be the sort of download you would look at for a local weekend excursion. The download size was a minuscule 1kb.

A second request for the whole English Channel and southern North Sea came to just 92kb. And lastly I requested all information for the whole of the north Atlantic for the next seven days and unsurprisingly the file size was a rather large 10mb. However, remove all but the pressure isobars, which is really all you'd be interested in at this scale and the size comes down to around 1.4mb.

It is also worth noting that if you do download a large area, you can zoom in and use this information on a local basis whereas if you only request local info, you can't extend it without completing another download.

In reality it is unlikely that you will need to download more than 100kb each time, so it isn't memory intensive. Once downloaded, your forecast is played in animation, which you can speed up, slow down, loop or just scroll through step by step to see how the weather develops. You can also save the forecast for future reference.

The downside to this product is that it's a subscription service. You can go online and try it for free for 30 days but, beware, once you have done so you will want to subscribe.

The cost is fairly modest at just £50 for 12 months or £36 for six months, for those fair weather boaters, some of which you can recoup in surfing charges, depending upon how you

usually obtain weather data. Once subscribed you have access to unlimited downloads and the programme can be used on two PCs, so you can plan at home on your desktop PC and use it out on the water via a laptop.

So why should you pay for this service when the web is full of sites offering similar information for nothing? Personally, I just love the user interface, the graphics and the programme's simplicity. I've also found it to be pretty accurate and while no weather forecast is going to be 100%, based on my experiences, I'm happy to say that I'll be using Movingweather this coming season. **Neale**



Download times are minimal

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Price: £50 for a 12-month subscription
Enquiries: Movingweather
Tel: 0870 8610032
www.movingweather.com