

Star Club Head of the River, 11th January 2026

Safety Plan

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1. Introduction

Welcome to **Star Club Head of the River**. We hope that you have an enjoyable and successful day's racing. With your help and co-operation, we (and our equipment) should survive the day intact.

This Safety Plan incorporates the key points of the British Rowing (BR) publication **RowSafe**, which should be read by every cox and crew member. This plan is a local extension, for the duration of the Star Head, of the latest version of BR's **RowSafe** guidance.

A copy of the Safety Plan is lodged with British Rowing's Regional Water Safety Officer and with Bedford Borough Council.

Medical professionals, Ambulance Response Services, will be present during the whole event.

Safety boats crewed by trained personnel will be patrolling the course throughout the event.

Marshals are equipped with loudhailers and basic safety equipment: throw-lines and emergency blankets.

Safety boats, marshals and officials are provided with radios for communication.

2. Safety Procedures & Preventive Measures

2.1 Safety Instructions & Information for Competitors

Equipment:

It is the responsibility of each crew to ensure that the equipment that they are using is safe and compliant with the requirements of ***British Rowing's Rules of Racing*** and ***RowSafe. Coxes arriving at the start without lifejackets will be disqualified.*** Coxes of front-loading boats should ensure that their life jackets allow for a quick escape from their boat.

All boats must have secure bow-balls, heel restraints and watertight buoyancy chambers. Coxswains must wear a life jacket or buoyancy aid in the correct manner and be familiar with its method of operation. In "front-loader" boats, coxswains must wear manually operated gas inflation life jackets. Spot checks on equipment will take place during the day.

Coxes

All coxes should be familiar with the method of operation of their life jacket.

Boat Identification

All boats must have clearly visible Boat ID, as specified in Rules of British Rowing. Boat ID must be visible on both sides of the boat.

Swimming Ability:

Every competitor is expected to be in good health and be able to float on their back for a minimum of 5 minutes. Although the river is fairly narrow and access from the bank relatively good, there are areas of dangerous under-current, especially in the area downstream of the Town Bridge by Bedford Rowing Club. In the event of capsize, follow instructions from marshals, which will normally advise you to stay with (and preferably on) your boat and await rescue by a safety launch.

Competitors' Responsibility

While we endeavour to provide a safe system at this event, each competitor and competing club also has a duty of care to themselves and others:

- Their own safety, remembering that they have a duty of care to themselves and any third party both on the water and on land.
- Ensuring that any equipment (e.g. boats, blades, buoyancy aids, etc.) are safe and prepared to the standards as required under the 'Rules of Racing' and 'RowSafe'. Spot checks may be made by umpires to check on bow ball, heel restraints, quick-release mechanism for feet and coxes' life jackets.
- Ensuring that their boats comply with the buoyancy requirements of 'Row Safe'.
- The strict observance of any 'local rule' or traffic/circulation pattern along with 'RowSafe' provisions.
- Deciding whether a competitor is competent to use the water course in the prevailing weather conditions. This decision may be taken by the individual or with their coach/crew.
- Adequate clothing and protection is worn suitable to the conditions on the day.
- Please ensure you do not obstruct the towpath with boats, trestles, blades and other equipment in case access is required by emergency services. The towpath is also a public thoroughfare.

River Hazards

Hitchin Railway Bridge is the first obstacle to negotiate, approximately 200 m after the Start. Use only the centre arch. For safety reasons, overtaking will not be permitted between the Start and Hitchin Railway Bridge.

Beware of the island just beyond Bedford RC, the weir 100 m downstream of that island and moored pleasure craft at the island just before the Schools' boathouse.

After the Suspension Bridge, the river bends and narrows. Additional care should be taken if overtaking another crew in this area.

Town Bridge

Both main arches of Town Bridge may be used during racing. See illustration below;



In the event of capsize:

The whole course is visible by course monitors and marshals. Monitors and marshals are equipped with throw-lines and safety boats patrol the course. In the event of a capsize on the course, please stay with (preferably on) your boat and wait for help to arrive.

Know the rules:

British Rowing's Rules of Racing will be used. The marshalling rules are straightforward – see the event circulation plan – the safety adviser and or chairman of the race committee, will stop racing if an unsafe situation develops. In particular, keep well into the bank on the way up to the start. Give yourself plenty of time to boat before your division race time. Listen for marshals' instructions - they are all experienced in the job and know the event and the river well. On the way to the start, if you have not reached Star Club ten minutes before your division start time, you will be stopped and turned back. Only if space permits in any following division will you be able race. We have to keep to division start times, otherwise there is a danger of racing in poor light conditions in the later divisions at this time of year.

If you see an accident:

Monitors, marshals and officials will be the initial public contact points for reporting of emergencies. Monitors and marshals will wear a high visibility jacket for identification at all times.

This Safety Plan is distributed to all officials.

Safety Boats

Two safety boats will be available on the course at all times. These shall be equipped with competent people, radios, throw lines, safety blankets and first aid equipment.

First Aid

First Aid cover is provided at Star Rowing Club, and at the Schools' Boathouse, and will be contactable via radio.

Emergency

The nearest A&E unit is Bedford Hospital (South Wing), accessed via Ampthill Road (A6).

Emergency: Fire, Police, Ambulance: 999 from any telephone.

Key Personnel

Person in charge on the day:	Ian Donald contact via control or mobile:	07922 833149
Chairman of the Race Committee:	Ian Donald contact via control or mobile:	07922 833149
Event secretary	Nicky Durrant, contact via mobile:	07971 079764
Competition Safety Advisor	David Gowing, contact via control or mobile	07775 030130
Safety committee member	Simon White, contact via control or mobile:	07748 335046
Event First Aiders:	Ambulance Response Services	07904 040092
Welfare Officer:	Chris Clifford-Myers, contact via mobile:	07821 876591

All marshals and officials are in radio contact with control, the rescue services and the Chief Umpire.

To assist emergency services. The What3Words system has been used to pinpoint these locations:

Location	Contact number	What3Words
Star Clubhouse	01234 212070	https://w3w.co/voices.swim.dome
BRC Clubhouse	01234 359076	https://w3w.co/slices.scam.lace
Schools' Boathouse	01234 353183	https://w3w.co/burn.rise.taken
Longholme bridge	n/a	https://w3w.co/sings.things.first

2.2 Incidents – Collisions & Capsizes

Above the start/below the finish: Get any boat that is damaged and unable to proceed to the side.

On the course: Any damaged boat that is unable to proceed should be moved to the bankside without delay, preferably on the Star Club bank. It should be noted that the only normal entry and exit points to the river are from the bankside below the finish, Bedford Rowing Club, Schools' boathouse and Star Club.

Monitors and marshals: Shall pay particular attention to any incident on the river. Should a crew be involved in a collision or suffer any injury requiring assistance, or crew member fall out of a boat, the official shall summon a safety launch by radio. If the course is blocked, the official shall also advise the start marshals to hold the division until advised that the course is clear.

Capsize: The whole course is visible to monitors. Every monitor position is equipped with a throw-line and a radio to inform Race Control. STAY WITH THE BOAT!

2.3 Alternative arrangements plan

Where extreme weather conditions or other situations, such as a local lockdown due to a covid outbreak, that could require the cancellation or postponement of racing, either for the day or until the conditions change, the decision will be the responsibility of the Chairman of the Race Committee. All competing clubs will be notified at the earliest opportunity. The Chairman of the Race Committee or the Competition Rowing Safety Advisor (CRSA) also reserve the right to amend this plan if weather or competition conditions on the day make this

necessary. Amendments, postponement or cancellation will be published at Race Control and announced over the public address system.

In the case of thunder or lightening, a risk warning will be broadcast advising participants already on land to avoid moving boats and oars during the period of the storm. The message shall make clear whether racing could be resumed if conditions improve. Crews already on the water will be directed where and when to leave the water. As soon as the decision is made, every effort will be made to get all competitors and Safety boat crews ashore and safe as quickly as possible.

As for determining when things are safe, the 30-30 rule will be applied. No crew should return to the water until permitted to do so by race officials.

NOTE: If a monitor / marshal considers that it is unsafe for a crew to race in the prevailing conditions (e.g. strengthening winds, deteriorating visibility or increasing stream) then that crew may be stopped and withdrawn from the race in the interest of their own safety and the safety of other crews and officials.

1.1.1 Pre-inspection

Approximately 1 hour before the start of the race the CRSA along with the Chairman of the race committee will inspect the course and surroundings for any obstructions or likely problems and assess the weather conditions. A Checklist shall be completed by the CRSA at this time. Any decisions on postponement or cancellation can be considered then.

2.4 Protecting children

The organisers of Star Head believe that the welfare and wellbeing of all children is paramount. All junior competitors have a right to safety and protection. All suspicions, concerns and allegations of harm will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

It is expected that the welfare of junior competitors is primarily the responsibility of the competing clubs' own coaches and officers, or individual parents accompanying their children.

In the event of a junior being involved in any incident, the responsible adult will be identified from the competitor's entry form. The named person will be called over the public address (PA) system and contacted by the mobile phone number given on the entry form.

It is the responsibility of the coach or parent accompanying juniors to monitor their whereabouts. In the event of any junior crew member going missing, the responsible adult must take appropriate action. In the first instance a call may be broadcast over the PA, by contacting Race Control. The named adult, or in their absence, the Regatta Chairman, is responsible for deciding whether the local police should be contacted in the case of any incident.

No individual will have access to personal contact details of junior competitors.

2.5 Instructions

Monitors, marshals, and other officials will be issued with all relevant safety documentation prior to the event. Further specific safety information may be issued on the day.

Competitors will receive details of the arrangements and instructions prior to the event.

3.

Communications

Safety boats are provided with radios operating on the monitors / marshal channel, to maintain contact with monitors / marshals / Race Control when needed. "Red" and "Blue" codes will be used to indicate urgency.

Radio etiquette shall be maintained at all times and only relevant event information shall be relayed by radio.

4. Circulation Pattern

The majority of visiting crews will boat from Longholme. All boats should stay on the starboard (bowside) side of the river when making their way to the start (that's the cox's right). There is an island between Star Club and County Bridge - all crews moving upstream must stay to the right (bowside) of the Island.

5. Emergency Response Plan

5.1 Purpose

This Emergency Action Plan sets out controls to be followed in relation to any emergency that represents a threat to Head Race participants.

5.2 Responsibility

Responsibility for actions in the event of an emergency rests with the Race Committee. These individuals will carry mobile phones at all times.

5.3 Actions in the event of a medical emergency

The first radio equipped Race official on the scene should take initial control and will assess the situation. (If necessary, he/she will call emergency services.) As soon as immediate life saving measures are in hand, Race Control (if not already aware) will be notified. If emergency assistance is required, the Official will call PAN, PAN, PAN or code RED on his/her radio and all other radio users will observe radio silence and follow instructions given by that official.

The initial incident report should briefly include:

- Where
- What has happened.
- The number of casualties
- The severity of injuries or illness
- Any support required
- If racing needs to be suspended

As soon as an incident is reported, all stations on radio are to minimise their communications. Absolute priority is to be given to Race Control and those responding directly to the incident.

In the event of any accident or emergency beyond that detailed in the safety plan and outside the capabilities of the first aid and safety facilities, the emergency services will be called using 112 or 999 by mobile phone, or if necessary, from landlines available at Bedford Rowing Club, Schools Boathouse or Star Club (See numbers above.)

5.4 Fire

If there is a fire in a Rowing Club, the person discovering it will assess the situation and tackle the fire only if they are competent to do so and initially order local evacuation. Any fire should be reported to an official of the Club. If the emergency may require the stopping of racing or general evacuation, he/she will inform the Race Chairman. They will agree appropriate action.

5.5 Equipment failure

Should there be a Radio failure during the event, Safety Boats and marshals etc shall use mobile phones & loudhailers to raise the alarm. The non-functioning radio unit(s) will be swiftly replaced. If this is not possible, Race Control shall be informed and racing shall be halted.

In the event of Safety-Boat failure during the event, this must be reported to Race Control straightaway to consider whether racing should be halted.

5.6 Floating Hazard

Any significant floating debris or "hazard" seen on the water shall be reported to Race Control immediately. A Safety Boat shall be deployed to clear the water and racing shall be suspended if necessary.

5.7 Anti-social Behaviour

A serious public disorder or violent behaviour shall be reported to Race Control immediately. If necessary, racing shall be suspended and the police shall be called.

5.8 Terrorist Threat

Any news that could be deemed a serious threat to life should be reported to the Police immediately. Evacuation of any area believed to be under threat shall be organised in the first instance by Event officials.

6. Reporting of incidents

Any witnessed incidents should be reported to Race Control for recording purposes.

7. Emergency Services Access

Emergency vehicle access to the Schools' boathouse area is via the small white foot bridge close to Longholme Way (see what-three-words locations listed above.).

8. Feedback

If you have any comments that may help us improve the plan for future events, then please let us know via control. Further information that makes up the full Head safety plan is contained in separate documents sent to clubs and available on the Star Club website, namely circulation plan, access and parking arrangements.

9. Star Head Safety Rules

The following rules should be observed by all competitors. Any infringement may result in the disqualification of a competitor, crew or club from the competition at the discretion of the Race Committee:

- a. Decisions of the Race Committee are final and should be respected by all competitors, coaches and clubs.
- b. All boats should abide by the circulation plan, the general navigation rules and all directions from race marshals and officials.
- c. All boats should be correctly assembled and well maintained, including the presence of adequate heel restraints, bow-balls and back-stays.
- d. All competitors should ensure any cuts or abrasions are covered to avoid risk of infection
- e. Care should be taken when manoeuvring boats on land. Surfaces may be wet and slippery. Other competitors and members of the public may be nearby and at risk of being struck.
- f. Anyone showing symptoms of covid-19, anyone having tested positive for the virus in the past 10 days and anyone shielding should not attend the competition.
- g. Changing facilities in the clubhouse are not available to visiting clubs.