

Updated April 2024.

# GRAVESEND ROWING CLUB

## SAFETY PLAN



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## [The Club Safety Plan](#)

A copy Club Safety Plan will remain within the Club Safety File, be included as part of any club induction for new and/or existing members and be accessible through the club website.

Due to the changing nature of the river and varying skills of people participating in rowing activities at the club, the Club Safety Plan may need to be changed by the Club Safety Adviser whenever the need arises. Any updates should be passed to the rowing Committee for consideration. Once agreed, these changes will then be approved by the rowing Committee, and the membership will be informed of the changes via letter and/or email but shall also reinforce these changes through one-to-one or group inductions.

## [2023/24 Update](#)

For the 2023/2024 rowing year a few additions and changes to be noted:

- Just before the Gravel Jetty, Gravesend has a sewage point where at times, sewage can be released into the Thames. Rowers are to take precautions after outings, including washing equipment and hands. If rowers capsize and are ill, they are to inform their doctor of the capsize and inform the club Safety Advisor. British Rowing Guidance can be found here - [Guidance-for-Rowing-When-Water-Quality-is-Poor-March-2024.pdf \(britishrowing.org\)](#)
- An unsafe Buoy had been illegally added to the river, right next to the boating point for crews. This has now been amended, fixed and is no longer a problem, but rowers are to keep a lookout for changing river hazards and report as required.

## 1. About this Safety Plan

This Club Safety Plan is designed to establish a positive safety environment for all on and off water members at Gravesend Rowing Club. It is hoped it will inform club members of their obligations and responsibilities, educate them about some of the dangers of this part of the Thames, and help them evaluate the risks associated with situations they may face.

British Rowing has published the Row Safe Guide in an effort to ensure that rowing clubs are aware of their responsibility to promote a safe culture of rowing. The Row Safe Guide outlines the minimum standards that rowing clubs should consider adopting and further good practice that clubs may also aim to achieve.

[www.britishrowing.org/taking-part/staying-safe/rowsafe](http://www.britishrowing.org/taking-part/staying-safe/rowsafe) (updated 2024)

A hardcopy of the Row Safe Guide is also contained within the Club Safety File, where it should remain and be accessible for future reference. The Club Safety Plan has been agreed, approved and adopted by the Rowing Committee in accordance with the Rules of Gravesend Rowing Club, Sections 21 and 22. The Club Safety plan is updated as required and is approved by British Rowing in the annual safety audit.

### a. Safety adviser

The Club Safety Adviser should be familiar with the safety guidance published by British Rowing, especially the Row Safe Guide (Row Safe: A guide to Good Practice in Rowing. 2024) and any subsequent revisions.

The Club Safety Adviser shall

- Promote a safe rowing culture,
- Encourage club members to record incidents of safety breaches or near misses,
- Analyse incident reports and provide recommendations to the Rowing Committee,
- Promote better procedures for the care and maintenance of club training equipment,
- Improve the club's safety record.
- Pass on relevant safety notices received from British Rowing, the Port of London Authority or the Gravesend RNLI.
- Complete the annual online club safety audit.

The Committee will support and help to promote the Club Safety Adviser with any action, effort or activity that leads to a safer rowing culture and better procedures.

Any breaches observed by the Committee or reported to the Committee by any other club member may result in those found responsible for such breaches being answerable to the Committee in accordance with the Rules of Gravesend Rowing Club, Sections 4 and 5.

### b. Annual Safety Audit and Gap Analysis Checklist

This is a mandatory requirement as British Rowing can revoke the racing licenses of any club failing to complete the audit before the deadline. This would mean that any club member with a racing license would be unable to compete at competition.

The Club Safety Adviser should look at the British Rowing 'Gap Analysis Checklist' on election and before completing the Annual Safety Audit. This form can be found on the British Rowing website.

The Rowing Committee must acknowledge the findings of the Gap Analysis Checklist and aim to address any shortcomings in areas of club safety policy and management before the next Annual Safety Audit.

## 2. Overview

### a. Location

Gravesend Rowing Club is situated on the River Thames very close to the point where the river ends and the estuary begins. The club is home to both coastal and fine boats. Due to its location, the club also has several hazards that rowing clubs located on the upper Thames does not need to consider.

This part of the Thames has a tidal range of up to 6 metres and is a working river with frequent commercial and industrial traffic. Some of these vessels are very large and others can move rapidly through the water, both creating hazards that rowers need to be aware of.

The neighbouring Port of London Authority, sometimes abbreviated to the 'PLA', promotes river safety, maintains and enhances the river, and is the navigation authority for this part of the Thames. The PLA monitors vessel movements through the London VTS (Vessel Traffic Services) based in Gravesend. Several smaller vessels working within our vicinity are owned and operated by the PLA, most commonly the Harbour Master's, Pilots and Survey vessels.

Our club is also located within Gravesend's Riverside Leisure Area, which is used by Gravesend Sailing Club, other leisure vessels and anglers. The stretch of the river from the Promenade downriver to the Depth Gauge is sometimes the venue for angling competitions and angler's lines can be hazardous to rowers.

The club shares this part of the Thames with:

- HMRC Customs & Excise
- UK Border Agency
- Gravesend RNLI
- Gravesend Sailing Club
- Tilbury Ferry
- The local skiff club
- Other leisure users

You should be aware and respect our neighbours and their right to use and enjoy the river too.

### b. Club address, telephone number and directions

The club postal address is:

Gravesend Rowing Club,  
New Bridge,  
Gordon Promenade,  
Gravesend,  
DA12 2BS

Directions to the club:

The club is located at the western end of the Promenade and if approaching from the east, the club can be accessed by vehicles via the A226 Milton Road. At the traffic lights at the junction of the A226, Milton Place and Ordnance Road take the first right into Milton Place, and then turning right again onto Commercial Place.

If approaching from the west, the club can be accessed via the A226 the Terrace, following the one way system onto Harmer Street and keeping left, turn left on the A226 Milton Road at the clock tower. Then turning left at the traffic lights at the junction of the A226, Milton Place and Ordnance Road into Milton Place, and then turning right onto Commercial Place.

**c. Useful information and contact numbers/ Emergency numbers.**

<b>Emergency</b>	<b>999</b>
<b>PLA - Harbour Master</b>	01474 562212
<b>RNLI</b>	01474 328465
<b>Gravesend Council</b>	01474 337000
<b>Gravesend Sailing Club</b>	07506 367699
<b>Denton Wharf</b>	01474 562444
<b>Ship &amp; Lobster</b>	01474 324571
<b>RSPCA</b>	0300 1234 999

**In the event of any emergency, rowers are to call 999.**

**Members are NOT to attempt to rescue by entering the river themselves unless in the safety launch.**

### 3. Emergency Action Plan

#### a. Self-rescue, buddy rescue or Coaching launch intervention

In some incidences it's possible that a rower in difficulty may be able to perform a self-rescue (by getting back into the boat without assistance), be rescued by another rower (buddy rescue whereby those in the water hold onto the stern of the rescuing boat) or by launch.

In these instances, the casualty should be returned to the club as soon as possible and medical advice sought if necessary. In the case of a buddy rescue or boat abandonment where equipment has been left, the PLA should be informed ASAP, or the launch is taken to collect it.

#### b. Gravesend RNLI rescue

If it becomes apparent that a club member is in difficulty on or in the water and a self-rescue, buddy rescue or intervention from the coaching launch is proving difficult or ineffective (noticeably in a strong tide, strong wind or colder temperatures) the first response is to call the Gravesend RNLI on 999 for assistance.

When calling for the RNLI:

1. Ask for the coastguard when asked which service you are after
2. Clearly state your name, the nature of the emergency and the location (what3words is a good app here to pinpoint exactly where you are on the river)
3. Stay calm and be prepared to give any additional information that the operator may need.

If you find yourself in difficulties but have then managed to get yourself to safety and the boat has drifted away, do not attempt to rescue the boat yourself/(re)enter the water. The boat can be salvaged later either by the coaching launch or the club can contact the PLA Harbour Master and ask for assistance in retrieving it.



### c. Land-based emergencies

For all land-based emergencies the appropriate emergency numbers from the 'Useful information and contact numbers' list should be used.

Contact the appropriate emergency service and clearly state your name, the nature of the emergency and the location.

Stay calm and be prepared to give any additional information that the operator may need.

If ever unsure, members should dial 999.

**A defibrillator, for those in cardiac arrest, can be found on the Outside wall of Gravesend Rowing club (River facing side). Guidance on use can be found inside, or support given from 999.**

### d. Guideline to boat buying.

The use of front coxswained boats, ('front or bow loaders') have not been used at Gravesend Rowing Club, although competing crews from other clubs will not be debarred. The reduced buoyancy of this class of boat is undesirable for Gravesend's changing water. Coaching can't be carried out in this class of boat, and if the club ever purchased one, capsized drills would be required for people who are coxing them.

Gravesend has two Eight's (8+). The size of Gravesend clubhouse means storing an eight is not possible unless its split. Launching from the New Bridge Causeway is possible however more time consuming and should have an experienced cox.

Boats that are having wing ringer can be an advantage to Gravesend's water due the increased height above the water and should be considered when new buys are discussed.

### e. Boat design weight classifications

Modern fine boats, (racing boats or racing shells), have a design weight so in the event of being swamped – these boats have sufficient inherent buoyancy, with oars or sculls, to support a seated crew of the stated design weight so that the rowers' torsos remain out of the water and the boat can be manoeuvred. This inherent buoyancy is beneficial in a capsize, as you can stay with the boat and its buoyancy will keep you warm and afloat. The design weight generally refers to the weight of the rower, or individual weights of the cox and crewmembers, and is split into two classes, lightweight (55-80kg) and heavyweight (80-110kg). The design weight varies between the classification of boat and the purpose for which it was constructed, rowers should be within the weight restrictions of the boat. New boats should be clearly marked with their weights.

Older boats are often constructed differently and from different materials to newer racing shells. Many older boats have a single skin hull of wooden veneer, canvases to bow and stern, and no integral buoyancy compartments underneath the rowers' seats. The club has boats of this type and has therefore added inflatables to these boats to increase their buoyancy. These inflatables should be checked before each outing.

## 4. Local landmarks and restrictions

There are several local landmarks on the Kent shoreline that rowers should be familiar with. This helps ensure you have assessed the risks associated with your planned outing, and, if the worst happens, allow you to guide the emergency services to your assistance or to help others.

Each landmark location is named on the following pages with its distance from the club recorded in both miles and kilometres. The first figures in brackets are the distance from the club to the destination, the second two figures are the total round trip.

These distances are rough guidelines and time taken to get to a destination and back again can depend on variables, such as, tide strength and direction, wind strength and direction, crew strength and experience, coxswain's experience and the course that is steered.

There is more detail on a map (with hazards), on the club safety board, which extends to cliff jetty. All members must have looked at this and be familiar with the hazards and locations.

**In the standard training outings, boats will not cross the river, into the deep channel used by ocean shipping. However, none of the river is out of bounds to the club but it is prudent for such crossing to be made by agreement with both the Captain and Safety Adviser.**

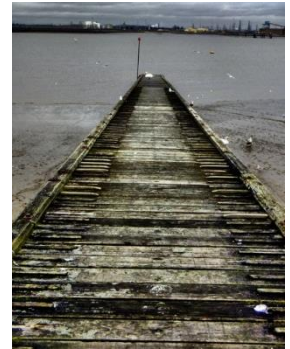
#### a. Customs Jetty and the Royal Terrace Pier

Customs Jetty is located a few metres upriver from the New Bridge Causeway, this floating pontoon is used by HMRC Customs & Excise and the UK Border Agency. Gravesend Rowing Club does not usually row this way. Both agencies occasionally moor their vessels here and they may depart quickly if they need to intercept a ship or smaller vessel travelling on the Thames. Upriver from the New Bridge Causeway the riverbank is replaced by several miles of river wall, the river also narrows and there are increased vessel movements, piers and jetties. These factors combined can result in very dangerous tidal conditions and limited opportunities to climb out of the river if you are unlucky enough to have fallen in. The Royal Terrace Pier is upriver from the New Bridge Causeway and Customs Jetty, and it is used by the Gravesend RNLI.



#### b. Gravesend Rowing Club Jetty/New Bridge Causeway

Our boating jetty is sometimes also used by members of the public so care must be taken when carrying equipment on the jetty to ensure you do not endanger yourself or others. The jetty is often slippery, so do not run on it and avoid walking along its edges. If the tide is out, it is surrounded by deep mud and could be a fall of nearly 2 to 3 metres, with the possibility of serious injury or worse if you fall over the side.



#### c. The Promenade

(0.27 miles / 0.43km) 0.53 miles / 0.85km

The Gordon Promenade is the centre of Gravesend's Riverside Leisure Area, and our Rowing Club and the neighbouring Sailing Club are located at either end of the Promenade. Rowers should give way to any wind-powered vessels (for example sailing boats) and communicate with other river users as required. Along the prom is also many buoyed boats and rowers should use a good lookout to avoid these obstacles, especially in a turning tide as boat's move.



#### d. Dolphins Jetty

(0.53 miles / 0.85 km) 1.06 miles / 1.71 km

Downriver from the New Bridge Causeway, Dolphins is a timber jetty located past the end of the Promenade. This jetty is often used as the starting point for 'scratch races' we hold at the club. Crews should not attempt to pass under the jetty but rather go round it keeping well clear of it in a fast tide or strong winds.



#### e. Denton Wharf

(0.8 miles / 1.29 km) 1.6 miles / 2.57 km

A concrete jetty leading to a series of floating pontoons where many PLA vessels are moored. Tugs also operate from Denton Wharf and are required to travel quickly to assist the large ships travelling to and from Tilbury Docks. There are two available options which are large enough for boats on the Essex side. Check each are clear before travelling through.

At high tide this jetty cannot be passed under. In the event of this happening, rowers should stay between Denton and the rowing club and not attempt to pass underneath unless a launch and competent cox is present who can assist going around the Denton Wharf. See 8.e for further details.



#### f. The Ship & Lobster

A Public House located at the end of Mark Lane. Development along the banks of the Thames reduces substantially once rowers have passed the end of the Promenade, this pub marks the limit of development next to the Thames. When rowers reach the Ship & Lobster PH and Clubby's Jetty their fewer people around and therefore the risks increase.



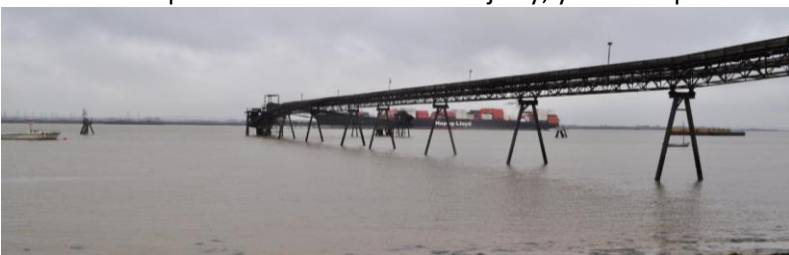
#### g. Port Heath Jetty

Crews should note that members of the public like to fish from the jetty so extra caution should be taken when travelling underneath. If in doubt stop and warn the fisherman or choose a different section to pass under. The gap with the gate on top is the largest and should be used by newer rowers when learning to cox.

#### h. The Gravel Jetty

A high-level conveyor belt that is visible downriver from the rowing club. Large dredging vessels moor here occasionally to load and unload aggregates.

You must not pass on the outside of this jetty; you must pass underneath between the spans.



### i. Sea School

(1.2 miles / 1.93 km) 2.4 miles / 3.86 km

This is the training jetty for the National Sea Training Centre. It is a multi-storey concrete structure with lifeboats on it. The Kent shore is very exposed from here as you continue downriver, the water can become rough, very quickly, especially when there is wind over tide conditions.

Rowers cannot pass underneath the jetty and should always pass around, keeping clear of the jetty.



### j. Depth Gauge

(1.8 miles / 2.9 km) 3.6 miles / 5.79 km

Two small timber posts on the foreshore are all that is left of the old Depth Gauge; the metal fence is a more prominent sign that you have reached this destination.

### k. Shornemead Fort

(2.5 miles / 4.02km) 5.2 miles / 8.37 km

Is now a derelict gun battery that was originally built in the 1790's to defend the Thames. The fort is a visible landmark from the river and the water can be very turbulent from here to Cliffe Jetty and beyond, due to the exposed nature of the river and the accumulation of underwater debris. Due to this, "eddies" and water turbulence is common in this area and rowers should take care when steering and passing through.



### l.

#### Shornmean New Light (New Light)

(2.6 miles / 4.18 km) 5.6 miles / 9.01 km

A new unmanned and automated lighthouse structure built to replace the derelict Old Parsons Light. This large red and white banded structure is located in the river adjacent to Shornemead Fort.

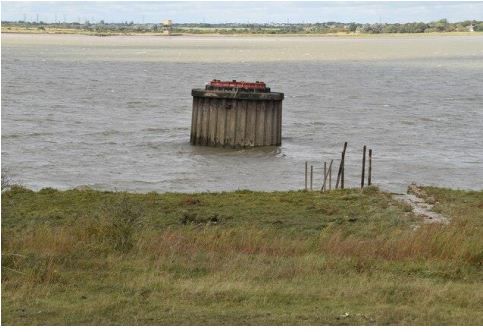
**The lighthouse should always be on the inside of a crew's boat. Rowers should not be trying to go on the inside of the lighthouse due to the risks of unknown rocks, objects and mud.**



#### m. Old Shornmead Light (Old Parsons Light)

(2.9 miles / 4.67 km) 5.8 miles / 9.33 km

The base of an old lighthouse structure located a few metres from the foreshore a few hundred metres



downriver of Shornemead Fort.

Rowers cannot row between the old lighthouse and the shore due to an old and disintegrating railing which cannot be seen at high tide.

**Only experienced Crews are allowed to row further than Old Parsons Light. After Old Parsons Light, rowers are to move out into the centre of the river and avoid being too close to shore due to a large number of shipwrecks, a large mud bank and unknown items below the river surface.**

n.

#### Higham Buoy

(3.12 miles / 5.02 km) 6.24 miles / 10.04 km

A navigation buoy on the Kent side of the shipping channel. Rowers are to stay on the inside of this Buoy, between the Buoy and the Shore due to the risk of moving vessels.



o. Cliffe Jetty

(3.95 miles / 6.36 km) 7.9 miles / 12.71 km

A commercial jetty adjacent to Cliffe Fort. Rowers are to move out early, not get too close to the jetty and keep a clear lookout at all times.

p. Cliffe Creek

A creek that is only accessible at high tide. Rowers are not to row down the Creek unless it is high tide

q. Lower Hope Point

(5.4 miles / 8.69 km) 10.8 miles / 17.38 km

This is regarded as the point where the River Thames ends and Thames Estuary begins.

r. Egypt Bay

(11 miles / 17.70 km) 22 miles / 35.41 km

This bay was once used by smugglers and was later used to moor prison hulks. It has "muddy pools" and a good lookout should be kept at all times. This is the last place a Gravesend Rower is allowed to row before turning back towards the club.



## 5. Hazards and risks

There are many hazards and risks associated with this part of the tidal Thames. You should consider all of

these hazards and be observant for others. This list is not exhaustive:

- Anglers and their lines
- Beaching and river mud
- Buoys, moorings and their lines
- Extremes of hot and cold weather
- Floating debris
- Jetties
- Reduced development and surveillance combined with increased exposure downriver from the club
- Submerged hazards
- The possibility of faulty equipment or equipment failure
- The possibility of swamping, collision and capsize
- Vessel movements, swells and wash
- Visibility
- Wind and tidal conditions

All hazards will be monitored by the safety adviser, and all experienced club members, and changes in the dangers will be reported.

#### a. **Personal Responsibilities**

Everyone involved in rowing has a Duty of Care to ensure their actions both on and off the water are conducted in a manner, which does not compromise the safety of others. Adults also have a personal responsibility for their own safety.

#### b. **Duty of Care**

##### Who has a Duty of Care in rowing?

Everyone connected with the sport.

##### Further good practice

Provide education and training on safety related issues such as navigation, boat checking, first aid, etc.

##### Completion of membership forms

Anyone participating in rowing or land training is required to complete the appropriate membership forms and declarations, and 'In case of Emergency' or 'ICE' form. You must not participate in any activities if you have not completed these forms and declarations. You must not participate in any activity that may fall outside of the scope of your membership, e.g., participating in an outing when you have only signed up for land-training membership.

##### Your safety and the safety of others

While participating in rowing either at the club or at competitions you must remember that you represent the club. You must act responsibly, respectfully and in a sporting manner at all times. You are responsible for your own safety and the safety of others, and you must look after the club premises and equipment.

##### Your health

You are required to disclose any health issues you may have that would affect your ability to participate in activities at the club. If you have any doubts you should speak to a medical professional before you participate. You are required to also disclose your swimming ability to us and confirm that you can Swim 100m in light clothing (rowing kit or similar).

#### c. **Capsize drills**

Your swimming ability will be assessed at a capsize drill, organized by the club, where you will be asked to:

- Swim 100m in light clothing (rowing kit or similar)
- Tread water for at least 2 minutes
- Swim under water for at least 5 metres
- Safely fall out of a single and "return to shore"
- Demonstrate use of a throw line

Rowers must complete a capsize drill every three years or risk not being allowed to row. Records will be kept by those organising the capsize drill. Any person who appears to the Safety Advisor or any club coach to be unable

to perform this task will be asked to demonstrate their ability at the next capsize drill. They will be expected to wear a Personal Floatation Device (PFD) or lifejacket whilst on the water until this has been completed.

For members who join and row between capsize drills there is a 'Stay with the boat' poster on the Safety Notice Board, which describes what to do if you ever capsize and a video found here: [Capsize Drill - British Rowing](#)

**d. Club premises and equipment**

It is every club members' responsibility to:

- Respect the premises and training equipment, ensuring you leave them, as you would wish to find them.
- Report any damage to the premises or training equipment to a Committee member or coach as soon as such damage becomes apparent.
- Do not leave any training equipment etc. where it will obstruct any of the club fire exits at any time.

**e. Suitable clothing and footwear**

You must bring suitable clothing and footwear for the weather conditions and activity you wish to participate in.

- You must be prepared to get your feet wet when launching/landing a boat – wear suitable shoes
- In cold weather layers of clothing help to keep you warm that doesn't hinder rowing (e.g. no straps which can be caught in the slides)
- **A change of clothing**
- Cuts and blisters should be covered by plasters to prevent the risk of getting infection and well washed e.g. Weil's disease.
- Women may want to consider wearing their hair up in a bun to prevent it being caught in equipment.

**f. Respecting other club members and our neighbours**

Listen to concerns other members may have and remember that their opinions are valid; they may be a better judge of their own limitations than you are.

The Captain, Club Safety Adviser, Coach or other experienced adult present may call for the abandonment of any outing because of inclement weather conditions, the composition of the crew, or the condition or choice of the boat, or any combination of these factors.

We share this part of the Thames with other river users; please respect them and their right to enjoy the river too.

## 6. Incident reporting

### a. What is incident reporting?

Sometimes things go wrong, but it is beneficial to learn from any mistakes that are made. Incident reporting is important as it allows rowing clubs to do this. By recording incidents and near misses our club can analyse the reports to see if there are any trends that need addressing, which may require a change in the club safety policy to allow the club to fulfil its Duty of Care. British rowing see it as an important way to let others know that rowing is a safe sport and in any serious situation they can use the stats to prove it.

#### Who is responsible for reporting an incident?

It is everybody's responsibility to report incidents or near misses.

#### Why you should report an incident or near miss

You should report any incidents or near misses that you are either involved in or witness. It allows the club to improve the way it runs club sessions.

#### When you should report an incident or near miss

As soon as practicably possible, ideally within 24 hours of the incident. The club has 'incident reporting cards' which allow members to write down the conditions and situation so the incident report is as accurate as possible.

#### What is an incident?

You must report any of the following:

- Capsize or falling out of boat through: inexperience, contact with another rowing boat, contact with other object, equipment or boat failure
- Collision through: contact with static object, moving object, navigation issue, poor visibility or lighting.
- Swamping through: rough water, collision with other rowing boat, collision with other object or wash.
- Health related: manual handling, respiratory, hypothermia, heat stress, water-borne disease.
- Equipment failure: boat buoyancy, riggers, gates, seats/feet, steering equipment, bow ball, blades/sculls, safety/coaching/rescue launch, PFDs and lifejackets, throw lines or racking.
- Land training due to: weight training; circuit training, running, cycling, indoor rowing or slips/trips.
- Trailer towing: failure of equipment, driving issue, incorrect or improper stowage, falling from a height.

### b. What is a simple capsize?

When using the online reporting system you have two options, you can 'add an incident report' or you can 'report a simple capsize', but what is the difference and what exactly is a 'simple capsize'?

The difference between the two types of incident report is the amount of information you are asked to submit.

British Rowing classifies a 'simple capsize' as:

**'A capsize due to a simple technique mistake or competence issue where there was no external cause (e.g. weed or collision), injury, damage to equipment or equipment failure. Reports should not be made when doing capsize drills [where] the capsize is expected.'**

So, if the capsize is caused by a simple technique mistake and competence issue it is a simple capsize. If the capsize has been caused by an external factor such as a collision with a static or moving object, injury, has caused damage to the equipment or has been caused by an equipment failure, it is not a simple capsize and must be reported as an incident. Please note, capsizes are expected at a capsize drill and these do not need to be reported as they take place under controlled circumstances.

### c. What is a near miss?

Currently British Rowing is thinking of removing the need to report near misses. While this allows British Rowing to concentrate on the analysis of incident reports, it would still be beneficial for the club to learn from any near misses that are occurring during club sessions.

The club may have to review its induction programme or review its safety policies if there are any worrying trends.

You must also report the following:

- Where sudden evasive action had to be taken to avoid a collision
- Where a boat is flouting navigation rules
- Where a boat is [out in low light conditions or] not displaying the required lights at night
- Where a crew has boated in high risk conditions
- Where a dangerous situation existed



#### d. First aid boxes and first aiders

The first aid boxes located within the rowing club premises can be found in the following locations:

- In the clubhouse
- In each launch

If you need to use anything within a first aid boxes please seek the assistance of one of the club's First Aiders or coaches, (their details are displayed on the club safety notice board). Anything used from a first aid box must be replaced as soon as possible.

If a club First Aider is not present at the club session, or the situation cannot be resolved by those present, further medical advice should be sought and, if necessary, the emergency services should be called.

The Committee should ensure that the first aid boxes are fully stocked and checked on a quarterly, 3 monthly, basis. These checks should be recorded on the appropriate sheets within the Club Safety File.

First aid boxes should not be removed or relocated without the prior consent of the Club Safety Adviser or other Committee member.

#### e. How to report an incident or near-miss

Reporting an incident or near miss is simple:

1. You can follow this link: <https://incidentreporting.britishrowing.org>. This is the fastest reporting method.
2. OR/ You can go onto Gravesend Rowing Club's website and click on the incident reporting section which will take you to the British Rowing website.
3. OR/ You can complete an incident report online by visiting the British Rowing website, click on the 'Online Services' section and then click on 'Incident Reporting'. Then just follow the instructions.

Once completed the online reporting process, notification of the incident is automatically emailed to the Club Safety Adviser. who may wish to contact you for further clarification on the submitted details. The incident report will be analysed to see if there are any worrying trends, and suggestions maybe made to the committee to avoid re-occurrences.

This procedure can be done anonymously.

Whichever system as much information needs to be given as possible e.g. weather and tidal information, crew experience etc.

#### f. How to fill out an incident report.

Please refer to document 14.d. in the appendix of this document. It can also be found on the website.

Additional guidance can be found in the Row Safe Guide, Section 12 - 'Incident Reporting'.

## 7. Planning your outing

### a. Club Sessions

The club has structured sessions to try and accommodate the needs of every club member. The activities club members undertake vary between the summer months, where training tends to take place on the water, and the winter months when training mainly occurs on the land.

The club has produced a summer and winter timetable that organises sessions for the junior squad, the adult squads and recreational rowers. You must observe and adhere to the times stipulated in the timetables as any overlaps can inconvenience others and overstretch club resources.

You must ensure that you attend only the sessions that are allocated for you, unless you have been deemed to be suitably experienced and have been asked by a committee member or coach to assist in running a session.

### b. Coaching launch

The club-coaching launch must be prepared and be made available prior to any club members going afloat during a club session where junior members or inexperienced rowers will be on the water.

The club-coaching launch must be equipped, used and maintained in accordance with the British Rowing Row Safe Guide, Section 5.2 - 'Launch Driving'.

### c. What is your objective?

You should always ask yourself, 'is the water suitable for the training exercises you have planned?' If the water conditions will frustrate and diminish the training you had planned you will have little or no benefit from being on the water. At best you will have a poor outing, at worst you will either damage equipment, yourself or others. If water-based training will produce no benefits, crews and individuals are encouraged to participate in land-based training.

### d. Cox and crew experience

**It will not be normal practice for crews composed of beginners to be coxed by beginners. Outings in which an inexperienced cox is controlling an inexperienced crew shall be monitored by a coaching launch, or by an experienced adult in a racing crew. It is advised that all crews with an inexperienced cox have an experienced bowman to help navigate around potential hazards.**

Experienced crews employing inexperienced coxswain shall use the outing to teach the novice cox, coxing skills, outlining the hazards present. (Stroke / Bow can help with this). An emergency stop can be executed if the novice cox feels the crew is in potential danger. Covered by some simple command such as 'HELP' or 'STOP'.

Crew experience must be considered when planning the outing, and revise your plans if the composition of the crew and cox are a concern. Remember Rowing and Sculling require different types of experience.

### e. Carrying out a risk assessment

**Questions to ask when understanding the risks: -**

- What are the objectives and aims of your outing?
- What is the collective experience and competence of your crew?
- Have you enough experience of rowing your chosen type of boat and to your chosen destination?
- If your boat requires the coxswain is suitably experienced for the type of boat and planned outing?
- What effect will the weather and water conditions have on your selection of boat, your cox and crew experience and the planned outing? Will these defeat the desired objectives and aims?
- Is there suitable equipment for the planned outing and is it in good working order?
- What distance are you planning to row and how long do you think you will spend on the water?
- Are the weather conditions and tide likely to change during your outing?
- Have you shared your plans with others?
- Do you require additional safety measures to be in place to facilitate your outing?
- Have you planned your rescue?

- Pre-activity risk assessment with similar questions should occur before undertaking any land-based activity too, e.g. weight training.

#### f. Dynamic risk assessments

Dynamic risk assessment is a continuous process of identifying risk, assessing, and coming up with a way to reduce or eliminate such risk. During every outing you should constantly assess the state of the river, the impending weather and any vessel movements, and avoid any danger.

When you have planned your outing, share the details and stick to your plan, and verbally communicate them to others or, if nobody is available at the club to discuss your plans send a phone message. When communicating an outing, the below information should be shared:

- Your destination
- Your estimated time of return
- Your time of departure
- Name of the boat
- Names of the crew and coxswain

Do not change your plans in such a way that would increase your risk of harm, i.e., do not decide to row to a destination further away than the one you had originally planned to go to. If you did this, and the alarm was raised on your behalf, the emergency services could be searching the wrong part of the river for you.

Always notify others that you have returned safely, failure to do so could result in a false alarm being raised. As you will have written your outing on the log-board ensure that you erase it from the board when you are back.

## 8. Checking the conditions

### a. Checking the state and strength of the tide

Checking the state of the tide involves understanding what times high and low tide occur and whether the tide is likely to turn during your planned outing. You can do this online.

You will also need to assess the tide direction and strength, which will assist you when going afloat or returning to the jetty and whilst steering or navigating.

**Everyone should be able to assess the tide and whether it is safe to go out, as well as which way the tide is going.**

During or just after heavy rainfall the strength of the outgoing tide can be greatly increased, leaving little time for coxswains and navigators to choose their course. Crews may also have reduced time and ability to manoeuvre. Weaker or junior crews should not go afloat in strong tide conditions due to their limited ability to manoeuvre.

Some characteristics of a strong tide are:

- Mooring buoys have a noticeable lean, as they are being pushed by the tide, and the mooring line is pulled taut.
- The presence of faster flowing water may appear as a visible 'stream' on the surface of the water.
- There may be floating debris visible on the surface of the water.

For further guidance please consult the Row Safe Guide, Section 9.1 - 'Weather' and 9.2 - 'The Rowing Environment'

### b. Launching and returning from the bottom step of the New Bridge Causeway

At very low tides, the water can fall to a level where launching and returning from the jetty can be a danger to equipment and rowers.

The water can fall to such a low level that getting into or out of a boat is difficult, it is also difficult for anybody standing on the jetty to hold on to the boat properly and assist those returning after an outing or going afloat.

When the tide is this low, the mud flats along the promenade and especially around the end of the New Bridge Causeway are exposed, which increases the possibility of a boat becoming beached or damaged by underwater debris. In shallower water boats are vulnerable to the amplified effects of swells, which quickly become breakers and can easily lift a boat up and deposit it on the mud if you are rowing too close to the shore at low tide. Equally, a boat can be damaged or people injured if it is at the bottom of the jetty when such swells occur.

In such circumstances it is better to wait until the tide has risen a little before you commence your outing or

keep a clear distance between the boat and shore.

If you are not prepared to wait for better tidal conditions, you must consider the risks before you go afloat as to do otherwise will increase the possibility of you either damaging club equipment, yourself or others.

#### c. Beaching and river mud

At low tide gravel banks and mud flats can become exposed, which present a danger of a boat becoming beached.

If you do become beached when the tide is coming in, it is possible for the rising tide to dislodge you if you wait. If you do become beached when the tide is going out, and you cannot summon assistance from the coaching launch or another boat, you may have to push with one foot and move the boat into a position where it can be rowed. **This is a last resort as mud flats are full of river contamination and can be like quick sand, some are predicted to be up to 8m deep. As a result, all boats must have some sort of communication on them such as a phone or a walkie talkie.**

A beached boat can lead to damage to the fin or steering mechanism, and these must be checked on return.

#### d. Swells and breakers

Swells can influence a boat and crew at any time, but especially so during low tide conditions the wash from vessels is amplified and swells are bigger. They can become big enough to form 'breakers' or 'white horses' where the crest of the wave is white and frothy. These waves can pick a boat and its crew up and deposit them onto the shore, jetty or any other static object. Dynamic objects, such as floating debris or boats moored to buoys or permanent moorings can also create a hazard when water conditions are like this, as they can suddenly behave in an unexpected manner.

When the tide is low you must ensure you give yourself and others enough space and time to manoeuvre. Constantly re-evaluate the risks while you are afloat and avoid putting yourself or others in harms way keeping a good lookout for passing vessels.

#### e. Issues caused by extremely high tides

When the tide is very high some of the structures you may normally be permitted to row underneath may become impassable. You are advised to be aware of this before you go afloat.

Be alert to the effect that the tidal flow and strength can have on your ability to manoeuvre safely; when the tide is taking you towards a jetty that has insufficient space to pass underneath you will have less time to react. It is best to anticipate that during very high tides structures such as Denton Wharf may be impassable. When approaching with the tide, i.e., the tide is pushing you towards the structure, you must assess the possible clearance for the boat and crew; if sculling, it is important to check over your shoulder before the tide takes you too close to the structure. On a rising tide it may be possible to row under Denton Wharf on the outward row but not on the return journey, this must be taken into consideration.

Approach jetties with caution at high tide, give yourself time and space to turn your boat around. Do not risk passing underneath any structure if you are unsure if your boat can pass through safely.

The Port Health Authority jetty is constructed from timber with diagonal braces that can restrict the width of each span as the tide rises. Passing under this jetty when returning to the club with an incoming tide during a high tidal event requires extra caution. Always plan ahead for your outing.

#### f. Rowing into unknown water.

At high tides, only if you have a launch with you and a competent adult crew and cox, they may row on the outside of the jetties. Crews need to be extra vigilant here due to manoeuvring vessels and a constant, unmarked, unknowing and changing scenery. Due to being further out the tide will also be stronger and carry rowers quicker towards objects. This route should be avoided where possible by pre-checking tide times and should never be used with juniors.

#### g. Issues caused by changing tides

A changing tide whilst afloat needs to be considered. Consulting the tide table will let you know. Considerations include:

- If a longer outing is planned and the tide changes so it is going out when you are likely to be returning to the club, is your crew strong and experienced enough to get back before the end of the club session?
- Would the tidal state mean that the tide is too low for you to safely return to the New Bridge Causeway before the end of the club session?

There is a transition between tidal states, the changing tide influences everything in the river, e.g. vessels that are moored to buoys, which can pivot on their moorings.

As you approach moored boats and vessels you must anticipate that they may turn suddenly and obstruct your course or worse still collide with you. You must allow sufficient space to pass them safely at all times, but especially so when the tide is turning.

#### h. Checking the strength and direction of the wind

You must check on wind strength and direction before going afloat. Checking the weather forecast and tide tables for Gravesend is a factor before deciding to go afloat.

The water can become very rough when the wind is gusting or strong. Choppy water, visible breakers or 'White Horses', where the crests of waves appear white and frothy as shown in the photographs below, are a tell tale sign that an outing would present real risks of swamping, capsize, damaged equipment or serious injury. Strong/gusting winds can present an unnecessary risk.

When tidal conditions and wind direction combine to form 'wind over tide' conditions, this can cause increased risk. Generally, this means that the wind is blowing in the opposite direction to the tide and can create rougher water.

In rougher water it is difficult to balance a fine boat and row well, this can often be frustrating for the crew and cox, there is also an increased chance of swamping and/or a capsize occurring.

You must assess and ensure you understand the implications of 'wind over tide' before deciding to go afloat, especially if the tide is about to turn to create this situation whilst out on the water.

The wind can actually be stronger than the tide and this can catch even the most experienced rower out.

You must take into consideration if the wind is stronger than the tide before any outing, before launching, before turning a boat and before returning to land at the jetty.

If the wind is stronger than the tide there is an increased risk of damage to equipment or injury. During your pre-outing risk assessment you should ask yourself if the risks of your planned outing outweigh the potential benefits.

**In windy conditions, boats should be left upside down whilst on land to prevent them being blown over and causing damage.**

#### i. Checking the visibility

Visibility must be good enough for you to see any potential obstacles or hazards, and to allow you to be seen by others. No boats should be used when visibility has been significantly reduced by mist or fog, a good indicator for poor visibility conditions would be when visibility is less than 100m. If you are unable to see the Essex shoreline or the Dolphins Jetty from the Clubhouse you should abandon any water-based training and opt for land training until visibility improves.

Rowing at dawn, dusk or night on this part of the Thames is also an unacceptable risk, as the chances of being seen by other vessels is reduced and your chance of seeing any debris or underwater obstructions is greatly impaired.

You must ensure that you allow sufficient time during your outing to return before light conditions make it hazardous to row. You must have good visibility to see and be seen by other river users.

Hi-Vis clothing can assist visibility if worn by the rower.

**It is prohibited to row in the dark.**

#### j. Cold conditions

Temperature is an important factor when you are planning to go afloat. In cold conditions you are more vulnerable if you capsize than in warmer weather. Even with a good swimmer, sudden unexpected immersion in cold water can kill almost instantly. Cold water immersion causes an initial 'cold shock' that affects your

muscular co-ordination and impairs your ability to swim.

Heat loss can quickly cause 'hypothermia', a near fatal condition where your body temperature falls dangerously below 35°C. This condition can be brought on far quicker by the action of swimming, which draws heat away from your body, which can lead to drowning.

Water takes away your heat much quicker than air, so it is important to get yourself out of the water as soon as possible. If able, get on top of the boat to await rescue or surf paddle it to shore keeping your torso out of the water. If you are wearing a lifejacket or PFD (Personal Floatation Device), and you are having difficulty climbing on top of the boat, current guidelines also suggest holding on to the boat, drawing your knees up towards your chest, to conserve body heat, and keeping your back to the waves to avoid cold water entering your mouth or nose, which can cause 'dry drowning'.

### **Snow & Icy conditions**

There is increased likelihood of slipping and falling while taking your boat down the jetty result in serious injury or worse. It is recommended that only indoor training takes place in these adverse weather conditions.

#### **k. Hot conditions**

##### **Sunstroke & UV exposure**

In hot conditions you will also need to take on fluids before, during and after training. Suitable hats, t-shirts, sunglasses and high-factor sun block are recommended for comfort and to protect you from the harmful effects of the sun.

Avoiding outings during times when UV levels will be highest, typically around midday. Be observant for the early signs of dehydration, sunburn and heat stroke.

##### **Lightning, squalls and stormy conditions**

Going afloat when weather conditions present a possibility of lightning or stormy conditions is an unacceptable risk. Lightning will try and find the shortest route to earth and being afloat on the river during a storm increases your exposure to serious harm.

Checking weather forecasts are therefore an important part of your pre-outing assessment.

**In the case of a thunderstorm, the 30:30 rule can help. If the gap between flash and bang is 30 seconds or less, you should seek shelter. Staying inside this shelter is advised until 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder. In the event of lightning crews are not to go afloat. If already afloat, crews are advised to land as quickly as possible.**

Squalls are sudden sharp increases in wind speed, for a short time interval and are difficult to predict, finding shelter or going ashore.

#### **l. Unfamiliar hazards**

Before each planned outing you must check the river for any unfamiliar hazards: new vessel movements, new buoys and moorings, anglers fishing and their lines, any floating debris or partially submerged obstacles. If you notice any of these you must notify others and the Club Safety Adviser as soon as possible, to reduce the risk to others.

## 9. Selecting your equipment

### Equipment choices based on rower/sculler/crew experience and ability.

Please see the 'Cox and crew experience' section and ensure that you have considered your experience and ability, and that of any crew or coxswain, before going afloat.

#### a. Equipment choices based on weather and water conditions

Fine boats: very narrow, sit low in the water and require skill to be able to balance them. They are not suited to all weather conditions and have an increased risk of capsize if used by the inexperienced or in rougher water. In slightly windier conditions with choppy water it may be better for a Coastal class boat to be used. Coastal boats: are wider and sit higher in the water and are designed for the rougher coastal conditions.

#### b. Carefully taking your equipment from the boathouse so it can be checked

1. Decide who is in charge of organising the crew to take the boat down from the racks (usually the cox or most experienced crew member).
2. Select the blades (oars/sculls) the crew are going to use. The blades will vary due to the experience of the crew – always check with the person running the session.
3. Do not place your blades where they could obstruct others taking equipment from the boathouse, they should be placed on the red trestles to avoid damage. If there is not enough space, get out more trestles.
4. Perform an equipment check on the blades (see the 'Checking your equipment' section for guidance).
5. If the blades are faulty and there are insufficient alternatives available, there is no point in taking a boat down from the racks. Instead the crew may need to re-plan their outing or opt to participate in land training instead.
6. Ensure that suitable trestles have been put out for the boat and that there are no obstacles that may affect your ability to take the boat down from the racks and carry it to the trestles.
7. Do not place your trestles where they could obstruct others moving equipment in or out of the boathouse. Preferably place boats further away from the boathouse.
8. Ensure other boats are chocked wherever necessary. Think ahead and communicate clearly, if you need extra hands to take the boat out ask others to help before attempting to move it.
9. Boats which are heavy (especially coastal) should be carried with more manpower and all club members are requested to assist in lifting out and carrying. Particular care is needed when boats return and are waterlogged or when the tide is low when launching or returning. At these times all available members should assist when asked.
10. Decide where everybody should be standing to take the boat from storage, carry it to the trestles and place it down safely. Carrying the boat is easier when people distribute themselves evenly along its length, with equal numbers on each side.
11. It is sometimes useful to place the boat on the trestles upside down, i.e., the same way up as it is stored on the racks in the boathouse, especially in windy conditions to prevent the boat being blown off the trestles. With the hull of the boat facing upwards it is also easier to check the hull for any damage that may prevent you from taking the boat on to the water.
12. If the integrity of the hull is compromised the boat should not be used and should be quarantined.
13. Once you have confirmed the hull is ok you can turn the boat over, place it gently back onto the trestles and continue the rest of the boat checks outlined in the 'Checking your equipment' section.

## 10. Checking your equipment

All equipment that you plan to use should be checked to see that it is undamaged and correctly functioning, before leaving the clubhouse forecourt.

It is a British Rowing requirement that a soft rubber ball, 4cm in diameter and white in colour, is fitted to the bow of all fine/racing boats, with the exception of Coastal boats. It is important that these 'bow balls' are present whenever a boat is used, not only do they protect a person in the water from terrible head injuries but they also prevent horrific abdominal injuries to others if you are careless when lifting and carrying a boat. You are responsible for ensure that you have completed a safety check of the equipment you are planning to use prior to using it.

**All active boats must adopt the minimum standards established in the Row Safe Guide (7.1 'Boats and Blades'). All boats about to be used should be checked to see that all the equipment is present and functioning correctly.**

#### a. Boat Buoyancy

The integrity of your boat and its buoyancy are important at all times, but especially so if you are unfortunate enough to be swamped or capsize. If the buoyancy of your boat is compromised it will not act effectively when you need it most.

If you are swamped during an outing the buoyancy of the boat should still allow you and the crew to row it, and the coxswain to manoeuvre it, without capsizing. This should allow you to get to the safety of the shore, if feasible, bail the boat out and then continue your outing or return to the club. You are at your most vulnerable when you are in the water.

Your boat can assist you in a number of ways:

1. You can use it as a life preserver: if you stay with the boat it can help you stay afloat.

**ALWAYS STAY WITH THE BOAT; IT CAN HELP YOU STAY AFLOAT. THE BOAT IS LARGER THAN YOU AND IS EASIER FOR RESCUERS TO SPOT - IF YOU CANNOT BE SEEN, YOU CANNOT BE RESCUED.**

2. You can use it as a fender: when drifting with a strong tide you may not be able to avoid a collision with a stationary object, such as a jetty or buoy. In these circumstances you can position the boat between yourself and the object so the boat takes the impact of the collision.

**A BOAT CAN BE REPLACED, THE CLUB CANNOT REPLACE YOU.**

3. If the water is cold it is important that you try to conserve your body heat, see the 'Cold conditions - cold water immersion & hypothermia', and the boat can help you. You should aim to get your torso out of the water as soon as possible by climbing on top of the boat.
4. If the weather is hot and the water is warm you can hold on to the boat and use it as a float. You can then swim with the tide towards the safety of the shore, where you can get back into the boat if it is still in a fit state to row.

**DO NOT SWIM AGAINST THE TIDE, IT IS STRONGER THAN YOU AND YOU WILL ONLY BE WASTING YOUR ENERGY.**

5. If the weather is hot, the water warm and if you are not in immediate danger, you may be able to right the boat if you are a more experienced rower, i.e., turn it back over, climb back in and row back to the club if the boat is still in a fit state to row.
6. Never hesitate to call the RNLI on 999 for assistance, especially in cold weather or with a novice crew.

#### b. Lifejackets and PFDs

Lifejackets and PFD's are different and have different uses. Choose the best one for your type of outing:

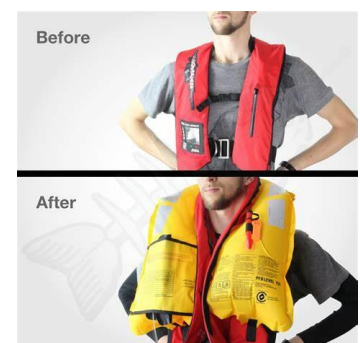
##### PFDs

- A PFD is a buoyancy aid, which has an inherent buoyancy provided by its air-foam filling.
- An PFD will only keep your head above the water if you are conscious.
- PFDs must be hung on a hanger and allowed to air-dry after each use.



##### Lifejackets

- A lifejacket has no inbuilt buoyancy and requires inflation to help keep you afloat. Some lifejackets require an action from you to inflate them, whether this is oral inflation, i.e., you need to blow into them, or the manual gas inflation type.
- Lifejackets that utilize gas inflation employ a small canister of CO2 to inflate and help you stay afloat. Manual gas inflation lifejackets are activated by pulling a cord. The automatic gas inflation lifejacket inflates automatically on submersion in the water. Once used the CO2 canister needs to be recharged before the lifejacket can be used again.
- A lifejacket will keep your head above water in the event of the wearer





being knocked unconscious

### Rules for wearing a lifejacket or PFD.

- All coxswains, launch drivers and it's passengers are required to wear a PFD or lifejacket **on top of** any other garments.
- All those wearing a lifejacket or PDF must check it is in the right weight range for them.
- PFDs and lifejackets must be checked by the user before use:
  - making sure all webbing, stitching, buckles and zips are in good order.
  - the CO2 cylinder has not been fired, is free from corrosion and is screwed up tightly.
  - PFD is dry
- Juniors who have not completed their capsized drill or learning to row should wear a lifejacket.

### c. Other safety aids

#### Throw lines & space blankets

Throw lines are stored in the boathouse and one is carried within the safety bag in the coaching launch. You will be shown how to use a throw line at a capsized drill and there are instructions on the side of the throw line bag, to follow.

Do not tamper with throw lines, as they are important safety aids and need to be deployed fully, without the possibility of the line being knotted, if an emergency situation arises. If you see that a throw line that has been tampered with, must report it to the Club Safety Adviser and/or a Club Coach.

Space blankets are usually waterproof and windproof, reflective sheets that are used to conserve body heat helping to prevent the effects of hypothermia. They are in the safety bag in the coaching launch.

**Once used, hang the throw line up to dry and then correctly put line back into bag without any knots. If in doubt ask the safety advisor.**

#### High-visibility clothing and sashes

Crews should consider having bowman or cox wear something high-vis, especially if boating alone.

#### Means of communication and waterproof bags

- A mobile phone should always be taken in a launch.
- A mobile phone should always be taken if a rower is going out alone.
- A mobile phone should always be taken if a rower, crew or group of crews are going out without a launch or if not being directly supervised by a launch.

The club has waterproof bags, but it is worth remembering that waterproof bags do not remain afloat if they inadvertently fall overboard and should be fixed to the boat or persons.

The club has radios. Each crew during a session should carry a radio on every outing, and anyone remaining at the club should also have one. This allows crews to communicate and raise any issues that arise.

### d. Checking the boat & equipment before your outing.

Checklist:

1. Check the integrity of the hull.
2. Check that all bungs and hatch covers are present and undamaged.
3. If the boat is of an older type of construction it will not have integral buoyancy compartments, it will have inflatables that should be positioned under each rower instead. You must check that these are all present and fully inflated before you go afloat.
4. Check the bow ball is present, not broken or cracked and is securely fixed.
5. Check the gates are operating freely, can swivel, and the thumb turn can be secured and unscrewed without difficulty and is opened before boating.
6. Check that the riggers are securely fixed and not damaged.
7. Check that the slides are secure and clean.
8. Check that all seats are present, not damaged and can operate freely.
9. Check the stretcher can operate freely, that all thumb turns are present and can be easily secured and

loosened, and that the castles are secure.

10. Check that shoes are in a good condition, that the heel restraints are secure and operational.
11. Check that the shoes have a quick release system that is in good condition and works.
12. Check the rudder and steering mechanism are present and working.
13. Check the condition of the fin - is it present and straight.
14. Check the handle, loom, spoons, sleeve, and collar of the blades are secure and a working set.
15. Ensure that the coxswain has a suitable PFD (Personal Floatation Device) or lifejacket.
16. Ensure, if required, a mobile phone is taken.
17. Ensure the outing has been recorded on the board in the club.

Any detected defects in the equipment you must quarantine the faulty equipment immediately informing a coach or member of the committee.

#### **e. Quarantining faulty equipment**

Anybody who discovers faulty equipment can quarantine it by informing a coach, Safety Adviser or member of the committee of the fault at the earliest opportunity. To quarantine a piece of equipment the crew must leave a clear note on it using the available "DO NOT USE" cards attached to a rigger facing the boathouse when racked. Once repaired a boat check still needs to take place before boating.

## 11. The Outing

### a. Going afloat

#### Preparing your equipment for the outing

Ensure all checks have been done (boats and blades), do not delegate this to someone else - Rowers can use 8(d) Checking the boat & equipment before your outing.

Check the side of the jetty for launching (according to tide/wind strength)

Take your blades down, check they will not be an obstacle to launching and will not be washed away on an incoming tide.

All club members have a responsibility to protect their own safety and the safety of others.

**Each crew or sculler is required to record their departure on the white board provided. Information should comprise of the following: name of boat; name(s) of crew; time of departure; expected time of return. This information should be deleted on return.**

### b. Assessing when to launch

As you walk down the jetty crews should anticipate swells, and you should delay your launch. Swells could damage the boat or endanger crew members who may have already embarked.

### c. Carrying the boat

A single scull, double or pairs can be easily picked up and placed on shoulders or over their heads to carry to the river.

A four or quad can either be carried overheads or with the crew standing on opposite sides of the boat, sometimes opposite their own riggers in the case of sweep oar boats.

**Boats should not be carried at the ends only, flexing of the hull can cause damage.**

Consideration is needed with the weight of the boat and the strength of the crew, a balance is required in the crews distribution along the sides of the boat so backs aren't damaged or grips slip.

### d. How to boat on a calm day:

- Singles should be launched off the side with the tide or launched off the steps, parallel to the steps, not end first.
- Doubles/Pairs should be launched off the side with the tide or launched off the steps, parallel to the steps, not end first.
- Quads/Fours launched off the side with the tide or launched off the steps end first with a competent rower holding the bow.
- Eights are launched off the side with the tide only.

Note that this is for usual rowing outings. Occasionally the weather or tide can change how a crew launches and this must be considered, for example if the wind is stronger than the tide, launching on the "wrong" side of the jetty.

**Helping others** - Be considerate and offer help any club members who may struggle with their boat or launching. Communicate with others to ensure that somebody is on the jetty ready to assist whenever necessary.

### e. During your outing

#### **Warming Up**

Before undertaking any exercise, it is important to warm up to prevent muscular injuries. You can do this by either participating in dynamic stretches or light ergo work just before you go afloat. Alternatively, you can undertake some light rowing or warm up drills in the boat. A warmup will increase your flexibility and allow you perform at your best and reduce the risk of injury.

### Dynamic risk assessments

It is important to continually evaluate the risks around you while you are afloat.

### Respecting the opinions of others in the boat

Crew feed back in a boat is important as this will help in improving balance and performance in the boat. Limitations of crew members must be respected.

**Any club member present may call for the abandonment of any outing because of challenging weather conditions, challenging river conditions, the inabilities of the crew, the condition of the boat or any combination of these factors.**

## 12. Navigating

Motorboats should give way to rowing boats but this may not always happen and coxswains should be prepared to shout loudly to other river users as required, including other Gravesend Rowing Club boats. This will alert the other craft that you are there.

Normally, rowing boats should give way to sailing craft. Those who are primarily in charge of steering are largely responsible for communicating with other river traffic where necessary and for making sure that the crew are prepared to stop and manoeuvre as required.

### a. The club circulation pattern

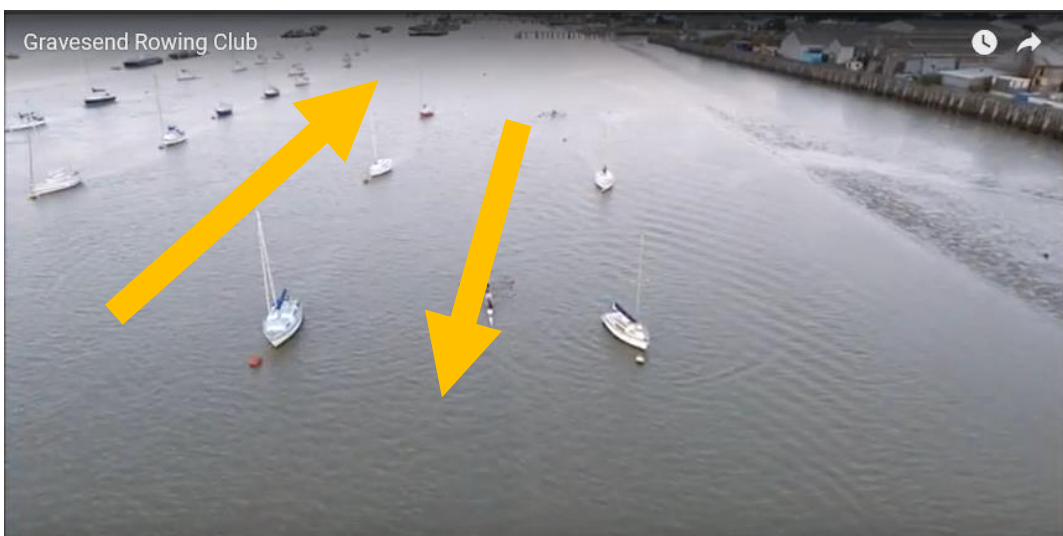
For Gravesend, boats punching against the tide will normally keep within 50 metres of the Kent shore and those going with the tide keeping within 100 metres of the Kent shore (the waterline). The circulation pattern is designed to avoid collisions between club boats and reduce the likelihood of swamping and capsizing incidents – ALL CREWS ARE TO STICK TO THE CIRCULATION PATTERN.

**THE FURTHER YOU ARE FROM THE SHORE, THE FURTHER YOU ARE FROM SAFETY.**

**Tide going out:**

**Boats will be facing to the right.**

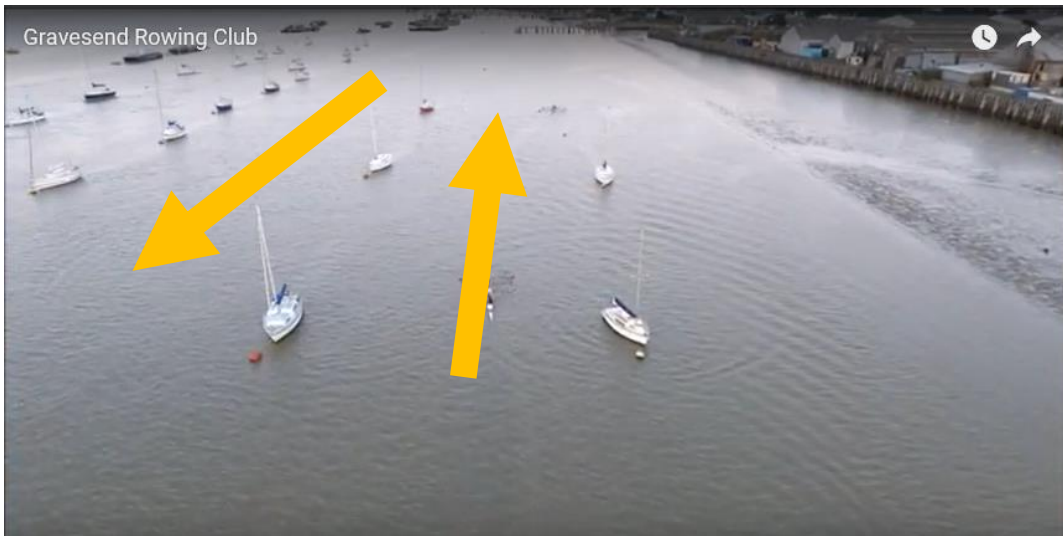
**You go up on the outside and back on the inside.**



**Tide coming in:**

**Boats will be facing to the left.**

**You go up on the inside and back on the outside**



### b. Steering and rights of way

Coxswains and steerer/navigators must keep a lookout for oncoming boats, particularly those who are sculling who have a restricted field of vision. If a coxswain or bow person acting as steerer/navigator suspects that a collision could be imminent they should stop their boat by shouting 'STOP' as well as hailing the oncoming boat, e.g., 'AHEAD SCULLER/FOUR'.

When you are going with the tide you must not turn in front of any vessel or stationary object because the tide will wash you onto it. Go past the vessel or stationary object and then turn behind it when there is sufficient space and time to turn safely.

When approaching a jetty where rowers need to pass underneath, e.g. Denton Wharf, crews must be observant for the movements of other boats. If two club boats are approaching the jetty at the same time coxswains and steerer must select the appropriate span of the jetty to pass underneath and this will be dictated by the circulation pattern. The crew or rower punching against the tide will select a span on the inside and the crew or rower going with the tide will select a span on the outside.

If both boats need to pass underneath the same span of any jetty, for whatever reason, the crew or rower punching against the tide must GIVE WAY to the crew or rower going with the tide.

**Care is needed to avoid cutting in front of the bows of moored craft, particularly barges, especially with fast flowing tides. These, along with other obstacles, need to be given a wide berth with extra consideration given with strong tides.**

### c. Turning the boat round

The coxswain will utilize the tide to assist the crew in turning the boat. This is normally achieved by turning the bow into the tide so the tide can assist the turn.

When you consider turning your boat round there are a few things to assess before deciding to turn either inwards, towards the Kent shore, or outwards, towards Essex:

- The direction and strength of the tide
- The strength and direction of the wind compared to the tidal conditions (see section 6.7 'Wind over tide conditions' for further guidance)
- The experience of the crew and whether there is sufficient space to complete the turn safely

### d. Coping with swells

Boats are vulnerable to swamping and capsize from the swells created by vessel movements on the Thames. Crews close to the shore are particularly prone to being swamped by swells, which can become breakers.

Coxswains should move into deeper water and place the boat parallel to swells when they are expected. The crew should relax and sit up with their blades in the 'easy' position with the spoons flat on the water.

#### e. Returning to the jetty

Assess the conditions well away from the jetty so you are not washed onto it, if unsure wait for help.

General rules:

**Landing with steps – approach against the tide**

**Landing with no steps – turn your boat parallel to the jetty and approach with the tide.**

**Rowers are advised to use their foot to slow their landing to the jetty to prevent the boat being washed over the jetty.**

Things to consider on your approach:

- The tide strength
- The tide direction. (It could have changed during your outing)
- Wind speed and direction. (Especially if the wind is stronger than the tide)
- Vessel movements (creating swells and wash)
- Delay your approach until help is available.
- Returning boats must wait for boats that are launching to clear the jetty.
- Multiple boats arriving back at the jetty at the same time must wait in a queue without compromising your safety or the safety of others so reducing the risk of collisions with the jetty or other boats increases.
- Communicate your intentions clearly to others and take it in turns to land at the jetty

#### f. Re-using the boat

If the boat is to be reused by others, they must be ready to help you land, as your approach must facilitate the re-use of the boat, which will usually be against the tide. This will help the second launching and will allow you to stop rowing and abort your approach if you have misjudged things; the tide will push the boat away from the jetty and hopefully away from harm.

#### g. Disembarking

Once you are safely alongside the jetty the coxswain and crew will need to disembark, i.e., get out of the boat. This needs to be done as quickly and safely as possible, and in a way that does not undermine the stability of the boat. The cox or most experienced crew member will take control giving clear instructions ensuring the crew disembark quickly and safely. Club members standing on the jetty assisting any crew disembarking from a boat must ensure that they hold the riggers firmly to prevent the boat from capsizing.

#### h. After your outing

**Taking the boat out of the water**

After your outing and returning safely to the New Bridge Causeway you should disembark as instructed by either the coxswain or most experienced crew member. Those in the clubhouse should always offer to help.

**IF YOU ROW IT, YOU LIFT IT, YOU WASH IT & STOW IT. PUT EQUIPMENT BACK WHERE YOU FOUND IT.**

The procedure for lifting your boat out is the reverse of events used to launch it. For a four or quad the most experienced rower should control the process of using the tide to turn the boat perpendicular to the steps and then instruct others during the lifting process.

The crew will also need to be aware of the effect the tide will have on the boat while it is being lifted out. The boat will continue to turn all the time it is in contact with the river, so the crew must anticipate this and not position themselves where their possibility of being knocked off the jetty is increased.

**Washing the equipment down by hand**

The club has a hose, but this should only be used to clean items that may have become caked in mud. The hose is not an acceptable way of cleaning boats or blades due to the force of the water. It also means that club members stand at a distance to clean equipment and therefore do not visually inspect equipment after using it. All boats and blades must be washed by hand, using soapy water and a sponge or cloth, after every use.

### Checking for damage

When washing the equipment down after use, you should use the same boat and blade visual checking procedures used prior to your outing to check for any damage after your outing. Any damaged item is to be quarantined following the procedures of 'Quarantining faulty equipment'.

### Incident Reporting

If you were involved in or witnessed an incident or near miss during your outing, you need now to report it while the details are fresh in your mind. If you need further guidance on what constitutes an incident or near miss, or a reminder on the incident reporting options that are available, please see section 6 of this guide: 'Incident reporting' for further information.

### Debriefing

For crews training to compete at Regattas and Head Races there is the opportunity to discuss the outing as soon as you have stowed the boat away. This is a good time to talk about how you all thought the outing went, any difficulties you encountered and for the coach and cox to provide you with feedback and suggest drills for your next training session.

### Logging your outing

Remember to log your outing in the logbook and delete your details from the outing log board in the boathouse.

### Helping others

If your outing has finished before the end of the club session; please be proactive in helping others, returning to or launching from the jetty, carrying, cleaning and stowing of boats, blades and the coaching launch.

**Club members are expected to be prepared to get their feet wet in order to assist in holding of boats from the jetty in order to prevent/limit damage to the boat.**

#### i. Land training

Things to consider

Land-based training is just as important as time spent in the boat. It allows you to focus on your flexibility, strength and stamina through a range of activities.

Ergo training, circuit training, weights, cycling, running and other activities can all aid in the development of strength and conditioning that will improve your abilities as a rower. It is important that you assess the risks of your chosen land-based training activity before you undertake it.

If you have planned to have a weights session then it is a good idea to make sure you know how to lift them and have enough people spotting you in case you get into difficulties. Equally, misusing the ergo by having an inappropriate damper setting can cause a back injury. It is important to know your limitations and how to get the most from the training equipment available.

A pre-activity risk assessment prior to undertaking the activity is advisable.

### Setting up your training equipment

You must know how to use and set up the equipment and follow the example given to you during your induction. Leave the equipment ready for the next person to use. Failure to do so could result in a serious injury or damaged equipment, both of which are unacceptable.

### Warming up

Prior to exercise a warm up is important to prevent any muscular strains dynamic stretches or light ergo work just before you start any activity with greater intensity. A 5 to 10 minute warm up will increase your flexibility and allow you to perform at your best and reduce the risk of injury.

British Rowing has training advice available on its website and you can view this by following the links below:

<http://www.britishrowing.org/taking-part/indoor/training-advice>

<http://www.britishrowing.org/taking-part/indoor/training-advice/warm>

### Cooling down

After a training session it is equally important to cool down to avoid muscle strains or joints seizing up. A period of lighter activity following your more intense workout can help. You can also perform a series of static stretches where you hold the stretch for anywhere between 5 and 30 seconds, whatever is most comfortable for you. Failing to cool down after a training session can lead to days of discomfort afterwards, so always take 5 to 10 minutes to cool down. British Rowing has training advice available on its website and you can view this by following the link below:

<http://www.britishrowing.org/taking-part/indoor/training-advice/cool-down>

### After training

After you have finished using any training equipment you must leave it in the condition you would wish to find it. It is important that you clean any exercise mats with the antibacterial spray and cloths provided. You can also wipe the handles of your ergo and seat with an antibacterial spray applied to a cloth. Clean the slides with a damp cloth or paper towel.

## 12. Competition

### a. Competing at home events

The club hosts a yearly regatta alongside Erith Rowing Club called 'Danson Dashes'.

A Competition Safety Plan must be produced beforehand to ensure the safety of competitors, officials, other water users and the public at large. The agreed Competition Safety Plan must be circulated to all competitors and officials at least three days prior to the competition.

For British Rowing events the British Rowing Rules of Racing shall apply.

Competition Safety Plans must be in place even for small private competitions.

For Scratch Races or Inter-club friendlies, it shall be understood that any race being run at Gravesend in which a boat is impeded by other craft shall be immediately re-rowed. This is in an effort to reduce the likelihood of damage to equipment or injury to rowers. The conduct of such racing shall be controlled by a person nominated before the race is started and their decision shall be considered final.

**Please see appendix 14.b for all the safety instructions regarding Danson Dashes**

### b. Competing at away events

Competing at other clubs requires you to row on unfamiliar waters. It is important that you read, understand and comply with any safety information the host club issues to you. You must also ensure you arrive on time and listen intently to any briefing that may be offered; disregarding the host club's safety policies not only makes our club look bad, but it can also lead to your disqualification.

When competing at other clubs it is important to remember that you are a representative of Gravesend Rowing Club.

If you are planning to compete at another club you must read, understand and follow all safety notices and instructions given to competitors.

You must report any incidents at the competition to the appropriate person at the host club. You must also report any incident involving our club or members to the Club Safety Adviser.

If you are a junior club member you must ensure that your parent or guardian has completed the necessary consent form(s) whenever the club has asked for these as a condition of participating in an event.

### c. Trailer loading and towing

Transporting boats to competition venues is a difficult job. The driver has to ensure that the trailer has been loaded properly to comply with legal requirements and ensure the boats arrive in one piece. Competing rowers must help load and unload the trailer, both before and after the event.

**The driver must always carry at least one passenger to help with navigation, manoeuvring and any emergencies.**

When towing the trailer, sensible restrictions should be put in place (e.g. having a break after 2 hours of driving) to allow an effective and safe journey.

If you are towing the trailer you must understand your legal obligations and ensure that you have read and



understood the safety guidance published by British Rowing, including the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) guidance for the Transport of Oar Propelled Racing Boats (Found here: <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/TowingGuidance.pdf?78251f>)

### 13. Appendix

#### a. Gravesend Rowing Club Rules, Constitution and other useful links

Gravesend Rowing Club rules:

[www.gravesendrc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Rules-of-Gravesend-Rowing-Club.pdf](http://www.gravesendrc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Rules-of-Gravesend-Rowing-Club.pdf)

Gravesend Rowing Club Constitution:

<http://www.gravesendrc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/GRC-Constitution.pdf>

RowSafe Guide (2019)

<https://www.britishrowing.org/about-us/policies-guidance/rowsafe/>

#### b. How to complete an incident report?

This document is also available on the website.

#### How to complete an incident report?

Sometimes accidents do occur. British Rowing monitors safety incidents in rowing to reduce the possibility of them happening again. We at Gravesend, use them to see where most incidents occur and take actions to prevent them in the future.

**The incident reporting system is confidential and available to everyone.**

**If you can, please log into your British Rowing account to complete the incident report.**

##### 1. How to log an incident report.

- a. You can follow this link: <https://incidentreporting.britishrowing.org>. This is the fastest reporting method.
- b. OR/ You can go onto Gravesend Rowing Club's website and click on the incident reporting section (in the member's section) which will take you to the British Rowing website.
- c. OR/ You can complete an incident report online by visiting the British Rowing website, click on the 'Online Services' section and then click on 'Incident Reporting'. Then just follow the instructions

##### 2. Was the incident a 'simple capsize' or 'incident report'?

- You can complete a 'simple capsize' if your capsizing was due to a technical fault on your part (e.g. losing balance or catching a crab). This incident report is self – explanatory and very short. If you have any problems, please speak to one of the coaches.
- If you hit anything (stationary or moving), something broke on your boat or a near miss led to you capsizing then you need to complete an 'incident report' (Please see Guide below, and any problems please speak to a coach.)

**Any problems, questions or concerns please ask a coach/ safety advisor**

Question & Answer Guide to completing an incident report.	
Email address	Allows us to contact you if we need any further information. Feel free to use a parent.
Primary Rowing Club Involved	This will always be Gravesend
<b>Other clubs involved</b>	e.g. If an incident occurs outside of Gravesend (for example at a race) you may have been involved with a crew from another club.
<b>Non – British Rowing clubs involved</b>	e.g. If the incident involves the sailing club or skiff rowers.
<b>Your role at the club</b>	Always 'member' if completing it for yourself. If you are filling it in for someone else, please put relevant role.
<b>Date of the incident</b>	
<b>Time of the incident</b>	
<b>Location of the incident</b>	A brief but precise description e.g. along the Gravesend prom/ On the Gravesend stretch opposite Sea School.
<b>Specific Location of the incident</b>	If you can (it does not work well on some devices) then pinpoint the exact place the incident took place. If you are unsure of the name of the location please refer to the Interactive Safety Map on the website.
<b>General Boat Type</b>	Most boats are fine except Dover Fund or Sunbeam which are Coastal
<b>Boat Type</b>	X means sculling boat - means coxless + means coxing e.g. if you were in Triton with two blades you would be 4x+ e.g. if you were in Moonlight with two blades you would be 4x-
<b>Number of beginner juniors</b>	Please ask a coach
<b>Number of experienced juniors</b>	Please ask a coach
<b>Number of beginner seniors</b>	Please ask a coach
<b>Number of experienced seniors</b>	Please ask a coach
<b>Experience of cox</b>	Please ask a coach
<b>+ Add another boat</b>	If you were involved in an incident with another boat please include it here
<b>Type of water</b>	We are ALWAYS INLAND at Gravesend (If at another location please ask a coach/ safety advisor)
<b>Did the incident occur on tidal water</b>	Yes, we are ALWAYS TIDAL at Gravesend (If at another location please ask a coach/ safety advisor)
<b>Tide State</b>	Please try and remember whether the water was high (near the club), low (you could see the steps) or medium (somewhere in between)
<b>Tide Current</b>	If the moored boats were facing the right, the tide was going out. If the moored boats were facing the left, the tide was coming in.
<b>Weather Conditions</b>	e.g. Sunny/Cloudy/Raining/Windy/Light breeze/misty/thunderstorm/not windy/nasty/good/
<b>Has the incident been reported to the/your club?</b>	
<b>Deleted Question</b>	Please ignore
<b>Incident Type</b>	Please choose one of the options: Health issue incident only: If the issue was caused from a health issue (e.g. epilepsy, exhaustion or sunburn) An incident resulting in an injury or health issue (e.g. cuts, broken/fractured bones etc) No injury or health issue
<b>Please specify the damage</b>	Feel free to leave blank or put in 0 if no damage was done.

<b>Cause of injury or damage</b>	Please select the most appropriate response (you can only choose one). Depending on the response you give, you may be asked further questions.
<b>Brief description of the incident</b>	Please give as much detail as you can as to how the incident occurred. For example; causes that led up to the incident, what the incident was, and how it was resolved
<b>Measures Taken</b>	What could you do in the future to prevent this happening again? E.g. better lookout, better checking of equipment or learning the circulation pattern.
<b>Were there any consequences?</b>	Please include here if the boat was damaged – what the damage was, and any medical treatment required (e.g. basic first aid or taken to hospital)
<b>Deleted question</b>	Please ignore
<b>Added Files</b>	There is no need to add any addition files unless you feel it is suitable.
<b>Review Report</b>	Please review the report. Edit if needed. Then click finalise report which will submit it.