

Burway Small Boats Head – Safety Plan (October 2026)

This document should be read in conjunction with the standard Risk Assessment.

This competition is being organised by Burway Rowing Club. The course is approximately 3km and is shown on the accompanying course map. The waters are within the jurisdiction of the Environment Agency and the necessary authorisation has been obtained from them.

The location and length of course, the extent of safety cover and other provisions in the competition welfare plan recognise that young (down to J13) and/or relatively novice crews may be entering. The organising committee will ensure that in the case of seriously adverse conditions, any rowers deemed to be at risk will not be allowed to row, even if already at the club. If already on the water, they will be given extra supervision on the water until back at the boating location.

The risk of serious incidents will be reduced by the adherence to these instructions by all competitors, coaches and officials. The Organising Committee will check the forecasts for weather and stream, and seek advice, if necessary, from the Environment Agency, before the event, to decide if conditions will make it safe to proceed.

No-one should attend the event if they experience any symptoms of Covid-19 on or before the day.

Safety Information

The Burway RC website provides maps of the course, together with Instructions to Competitors and Officials, which give details of the positioning of crews at the start, the course to be steered, navigation rules that apply on the day and the circulation plan for crews. It also outlines the positions of all Race Monitors, Marshals, Key Race Officials, Safety Launches and First Aid.

Accident and Emergency procedures

All parts of the course are under observation by at least one Key Race Official (KRO). A KRO seeing an incident will deal with it as the priority and inform the Chief Umpire immediately by radio. If a safety boat is required, this should be summoned on CHANNEL 1. The nature, specific location of the incident and the assistance required must be clearly stated. The safety of the crew is the sole priority. It should be quickly ascertained that all crew members' feet are free of the boat. Approaching crews must be warned to take avoiding action. The crew should be assisted, if possible, to get their boat to the bank. Consideration must be given to seeking expert medical assistance from First Aid available.

A capsize does not necessarily warrant an EMERGENCY radio call unless there is a clear need for immediate help.

Pre-start on race day

Race control will be set up early in the day and remain staffed all day. Race control will take on overall coordination of the competition, though tasks may be delegated to others with clear reporting lines. Number distribution will be set up outside Burway Rowing Club near to Race Control to avoid unnecessary competitor interaction at Race Control.

Instructions will be issued to clubs in good time before the competition, except for late changes and up-to-date weather and water reports, so crews should all be well briefed. The competition safety adviser will confirm to Chief Umpire that all safety provisions are in place before advising that boating can take place – notably launch-based umpires, marshals and safety cover. Crews will have been advised that the normal rules of river navigation will apply until 10 minutes before the start of each division

Crews presenting after the last boating time indicated may be refused permission to boat to ensure prompt start time, unless race control, in consultation with other officials, agree otherwise. Umpires at the boating sites will perform Control Commission checks before each division by asking the coach or competitor(s) to demonstrate compliance.

Competitors will be expected to be self-sufficient when getting on and off the water, though help from a registered coach or helper is permitted. If an athlete gets into difficulty, then there will be marshals on hand to assist them if the registered helper is not available to do so.

Stopping Racing

In the event of a serious incident on the course making it unsafe to continue racing, any KRO may stop racing by verbally instructing crews to “STOP RACING”. Each KRO’s first responsibility is to the crews in their reach of the course. Having ensured those crews have understood and reacted to the instruction to stop racing, they will then contact the Chief Umpire by radio or phone with a brief report as to why they have stopped the race. The Chief Umpire will then relay the message to all other KROs and the Starter, who must immediately stop the race in their reach using the command “STOP RACING”. The Chief Umpire will use the following message “ALL STATIONS. ALL STATIONS. RACE CONTROL.STOP THE RACE. I REPEAT STOP THE RACE. The Chief Umpire will then seek confirmation from all KROs, beginning with the Starter.

The Chief Umpire will then determine what KROs should instruct crews to do.

Person Overboard and Capsize

If a sculler or crew capsizes, others must be instructed to steer clear whilst those in the water should stay with their boat. The sculler or crew should attempt to get themselves and their boat to the nearest bank, straddling the boat to get as far out of the water as possible and await rescue by Safety Boats. Nearby Marshals’ boats may be re-positioned to warn oncoming boats/protect capsize/recover equipment if required.

Lightning

In the event of possible thunder or lightning, the race will adopt the British Rowing guidelines, as below:

Use the “30-30 Rule” - when you see lightning, count the time until you hear thunder. If it is 30 seconds (approx. 10km away) or less, seek “proper shelter”. If you can’t see the lightning, just hearing the thunder is a good back-up rule for it being time to seek “proper shelter”. Wait a minimum of 30 minutes after the last lightning or thunder before leaving shelter.

In the event of imminent danger from thunder and/or lightning, the Chief Umpire will suspend racing and in conjunction with all other KROs, instruct all crews to land as quickly as possible at the nearest and safest part of the river. Crews should not row back to their departure point but land at the nearest point.

Weather

The stretch of the river is non-tidal. During the week preceding the competition, the competition safety adviser will monitor weather forecasts each day and inform the rest of the organising committee a week before and then daily from the preceding Wednesday, noting not just the weather, but also the likely interaction of wind.

The Organisers will ensure that participating clubs are kept informed.

If a sudden change in the weather on the day forces abandonment of racing, crews will be directed to return to the boating areas by the KROs with priority given to crews deemed to be at particular risk.

Competitor and entering club responsibilities

The responsibilities of and precautions taken by the organising club are outlined above and in the standard Risk Assessments. Competitors must take some responsibility for their actions, as advised by their clubs through coaches or otherwise. Coaches of juniors must ensure that all competitors are fully briefed before the event on the instructions to crews and on the day of any further information from the briefing.

Competitors’ instructions must be read prior to the competition. The instructions to crews emphasise two things for competitors and coaches to consider. Firstly, that all crews should have sufficient strength and experience to row a 3km race upstream. Secondly that the weather could be cold and/or wet and suitable clothing to wear at the start should be carried. Competitors and clubs should be aware that they may not be allowed to boat or race if these expectations are not met.

Entering clubs are asked to check all standard safety items on every boat entering before loading and again on the day before proceeding to boating pontoons. It is the responsibility of individual clubs to provide adequate cleaning equipment to athletes if boats or blades are being shared between competitors. Competitors through coaches or directly should make themselves familiar with the British Rowing Rules of Racing as they apply to head races and to any local rules published.

First Aid and Rescue

Three Safety Launches, each carrying a qualified First Aider as crew, will be stationed along the course in the positions shown on the map. If a launch crew sees an incident they should deal with it as a priority, keeping the Chief Umpire and Race Control informed. A rescue launch attending an incident must be aware of the effect excessive wash can cause to other crews. Where possible, safety launches should approach an incident from downstream.

Land based First Aiders will be in attendance in a marked vehicle at Sir William Perkins School boathouse next door to Burway RC.

Casualties can be brought ashore with Ambulance access at the Burway RC/SWPS landing stages and at various points along Thameside.

The water-based Marshals will assist where necessary.

Communications

During any incident, the radio network must be kept free from unnecessary traffic to allow the person on the spot, handling the situation, to communicate with whom they choose.

Radios are issued to all KROs, Safety Launches, First Aid and Start Team.

Emergencies

In the case of a serious emergency, dial 999

Chief Umpire:	TBA	TBA
Welfare Officer:	Tracey Dawson	07866 779807
Safety Adviser:	Graeme Ross	07933 177175