



INSTRUCTIONS AND RULES

THE HEAD OF THE RIVER RACE 2026

Saturday 28th March at 12:15

INTRODUCTION

The Head of the River Race course is the “Championship Course” from Mortlake to Putney, and is timed from the University Stone in Chiswick to the University Stone in Putney, covering a distance of 6.8 km.

The Race is conducted under the **British Rowing Rules of Racing** and these HARR Instructions and Rules.

Safety is our primary concern. All crews should be familiar with these instructions and the **Tideway Code**. You should be capable of a 10-mile outing and be prepared for being on the water for up to three hours. Please dress appropriately for the conditions and carry water with you. **Safety is everyone’s responsibility.**

Coaches and Captains must ensure that the crew complies with Row Safe, the Tideway Code, the British Rowing Rules of Racing and these race instructions and rules. Captains must ensure that their coxes are competent to control and navigate an 8+ on the Tideway.

Boats with a front-loaded cox are NOT permitted to race.

The Chief Umpire will apply penalties (which may include disqualification) as appropriate.

NAVIGATION

Coxes must navigate according to the rules and guidance of the **Tideway Code** during training.

Visiting crews should speak to their host club for support with navigation whilst training. The Tideway Code contains navigation rules and guidance which must be followed outside of the race river closure.

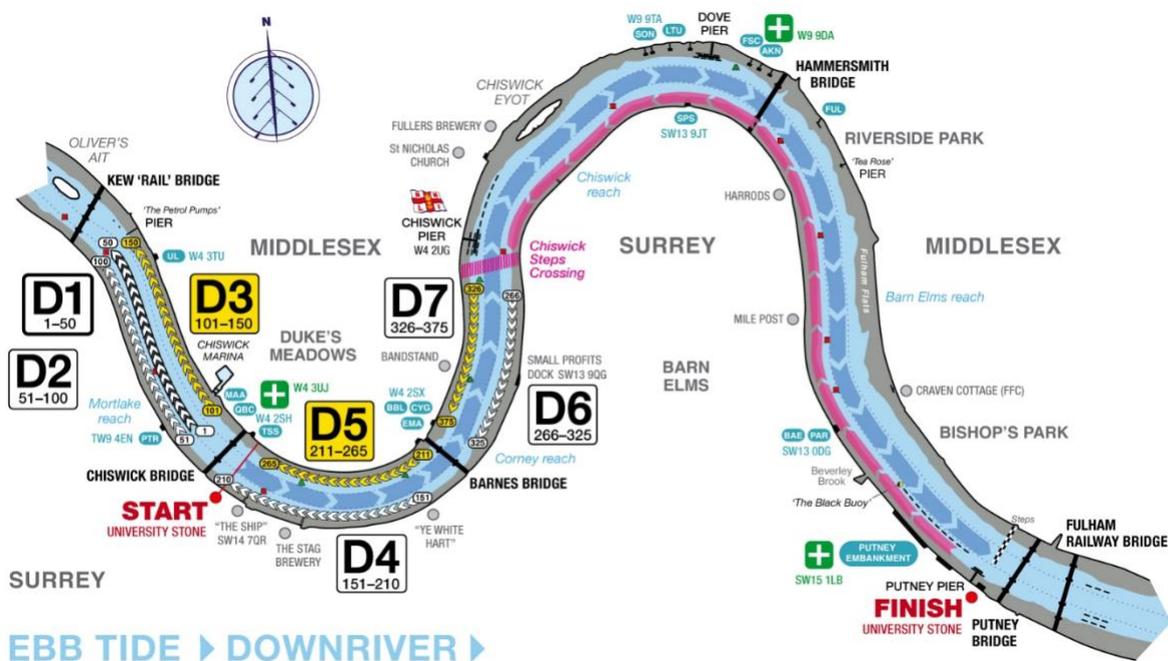
Prior to, and during the race, the river will be subject to a river closure. The river closure will apply to the area between Kew Rail Bridge and Fulham Rail Bridge **from 11:15 until the last racing crew has crossed the finish line and returned past Putney Pier**. Safety cover will extend from Kew Railway Bridge to approximately 200m below Fulham Railway Bridge.

During and within the river closure the Tideway code navigation rules do not apply, crews should be in the middle of the river when travelling with the tide and as near the bank as conditions and depth allow when travelling against the tide. Maintain a good look out, bow pair should aid the cox. Do not stop or turn immediately up stream of fixed hazards or at the crossing point upstream of Chiswick Pier

The Race Committee may apply penalties to crews training on the Tideway in the 14 day period before race day that are not compliant with the **Tideway Code** and **British Rowing Rules of Racing**.

Coxes are required to watch the **'Steering a Tideway Head'** and recommended to watch the 2026 Spring Tideway Heads Webinar delivered by WOX (**'WOX Webinar'**) to support with race day preparations and racing line competence.

THE COURSE



RACE DAY

Numbers

Both the bow numbers and kit numbers (for cox and bowman) will be delivered to your nominated host club.

Bow vinyl number plates and kit numbers on both bow and cox must be visible at all times i.e. before and during the race. Fix the vinyl number in the bow slot using the cotter/split pin provided. Stick the saxboard number to the outside of the bowside/starboard saxboard of the cox's seat area, this is a backup for the timing teams located on Surrey. Coxes must pay particular attention to prevent long hair or lifejackets covering the number on their back. The kit numbers are waterproof. The bowman must wear one number on the back of their racing vest, the other on their outer garment.

Random boat checks will be made on race day across all boating locations by Control Commission Officials. Crews must ensure they are compliant with both Row Safe and the British Rowing Rules of Racing.

Following the race, you **MUST** return your bow number to your host club or to Ranelagh Sailing Club at Putney on the day of the race. Crews whose bow numbers are not returned to the HORR committee within seven days of the race will be charged a penalty of £20.

Crew Conduct

Crews must carry sufficient clothing and kit in readiness for time spent marshalling, the row back after racing, and in the case of race abandonment. Additionally, coxes must carry a mobile phone in their boat.

Crews must not bring the sport into disrepute (e.g. foul or abusive language, urinating in public view, and littering, especially plastic bottles) and are reminded that this applies across the whole field of competition, including the foreshore and boating areas, during training, and competition.

MARSHALLING

From 1 hour prior to the start of the race (i.e. 11:15) all crews must boat and marshal in accordance with these marshalling instructions even where this may conflict with the Tideway Code.

Crews must abide by the boating arrangements of their host clubs. Shore-based HORR marshals are identified by a yellow hi-vis vest.

The 'Marshalling Area' extends from Kew Railway Bridge to the crossing upstream of Chiswick Pier.

Crews must ensure that they are on the correct side of the river – if the crew's kit numbers are Black on White background the crew's marshalling position will be on

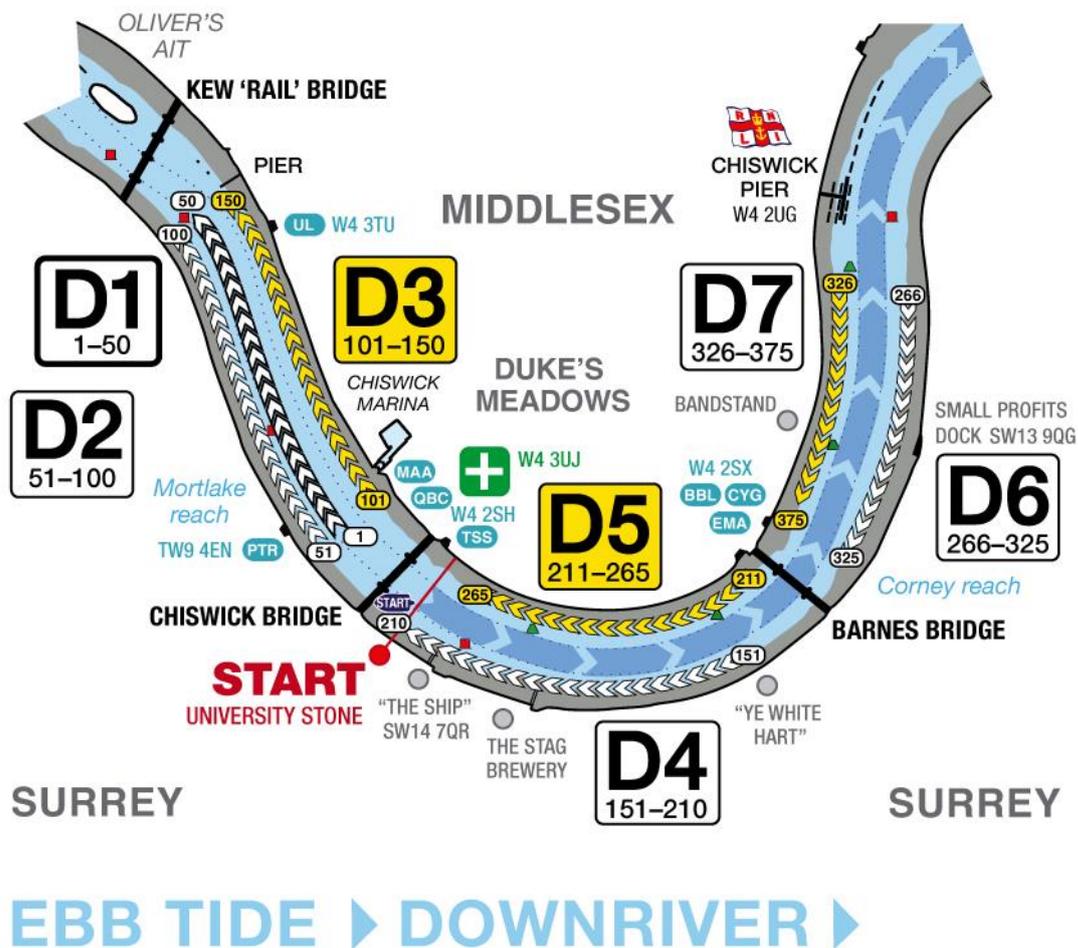
the Surrey (south) side, if they are Black on Yellow background, the crew will be on the Middlesex (north) side of the river.

Coxes are reminded that the Tideway is subject to strong currents – when a crew is stopped on the water, it will still be moving at 3-4 mph. Crews must not attempt to stop or turn upstream of fixed hazards, such as bridges or moored boats.

In the marshalling area:

1. Crews may only paddle up to half pressure at a low rate in the Marshalling Area, unless instructed to do so by an official.
2. The middle of the river must be left for crews going with the tide, crews going against the tide must be on the side in which they are marshalling.
3. The crossing point upstream of Chiswick Pier is controlled by an umpire/marshal.

Please check the [marshalling plan](#) and identify your position in relation to landmarks.



When waiting, crews must maintain their position against the tide, while safely minimising gaps between crews.

HORR 2026 has 7 Divisions, which are as follows:

Division 1 (Crews 1 to 50); Division 2 (Crews 51 to 100), Division 3 (Crews 101 to 150), Division 4 (Crews 151 to 210), Division 5 (Crews 211 to 265), Division 6 (Crews 266 to 325) and Division 7 (Crew 326 to 375).

All crews in must be in their marshalling position by 12:05.

By 12:05, all crews marshalling in Divisions 1, 2 & 3 (Crews 1 to 150) must be upstream of Chiswick Bridge. Failure to be in position risks a time penalty.

Any crews which have not reached Chiswick Bridge by that time will be held below the Bridge and will have to row at the end of Divisions 4 or 5 as the case may be.

By 12:00 crews marshalling in Divisions 4 to 7 (Crews 151 to 375) must be downstream of Chiswick Bridge and on their marshalling side of the river. Not being so risks a time penalty.

You may not cross the river in the marshalling area after 12:00.

Crews not in their marshalling position by the time specified must proceed as directed by the marshals. Crews that arrive late to their marshalling position/the start may be required to wait to the end of the division to be allowed to race or may not be permitted to race at all.

START PROCEDURE

On the instructions of a marshal, crews will be required to turn into the middle of the river and paddle downstream to Chiswick Bridge. Prior to crossing the start line crews must not close up on boats next to or in front of them and must immediately drop back if instructed.

The Chief Marshal may temporarily pause crews crossing the start line for reasons of safety; in this instance the race has not been stopped.

Crews will be started by an umpire in a launch just downstream of Chiswick Bridge and the timing will start at the University Stone where a 'START' banner will be displayed.

DURING RACING

Overtaking crews should manoeuvre so as to overtake at a point where they will be as close as possible to their best course.

A crew that **is overtaking** must have consideration for the slower crew and allow it sufficient time and space to give way without risk of colliding with a fixed hazard or other crew.

A crew **being overtaken** should look to move in good time; severe use of your rudder will slow you more significantly than being off the best course for the period.

All crews have a responsibility to avoid collision.

All crews must pass through the centre arches of Barnes and Hammersmith Bridges. Crews must not enter the inshore zone marked by the green and red navigation buoys. Crews must pass on the Middlesex side of the line of the moored boats at Putney.

Should your hull be swamped and provided all hatches are secure it should be rowable. Your crew should stay with the boat until a rescue boat arrives, or you have manoeuvred it ashore.

If a crew encounters any significant mechanical difficulties with their boat or serious medical problem during the Race, they should stop racing, move away from the racing line towards the nearest bank while avoiding fixed hazards and seek assistance.

AFTER RACING

After completing the course, all crews must continue through the centre arch of Putney Bridge and the centre arch of Fulham Railway Bridge before turning.

After passing through the centre arches of the Bridges all crews must turn right towards the Surrey (Putney) shore and paddle back on that side of the river between the line of moored boats and the shore.

The finish area marshals may instruct you to keep moving until you are above Putney Pier, this is to prevent congestion, and excess time on the river.

Crews returning to Middlesex clubs below Chiswick Eyot have crossing marshals for their boating locations, they should present themselves to these marshals and await instruction to cross.

For crews returning to Fulham Reach, the marshal is opposite the clubhouse.

For crews returning to Hammersmith clubs below Dove pier (Furnivall and Auriol Kensington) the marshal is stationed above Hammersmith Bridge.

For crews returning to Hammersmith clubs above Dove pier (Latymer and Sons of the Thames) the marshal is stationed upriver of St. Paul's BC.

No crew should cross unless specifically instructed to do so.

Crews returning to Barnes, Mortlake, Chiswick and Kew must paddle up the Surrey side to opposite Chiswick Pier and present themselves to the marshal stationed at this point before crossing to the Middlesex side. They must then paddle up the Middlesex side keeping clear of racing crews.

While marshalling is still in progress crews returning to Barnes, Mortlake, Chiswick and Kew must remain behind the last division on Middlesex as they move upstream and – if necessary – wait below Mortlake Anglian & Alpha BC for them to complete their turn before proceeding further upstream.

Under no circumstances may returning crews overtake marshalled crews. Crews wishing to cross to Surrey at this point must await permission from the Marshal above Chiswick Bridge. This will not be given until the last crew to start has passed through Chiswick Bridge. Only in exceptional circumstances and under the express direction of an umpire/marshal, may a crew cross at a point other than an official crossing-point.

PROTESTS

Protests, and further protests, must be received within 45 minutes of the last crew crossing the finish line.

Protests, and further protests, must be sent to secretary@horr.co.uk. You must include your mobile phone number, your bow number, and a short description of the incident subject to protest.

RESULTS, LIVE STREAM AND PRIZE GIVING

Results will be available on this site and updated live throughout racing. Results are provisional until finalised.

Race Livestream will be available on [our YouTube channel](#) from 12:00 and available on the HERR YouTube Channel shortly after the race.

Prizegiving will be held at 16:45 on Race Day at London Rowing Club, Putney.

For prizes not collected on race day please contact secretary@horr.co.uk to arrange your collection, or delivery.

WATER QUALITY

The Thames, like any open body of water can have safety risks associated with the quality of the water.

Please refer to British Rowing's [Guidance for Poor Water Quality](#).

The water quality is monitored as part of the event's risk assessment, and if necessary, specific guidance will be issued to all competing crews, however all participants are encouraged to apply safe practices at all times.

RACE CANCELLATION, ABANDONMENT, COURSE CHANGE AND ADVERSE WEATHER

The HARR Committee fully realises the huge disruption that can be caused by cancellation, and/or misleading or late information through the different social media.

The Race is ON, unless a time-stamped message is put out on Instagram, e-mail and the main page of the website stating that it is OFF. Once it has been declared OFF, it will not be reinstated. It is the intention that all 3 media will be updated at the same time, but for operational reasons it may take up to 30-45 minutes.

The two key risks for the event are high wind speeds and high fluvial flow rates (the flow of water from upriver). The Committee will be reviewing the fluvial flow pattern and weather forecasts, in the days prior to and during the Race.

If there are high fluvial flows, it may be necessary to alter the marshalling arrangements or reduce the number of competitors for safety reasons.

If there are high wind speeds forecast, it may be necessary to reduce the numbers of competitors to avoid exposed banks and consider shortening the course.

On race day there will be a course inspection shortly after high water, at which a decision may be made to cancel the race, delay the start, or possibly shorten the course. Any cancellation, delay or curtailment announcement will be made as soon as possible after high water and will be broadcast to crews by race officials and host clubs, and subsequently via social media and the main page of the website

You are therefore recommended to monitor the official HARR social media channels and HARR website for updates. It is in your own interests to ensure that you follow these channels, and that the three e-mail addresses you have given via BROE are all correct, up-to-date and different.

If the Race needs to be changed or indeed abandoned for safety reasons while crews are on the water obey the instructions of the Marshals who will be following a prescribed plan. Failure to observe instruction will put this plan and safety at risk.

In the event of the need to stop the race, marshals and umpires along the course will sound continuous short blasts on air horns, wave red flags and instruct crews to "STOP RACING". Crews must immediately slow to a light paddle and await further instructions. Failing to do so is a major safety infringement.

In the event of the cancellation of the Race, all crews in the marshalling area remain under control of the marshals and must only move from their position following receipt of specific instructions from a marshal.

Race Officials in the Putney, Hammersmith, Barnes Bridge and Chiswick areas will prevent crews from going afloat in the event of either Race cancellation or abandonment; crews are required to follow their instructions at all times. If weather and/or river conditions are poor, but not bad enough to force cancellation, the Committee may decide for reasons of safety to hold the Race over a shorter course, and possibly with fewer crews.

Enjoy your racing, and good luck!

Ben Helm

Chairman and Chief Umpire

The Head of the River Race

Dan Baillache

Hon. Secretary

