

Ely Head Race Risk Assessment

Isle of Ely Rowing Club - Ely Head Race

Event: Ely Head Race
Date of event: **Sunday 1st November**
Estimated number of people: 300 competitors, 200 officials and spectators

Author: **Mark Southwood (IOERC Safety Advisor). Updated from previous versions.**

Signature: **Mark Southwood** Date: **28th Sept 2025**

Overview
The Head Race is run over 3 divisions and covers 2 distances. Division 1 is a 3km course starting from Littleport. All divisions finish near Queen Adelaide Road Bridge. Crews launch at and return to the start in open conditions without shelter available. It is generally wide and obstacle free, with the exception of the bridge which is stationed at the start, middle and finish of the course. The start launch will follow the last boat across the bridge.

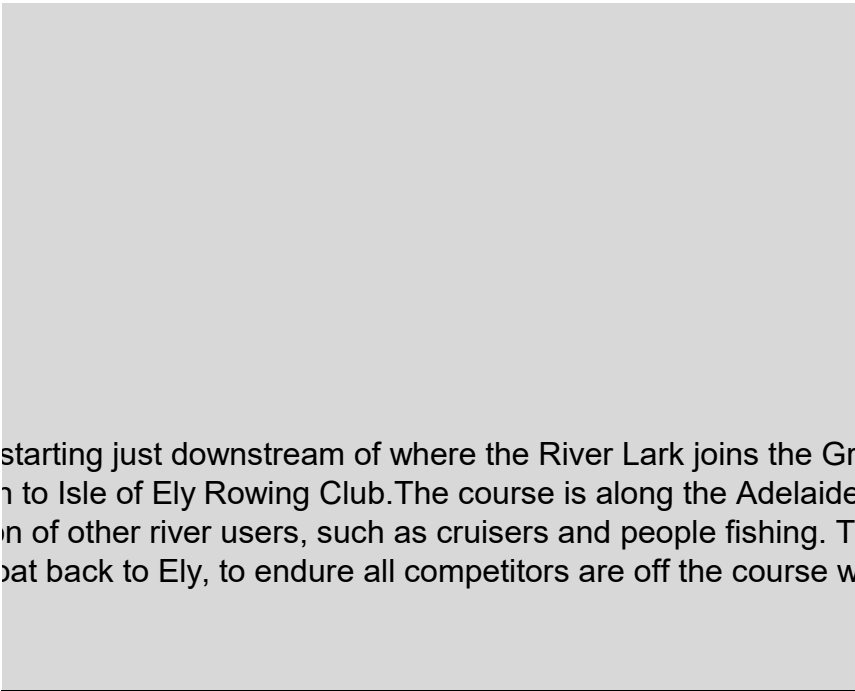
Club	
Author	

No:	Hazard	Reduce probability a Hazard causing a Hazardous Event	
		Barriers	Action to maintain barriers
1	River too high or too low to boat safely	Use of main and side floating lading stage	Safety assessment before and during event

2	Water conditions too rough, or stream too strong	Review which boats could safely race in the conditions	Prevent smaller boats from entering the water
3	Debris, including weed	Assessment along course pre-race	Remove debris, or re-locate away from course
4	Infectious diseases	Provide antiseptic wipes, handwash. Remind crews and volunteers not to attend if they have symptoms. Minimise contact. Maximise ventilation of indoor spaces.	Warn rowers of risk of water contamination of open wounds including BR Weils disease guidance. Maintain appropriate level of Covid awareness.
1	Severe weather conditions	Postpone, suspend or cancel event	Monitor weather before and during event. In the event of thunder and lightening, competitors are to use the 30-30 rule. Race to stop when flash to bang count is 30 seconds or less and not resume until 30 minutes after last lightening. Race Monitors to advise Safety Advisor.
3	Cold/hot weather conditions	Assess which rowers can row in the conditions. Assess clothing before boating	Marshalls on the course to observe rowers and recommend clothing changes. Plan for evacuating rowers from river who are unable to row do to temperature
4	Poor visibility	Cancel or curtail outing	Review incoming weather and forecast
1	Other rowing boats	Warning to rowers of likely number and direction of other rowers. Enforce circulation pattern	Monitor boat activity and follow circulation plan and avoidance practices
2	Other powered vessels	Sign post the course warning of ongoing event. Notify rowers of likely traffic on the course	Monitor boat activity and if possible notify powered vessels of the risk of collision and wake impact
3	Anglers	Sign post the course warning of ongoing event. Notify rowers of likely anglers on the course	Marshall the course to notify anglers of event timing and duration

4	Paddle boarders, swimmers	Warn rowers of likelihood of people on the river. Sign the course warning people that a race is ongoing	Marshall the course to warn people of the dangers of being in the area of a race
1	Bridges	Course map available from website. Rowers and crews to remain vigilant.	Position Marshalls on bridge to warn rowers
2	River Bends	Infrequent bends during actual head race but occasional bends when heading up to start	Position Marshalls at bends to warn rowers
3	Concrete river sides	Notice to rowers on the homepage alerting rowers to sheet piling	Position Marshalls at key points
4	Wild animals	Warning to rowers.	Rowers to remain vigilant.
1	Trip hazards	Marshall on landing stages	Oversee launching throughout event
2	Launching and landing heavy boats	Ensure enough people are involved in carrying and launching each boat	Marshall area
3	Slipping on decking	Keep stages clear of mud and water. Crews and supporters advised to not congregate on landing stage	Do throughout event
1	Being hit by boats in transit	Marshall club area	Marshall throughout event
2	Trailers & Cars	Marshall car and trailer park	Marshall throughout event

3	General obstacles	Marshall site	Marshall throughout event
4	Slipping on wet grass / banks / car parks etc / uneven ground	Marshall site and car park supervision	Marshall throughout event
1	Gate not correctly closed	Check boats before going afloat	Notice and reminders to rowers and coaches
2	boat not correctly set up and adjusted for rower	ensure correct adjustment before going afloat	notice and reminders to rowers and coaches
1	Fatigue - Due to length of race	Information provided to competitors prior to racing	Course is marshalled by land based and launch based personnel
2	Fatigue - Due to pre-existing health conditions or due to challenges faced by adaptive competitors.	Information provided to competitors prior to racing. Specific help to meet needs of adaptive rowers will be made wherever possible. Adaptive rowers and their clubs are expected to advise the Organiser when an entry may	Course is marshalled by land based and launch based personnel



starting just downstream of where the River Lark joins the Great Ouse to Isle of Ely Rowing Club. The course is along the Adelaide bank, away from other river users, such as cruisers and people fishing. The boat will return to Ely, to ensure all competitors are off the course when the race starts.

Isle of Ely Rowing Club
Mark Southwood

Hazardous Event	Reduce the risk
	Controls
Water	
Risk of capsizing, damage to boat or personal injury	Floating landing stages

Damage to boats. Rower exhaustion. Risk of collision with other water craft.	Only allow appropriate boats and competent rowers to boat
Damage to boats. Capsize. Personal injury	Warn crews of any known debris. Monitor course throughout event
Contact of infected water with open wound.	Include in published risk assessment. Further warnings in event documentation

Weather

Excessive warm/cold extreme weather, Lightning, high winds, ice	Review weather forecast before and during event. Know direction weather is coming from
Unable to row. Loss of mental capacity to make decisions	Suitable clothing, extra layers. Sun screen. Drinking water
Unable to see other boats, or obstacles. Collision & capsize	Do not go out when fog is forecast or visible

Other water users

Collision	Make sure rowers are familiar with area navigation, care to be taken when passing and at safe distance, especially when passing at race speed
Collision & Swamping	as above
Catching a fishing line. Risk of cuts, and bruises	as above

Collision	as above
Local Environment	
Collision	Reduce speed of boats near bridges and maintain navigation
Collision with boats on the wrong side of the river	Warn crews of risk areas. Rowers to remain alert
Capsize	Warn crews of risk areas and rowers to remain alert.
Collision, capsize.	Warn crews of risk areas
Going afloat and landing	
Falling with boat	Warning rowers of hazard
Dropping boat	Oversee launching
Falling over	Control speed of launching and number of crews waiting
Around the boathouse (including handling)	
Collision between boats and people	Ensure adequate people are present to help carry boats and equipment
Collision between cars, trailers and people	Ensure adequate people are present to help carry boats and equipment

Collision between people, boats and fixed/temporary obstacles	Ensure adequate people are present to help carry boats and equipment
Slips, trips, falls	Ensure adequate people are presen to help carry boats and equipment. General awareness of spectators, competitors etc

Faulty, incorrectly set and poorly maintained

Scull or oar comes out of gate	Marshall the launch area
rower suffers muscelo-skeletal injury	Provide First Aid treatment. First aid suport will be available at the start and end on the race. Emergency support can be contacted during the race.

Pre-existing health conditions and low fitness

Rower unable to continue to row	Marshalls assist with getting rower off the water and transported to finish.
---------------------------------	--

Rower unable to continue to row Marshalls assist with getting rower off the water and transported to finish. Emergency help provided if required



Great Ouse. Division 2 and 3 start from Sandhill Road Bridge, the Straight which is exposed to the prevailing wind, weather and water. The course will be marshalled at regular points, with 3 launches when the event is deemed complete.

Date:	28/08/2025
Rev:	1

Severity of Harm	Harm	Severity (1-5)	Probability (A-E)	Level of Risk (L/M/S/I)
Action to maintain controls				
Marshalls to oversee boating and prevent unsafe entry	Injury from landing stage or boat rigging	2	A	Low

Marshalls to oversee boating and prevent unsafe entry	Injury from contact with river bank, or other water craft	2	B	Low
Safety launch to patrol course, and take input from course Marshalls	Head injury, cold shock/hypothermia, drowning	1	A	Low
Regular checks on supplies of antiseptic wipes, handwash and ventilation.	Infection, feeling ill and death	4	A	Low
Do regular visual checks, and review weather forecast	Injury & death	4	B	Moderate
Deny access to rowers without suitable clothing. Ensure they carry water and wear sun screen.	Hypothermia. Dehydration/sunstroke	3	B	Low
Risk assessment prior to boating, and ongoing throughout event	See collisions.	1	B	Low
Competent coxes & bow person	Back injury, cuts and bruises. Damage to boat, especially bow ball and riggers.	2	D	Moderate
Competent coxes & bow person	Back injury, cuts and bruises. Damage to boat, especially bow ball and riggers.	3	C	Moderate
Competent coxes & bow person	Cuts and bruises.	1	D	Low

Competent coxes & bow person	Possible serious injury to the other party. Injury to rower and damage to rowing boat unlikely.	4	B	Moderate
Retain Marshalls throughout event	Injury and boat damage	2	A	Low
Retain Marshalls throughout event	Injury and boat damage	1	B	Low
Retain Marshalls throughout event	Hyperthermia, drowning	4	C	Substantial
Retain Marshalls throughout event	Physical injury	1	A	Low
ing				
Retain Marshalls throughout event	Injury and boat damage	3	B	Low
Retain Marshalls throughout event	Injury and boat damage	3	B	Low
Retain Marshalls throughout event	Injury and boat damage	3	B	Low
ing boats on land)				
Retain Marshalls throughout event	Cuts and bruises. Equipment damage	2	C	Low
Retain Marshalls throughout event	Cuts and bruises. Equipment damage	3	C	Moderate

Retain Marshalls throughout event	Cuts and bruises. Equipment damage	2	C	Low
Retain Marshalls throughout event	Cuts and bruises. Equipment damage	2	C	Low

tained equipment

Retain Marshalls throughout event	capsize	3	B	Low
Maintain First Aid training and equipment	muscelo-skeletal injury	2	C	Low

r levels of fitness

Marshall on duty throughout the race. Course is swept for competitors after final boat has started.		2	B	Low
Marshall on duty throughout the race. Course is swept for competitors after final boat has started.		2	B	Low



Action Owners				
Club Chairman	Club RSA	Coaches	Coxes	other
	X	X	X	X

	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X

	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X

	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X	X	X
	X	X		X
	X	X		X