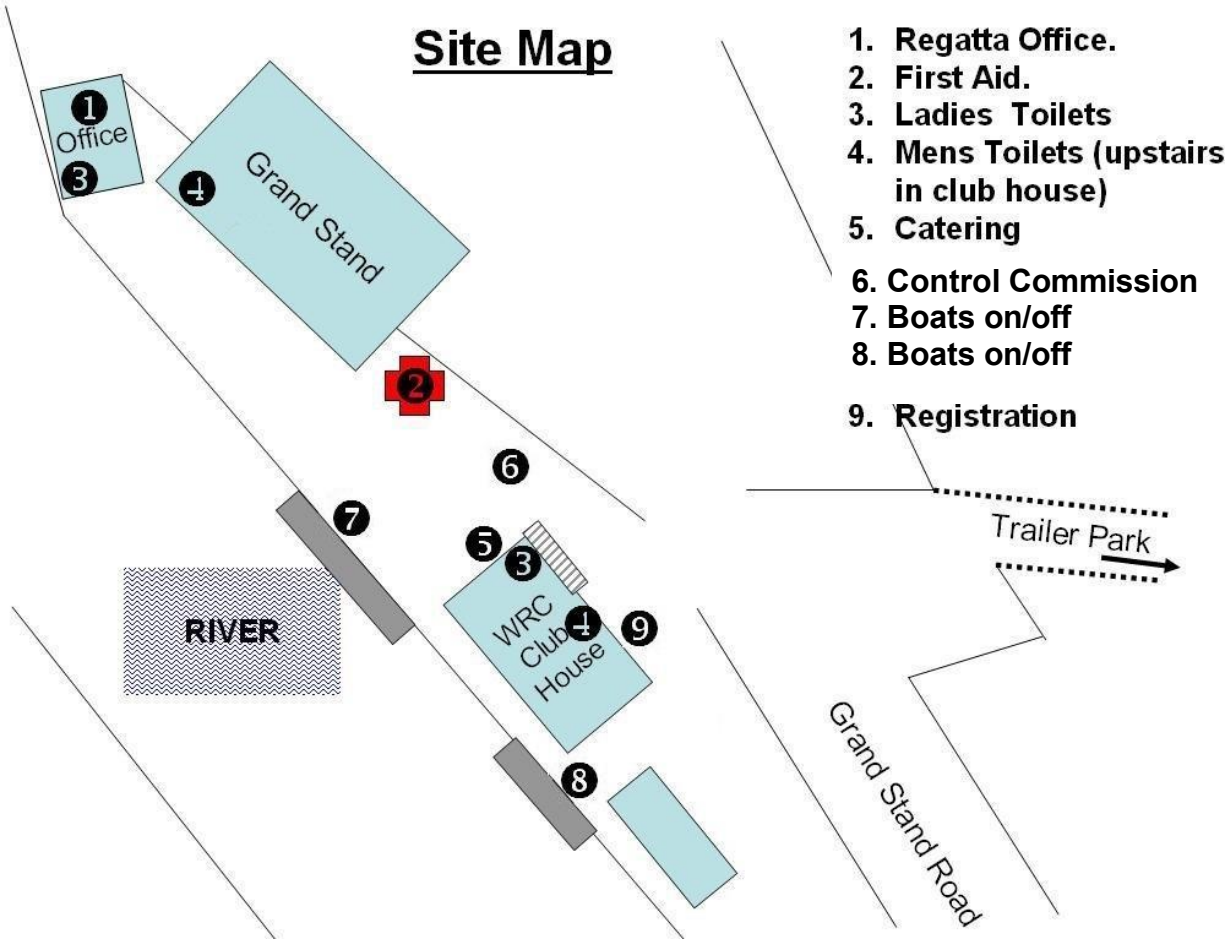
Worcester Rowing Club Head of The River Safety Plan

Saturday 14th February 2026

Introduction

Worcester Head of the River is held in early February on the River Severn, downstream over approximately 6000 meters between the Camp Inn, Grimley and Diglis as a processional race. Typically, around 70 crews enter each of two divisions.



This safety plan has been compiled to complement RowSafe, and not to either replace or rewrite it. The safety plan explains local safety measures that have been introduced as a result of the event risk assessment and specific details linked to BR requirements.

Organising Committee

Chairman, Organising Committee – Dominic O'Loghlin

Chairman, Race Committee – Paul Holmes

Safety Adviser – Jim Swann

Welfare Officer – Sarah Johnson/ Aidan Melarkey

Communications

Permission to hold the event on the River Severn has been obtained from Canal and River Trust.

Other river users and local organisations will be informed of the event by e-mail, to include:

Canoe Club

Dragon Boat Club

Anglers Association

Severn Motor Yacht Company

Worcester Racecourse

Worcester City Council

Worcester Tourist Information Centre

Calls will be made to West Mercia Police and West Midlands Ambulance Service to log the event, although the likelihood of their direct involvement is low.

Competitors, umpires, marshals and organisers will be made aware of the safety arrangements to enable incidents to be dealt with efficiently during the event.

1) Course maps and emergency procedures will be posted on the website, displayed at the boathouse and distributed to officials during the day.
2) A safety briefing will be given by the organisers before boating starts, to the Race Controller, all marshals, and representatives of the Safety Boat and First Aid teams.
3) Radios, throw lines and loudhailers will be issued to all umpires, marshals and safety launches. Fully charged spare batteries will be carried for each radio. Two channels will be established, one exclusively for emergencies.
4) Officials will be encouraged to carry mobile phones with the numbers being held at Race Control so contact can be made easily if other communication methods fail. This is essential for the Safety Adviser and the Control Commission Umpire.

5) Any feedback or comments on the event safety cover should be sent to Heather Gow (regatta@wrc1874.co.uk). A meeting will be held in the week following the event to review the safety arrangements.

Boating and circulation arrangements

Boating and circulation patterns for on and off the water have been designed to minimise congestion and collisions. Crews will boat using all the landing stages, after passing through boat checking and down the steps. They will return using all the stages again, and pass behind the boathouse as well as up the main steps, to the racecourse car park. Crews will row upstream observing normal rules of the river and then wait at their allocated place on the Camp Inn (west) side of the river. No race-pace rowing shall take place once the marshalling area is entered. Plans of the river will be posted on the web site and displayed by the boathouse.

Safety boats

Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA), a professional organisation specialising in boat handling and rescue techniques, will provide four safety boats, located at areas at most risk of collision, being:

- At Camp to cover start, boat marshalling area and initial section of the course.
- At Kepax to cover the mid-section of the course
- Between bridges to cover final section of the course and navigation around bridges
- Finish

Race Marshals, Monitors and Umpires

Race Marshals, Monitors and Umpires (RMMUs) will be located along the course to provide visual surveillance for safety and racing infringements. All instructions given by these people must be acted upon; otherwise the offending crew may receive time penalties.

RMMUs will be issued with radios and loudhailers at the start of each division. They will be encouraged to leave their mobile phone numbers with Race Control in case of radio failure.

Each RMMU will have responsibilities as follows to ensure a safe and fair event:

Description	**No. required**	**Responsibilities**
Start marshals	5	Ensure boats moving up to turning area and in turning area are controlled. Start of race and assist with timings.
Marshals downstream of start	3	Ensure boats queuing to race are in order and keep in to the bank to avoid collisions with other boats.
Finish marshals	5	Ensure boats clear the finish and turn safely. Assist with timing.
Marshals downstream of finish	2	Ensure boats turn promptly but safely below the railway bridge and well above the road bridge.
Control Commission	4	Check boats and crew before boating; record any failures. Assist with boats coming up steps from trailer area.
Stage marshals	6	Assist with boating, ensure area does not become hazardous with spectators, shoes, blade, etc.
WRC Launch monitor (Boar Pig Bay)	1	Monitor race for accidents or breaches of safety or Race Rules. Instruct crews where necessary and report infringements of rules to the Chief Umpire via the Race Controller. Assist safety launches when directed.
WRC Launch (bend at Slip)	1	Monitor race for accidents or breaches of safety or Race Rules. Instruct crews where necessary and report infringements of rules to the Chief Umpire via the Race Controller. Assist safety launches when directed.
Land Monitors	6	Monitor race for accidents or breaches of safety or Race Rules. Instruct crews where necessary and report infringements of rules to the Chief Umpire via the Race Controller.

Medical Provision

First Aid is provided by SARA, stationed in the boat yard. Two crew members will be present as a minimum throughout the racing period. The medical staff will be given a copy of the Welfare Plan in advance of the event.

The nearest Accident and Emergency unit is located at Worcestershire Royal Hospital, Charles Hastings Way, Worcester, WR5 1DD (telephone 01905 763333) 3 miles from the site. Journey time from site to hospital is typically 10 minutes. Ambulance access is clear through to the boat yard to the top of the steps descending to the river [and ambulance crews regularly use Grandstand Road as a standby location].

Accident and emergency procedures

Where an accident occurs on the water the following procedure will be adopted:

1) The observing monitor or marshal will decide if racing needs to be stopped and report the incident to the Race Control who will decide if further action needs to be taken.

2) The nearest safety boat (and any other appropriate assistance) will be sent to the incident by the Race Controller.

3) The safety boat's priority will be to retrieve the people from the water and, if injured, return them to the land at the boating area (or nearest appropriate landfall) where the First Aiders will take over. The second priority is to retrieve the boat.

4) First Aiders, Medical Adviser and Safety Adviser should be informed.

5) The Race Controller will co-ordinate the incident response and decide when hazards have been adequately removed so racing can recommence and will call emergency services if necessary.

Incident Reporting

Any incident or accident must be reported to one of the Event Organisers and the Event Safety Adviser. The Safety Adviser will record any incidents and log them on the BR website. Clubs who are involved in an incident have a responsibility to report it on the BR website.

Weather and river conditions

Some weather and river conditions may require the event to be changed, suspended or even cancelled to avoid unnecessary risk to competitors and officials. The decision on these actions will be taken as early as possible by the event committee including Safety Adviser, Race Controller, Club Captain and the lead Umpire. Although it is not possible to set exact rules for these decisions due to the number of variables that exist, a set of guidelines have been set out below:

Conditions	**Possible control measures.**
Lightning	Suspend racing and stop boating until 30 minutes after last incidence of lightning witnessed. All participants to seek safe shelter (tents and marquees not included) until 30 minutes after the storm has passed.
Flooding (fast current and/or debris in water or on bridges)	- Cancel event. - Limit entries to senior rowers. - Increase safety boat cover. - Shorten course.
Heavy rain	- Ensure appropriate clothing is worn at boat inspection point. - Limit entries to senior rowers.
Wind	- Cancel event. - Limit entries to senior rowers. - Increase safety boat cover. - Shorten course.
Snow/ ice/ very low temperatures	- Ensure appropriate clothing is worn at boat inspection point. - Limit entries to senior rowers. - Increase safety boat cover. - Arrange for salt to be spread round boating area.

Failure of safety arrangements

In the event of the loss of safety boat cover, umpire support, medical cover or communications breakdown, racing will be cancelled or shortened to reduce risks, unless appropriate cover can be arranged.

The SARA organisation is used by the police in case of emergency on the River Severn. It is possible that one or more crews on duty at the event may be called away to attend such an emergency. Consideration will be given in that situation whether racing can continue (safety

crews still capable of responding to event incident in sufficient time), should be suspended (safety crews likely to return in a short time) or be cancelled (safety crews unlikely to return at all).

Slips and trips

The boating and trailer areas should be kept free from blades, shoes, trestles, etc. that will cause a trip hazard. The marshals working in these areas will monitor and arrange for equipment to be removed. Blades can be stored on the grassed area or on the large steps.

Spectators will not be permitted to sit on the steps or slope leading to river when boats are moving around.

Trestles will be provided at the boat checking area for crews to rest and to allow small repairs to be made.

No competitor cars will be permitted on Club Car Park.

Hygiene and water quality

Toilets and washing facilities will be available at the rowing club. If utilities fail (water, sewerage or electricity) the event Safety Adviser will arrange for an appropriate utility or contractor to attend to rectify the problem.

No food or drink will be available from WRC clubhouse if water supplies are lost. Litter bins will be provided and the trailer area is to be inspected after the event for unnecessary refuseAn assessment of water quality will be made before the event starts, which any recommendations made at the Safety Briefing.

Trailer Parking

Car and trailer parking is in the middle of the race course, access though the public car on Severn Terrace by the Swan Theatre WR1 3ED.

APPENDIX: Local Event Rules for Worcester Head of the River Race

In general the race will be conducted in accordance with the BR Rules of Racing.

1. In the event of an incident where a competitor may be at risk the first responsibility of any following crew is to stop and render assistance to any competitor in danger. The course is covered by race monitors who can summon safety boats. If the following crew(s) is satisfied that assistance is present, or has been summoned, it should carry on to avoid congestion.

2. The course will be covered by race monitors. They may apply time penalties for any breach of BR or local rules. The Monitor responsible will advise the Timekeeper and Chief Umpire of any such decision before the results are computed. He will provide an explanation of the penalty to the crew concerned if asked to do so.

3. A crew being overtaken must give way. Any crew failing to move out of the faster stream and failing to provide enough space for the overtaking crew may be penalised. This does not give an overtaking crew the right to force other crews into the bank. Race monitors will assess the situation and warn crews. The Chief Umpire may award appropriate penalties for violations of the rules, including interference and breaches of safety regulations.

4. The Stage Marshal, in conjunction with the Chief Umpire, may refuse to allow a crew or a competitor to compete if it is judged that it is not competent to complete the course safely. In any such case the entry will be fee will be refunded.

5. **The race will not be delayed for late crews. Boating times are for guidance only; crews are responsible for getting themselves up to their start position before the given start time. No boating will be permitted for 20 minutes before the given start time. Time penalties will be issued for crews boating late or affecting the start time. The starter/marshals may place latecomers at the bottom of the starting order or refuse to start them as appropriate.**

6. If, for whatever reason, a crew finds itself still rowing to the start after the start of the race, it must keep clear of crews which are racing, pull in to the bank and observe the directions of the nearest race monitor.

7. Coaching from the bank is allowed.

Worcester Rowing Club Head of the River Welfare Plan

Saturday 8th February 2025

Policy Statement

The organising Committee of Worcester Head of the River believes that the welfare and wellbeing of all children and vulnerable adults is paramount. All children and vulnerable adults, regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, religion or ability, have equal rights to safety and protection. All suspicions, concerns and allegations of harm will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and in an appropriate manner.

Sarah Johnson is Welfare Officer for the event. She will act as the point of contact for any safeguarding concerns or allegations, and can be contacted on 07973 490201 or via Race Control located in the Regional Rowing Centre upstream of Worcester Rowing Club boathouse.

Reporting Structure

The first point of contact during the event will be the Welfare Officer. Any event reported will be discussed forthwith by the Welfare Officer and Event Organisers. If, after due consideration, they decide that the police should be informed, the Welfare Officer will report the matter to West Mercia Police.

The Event Organisers and the Welfare Officer will then decide whether the Welfare Officer will report the matter to the British Rowing Child Protection Officer.

Security

The event organisers brief all helpers on the Welfare Plan and ask them to report any inappropriate behaviour to race headquarters.

The event attracts Junior competitors, who would usually be under the care of a parent or coach. A name and mobile telephone number is requested by the Entries Secretary for each club entering Junior crews. The list of contacts is held at Registration and Race Control so that the responsible adult can be contacted easily in case of incident. No personal contact details for children are held.

Photography

As the event takes place in open public areas, control of photography is not feasible. All helpers are briefed to respond to any inappropriate photography and report such to the Event Secretary or Race Control.