Dart Totnes Amateur Rowing Club
Water Safety Plan
Rules, Procedures and Guidelines

Revised 13 May 2026 (DJS)

(New Additions highlighted)

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1. Introduction to this water safety plan

This document sets out the safety procedures and summarises the codes of practice operated by Dart Totnes ARC and comprises part of the club's duty of care policy. Safety is everyone's responsibility and is paramount at all times, these procedures apply to all members and visitors to Dart Totnes ARC including users of private equipment.

2. DTARC water safety rules

2.1 Rowing at Dart Totnes ARC is carried out in accordance with the guidelines of British Rowing "ROWSAFE", the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (IRPCS) and the Dart Harbour Navigation Authority bylaws.

2.2 During club training sessions, the club captain, vice captains, club rowing safety advisor, coaches or other senior person in charge shall assess the river and other conditions and determine the safety status for the session. This is to be indicated by use of the coloured tabs on the outdoor safety box.

The guidelines associated with each code (green, yellow and red) are displayed in the outdoor safety box.

In the event of an assessment leading to a red code being displayed, "Adverse conditions guidelines" are to be adhered to. These are presented in Appendix C of this safety plan.

2.3 Individual crews, scullers and their coaches shall, in addition to the above, conduct their own risk assessment and plan their outing accordingly.

2.4 All crews and scullers must record their details and expected return times on the outings board.

2.5 Beginners must be supervised on the water at all times and must remain in sight of an experienced coach or senior person in charge. Inexperienced rowers or scullers (as defined by judgement of the coach or senior person in charge) shall not go further down the river than the end of Home reach unless accompanied on the water by suitably experienced persons.

2.6 No member under the age of 18 shall go out on the river unless there is a senior person in charge, and shall not go further down the river than the double bends unless accompanied by a competent experienced senior within the crew OR in an accompanying boat.

2.7 Safety features (bow balls, heel restraints, hatch covers etc) on all boats should be present and in good condition in accordance with BR Rowsafe. Individuals and crews are responsible for checking their boats before each outing.

2.8 Accidents that involve third parties or result in injury to club members or damage to club equipment must recorded as Reportable Incidents, whilst other incidents such as Capsizes and Near Misses must be noted as Recordable Incidents, in the Incident Logbook in the boat house (see below).

2.9 Limits of Navigation: In general, club members are not to proceed up-river beyond Steamer Quay due to underwater obstructions, strong eddies and limited space for manoeuvre. Fine boats should never proceed below Dartmouth Castle.

2.10 Crews must dress for conditions anticipated in appropriate lightweight sporting kit, should always bring a towel and a change of clothes and carry liquid to avoid dehydration.

2.11 Wellington boots, sliders or other watershoes with soles should be worn whilst boating to protect from hazards underfoot. Once afloat, Wellington boots must be removed immediately by crews and coxswains to avoid inhibited ability to swim if capsize occurs.

3. Emergencies

3.1 Emergency phone numbers:

Ambulance, Fire, Police or Coastguard	999
NHS Direct (non-emergency advice):	111
Doctor (Leatside Surgery, Babbage Road):	01803 862671
Doctor Catherine House, New Walk	01803 862073
Community Hospital (Minor Casualties)	01803 862622
Dart Harbour Navigation Authority	01803 832337
Dart Lifeboat Station	01803 839224
Coastguard	999
Police	999
Environment Agency	0800 807060
Torbay Wildlife Rescue Service	01803 557624

3.2 Emergency Phone locations:

A. Back of boat house (adjacent to weights area).
B. Behind bar in upstairs club house.
C. In neighbouring industrial units.
D. Any mobile phone.

3.3 Missing Crews Procedure:

If a crew or sculler has not returned 45-60mins after return time written on the black board, then CHECK:

A. Is the boat still out – check rack/ shed?
B. Have they been seen?
C. Is their car or bike still at the club?
D. Are they answering their mobile or home phone?

If not accounted for you must assume they are in difficulty, and:

A. Call the Dart Harbour Office, Brixham Coastguard and club Captain.
B. Detail one responsible person to remain at the boathouse as a point of contact.
C. Launch a safety boat with safety kit bag, mobile phone and one other person to search the river IF AND ONLY IF you are appropriately qualified and experienced to do so, PLUS inform the Harbour Office/Coastguard that you are afloat.

4. Safety Equipment

4.1 Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs –Lifejackets and Buoyancy Aids):

All coxswains, launch drivers and launch crew must wear a flotation device.

Coxswains in bow-loaders must wear a manually operated inflating lifejacket and NOT a foam buoyancy aid, to reduce the risk of getting trapped in the boat.

PFDs are kept on hooks by the boathouse door. Choose one the correct size for your activity and fit correctly, using the straps and clips provided. Wash and stow correctly after use. Report any damage. Crotch straps – where fitted – must be fastened.

4.2 Use of throw lines in Emergency

Throw lines are kept in their bags on the hooks inside the main boathouse with the PFDs

1. Get the attention of the casualty, reassure them and explain that you will use the line.
2. Position yourself on the bank with a safe footing and with regard to the path the casualty will take as they are pulled in.
3. Hold the line by the handle in one hand and throw the bag. Or, if using one of the orange “Bell” type throw lines, remove the blue plastic end cap, hold on to end of line and throw the orange canister (overarm or underarm).
4. If you miss with either device, lay the rope on the ground fill the bag or canister with water and try again.
5. Pull the casualty in steadily.
6. The casualty should hold the bag and beware of water thrown up into the face when being pulled in.

4.3 First Aid Kit:

First aid equipment is located in the red cupboard at the back of the main boat house next to the men’s changing rooms.

Contents should be checked monthly.

AED is located outside boathouse on riverside. Access code is available on “grab signs” around the inside of the clubhouse.

The Incident Logbook and Damage & Repair Logbook are kept here also.

Use of the kit should be recorded in the Incident Log Book.

4.4 Safety notice board:

The safety notice board is located upstairs in the clubhouse next to the entrance towards the ergo room.

A copy of BR Rowsafe is also kept in this area.

Members and volunteers are expected to familiarise themselves with the information and check regularly for updates.

4.5 Outings Board & Conditions for Rowing:

The Outings board is located behind the wooden box doors on the outside wall next to the main boathouse doors.

Crews and scullers should record details:

1. Time OUT
2. Type of boat
3. Crew names
4. EXPECTED TIME BACK

On return from an outing the entry must be scrubbed out.

Additional safety information may also be displayed
- river safety status,
- water temperature
- tide information
- exceptional hazards.

4.6 Launches:

The club owns three launches: Blue RIB, Orange RIB and Tinfish with outboards

Tinfish is suitable as coaching and safety/ marshalling boat.

The RIB's are suitable for coaching and rescue boat duties.

Launch drivers should:

a. preferably hold an RYA Level 2 Powerboat Certificate
b. have the club Captain's permission to drive
c. be familiar with
    I. BR Rowsafe guidelines for the use of Rescue Launches
    II. local rules of navigation
    III. the correct use of the safety equipment provided
    IV. sound signals used by manoeuvring vessels

The launch driver, crew and any passengers must wear a PFD.

Rescue equipment, paddles, bailer and spare fuel should be carried in the launch.

The Incident Logbook and Damage & Repair Logbook should be used to record any incidents and near misses which should be relayed to the Captain or Safety Adviser.

4.7 Incident Reporting:

It is a requirement of British Rowing and the club's insurers that any accident or incident is recorded.

Accidents, Incidents and Near Misses involving club members and non-club members should be recorded in the Incident Book and reported the Captain and Rowing Safety Advisor for reporting, as a matter of course, to British Rowing. This helps the club and British Rowing to identify areas where safety can be improved.

5. Local Navigation

5.1 Speed:

The speed limit for power driven vessels in most of the river is 6 knots and “dead slow” in Home Reach. When engaged in rescue operations or escorting a fast moving rowing craft, launch drivers may exceed a speed of 6 knots providing it is safe to do so and taking care to respect and safeguard other river users and, where possible, wildlife.

Rowers and scullers should proceed slowly and with caution along Home Reach and past the Club during Club Juniors and Beginners sessions.

5.2 Overtaking:

In normal training circumstances, rowers and scullers should move out towards the middle of the river when overtaking and not cut inside.

IRPCS Rule 13 applies:
“any vessel overtaking any other shall keep out of the way of the vessel being overtaken”.

Under head racing conditions, when declared by event organisers or coaches in charge, a crew being overtaken should not impede the progress of the faster boat.

However it remains the responsibility of the overtaking boat to pass safely.

5.3 Circulation:

The standard circulation pattern is anti-clockwise. All boats should in general keep to starboard and in passing circumstances should always aim to pass port to port.

Note – Craft under oars have no rights of way over powerboats or sailboats.

5.4 Side by Side training (excluding official club events, not simple overtaking)

Side by side training where the river is restricted and busy will be limited to no more than 2, oared boats of any size under any circumstances.

In particular, side by side training by more than 2, oared boats is not permitted upstream from the downstream entrance to double bends.

Furthermore, side by side training by maximum 2, oared boats is only permitted along the ranges when accompanied by a coach either on the bank or in a launch with good view ahead.

6. Boating and Landing Procedures

6.1 All boat types may boat or land at the club steps. Singles and doubles may also use the slip and are encouraged to do so at busy times.

6.2 Crews and scullers boating or landing should in general seek to do so with their bows pointing into the current flowing in the river. Even when the tide is coming in, river water may well cause the direction of the current to flow down river. Indeed it is unusual to experience strong up river current. Judgements should be made on the basis of observation of the prevailing conditions rather than reliance on tide tables.

6.3 Crews and scullers making a judgement to boat or land with their bows pointing down river should recognise and be aware that this will place them against the generally prescribed circulation pattern and may well take them directly into the path of crews heading upriver or waiting to land at the steps or slip.

6.4 Boat checks and adjustments should be made before taking the boat to the water, final adjustments to feet should be made away from the steps in order to minimise the time that the boat is at risk of grounding and to minimise waiting times for other crews.

6.5 Wellington boots should be removed as soon as is practicable by crew and coxswains when going afloat, and should not be put on again ideally until the boat is in water of a depth in which the crew can stand.

6.6 Concentration and attention to safety considerations should be maintained throughout the time that the boat is off its rack. The outing starts when the boat is picked up and is not over until the boat is washed and put away.

6.7 When carrying boats or positioning them on trestles, members should be aware of the general public walking along the river bank and should take care not to obstruct or inconvenience anyone. Boats should not be left on trestles such that they obstruct the foot path or the entrance to the car park.

6.8 Boats should, in general, not be left on trestles for any longer than is necessary to prepare the boat for an outing or wash and check it after an outing. In windy conditions, no boat should be left unattended.

7. Risk Assessment for Every Outing

Coaches, coxswains, crews and scullers should assess the risks before taking to the water. Risk is the probability of a hazard occurring (damage, capsize, collision etc) multiplied by the seriousness of that hazard (discomfort, injury, risk to life.

Listed below are some of the basic checks individuals should undertake:
(Hazards in round brackets)
[control actions in square brackets]

- Water conditions: assess wind and tide, likely changes in both and the associated likely affects on the rowing conditions. (shallow river depth, poor visibility in fog), [avoid rowing on low tides and poor visibility, wear high-viz clothing]

- Weather – temperature: is it very hot or very cold? (hypothermia, heat exhaustion) [wear appropriate clothing, take bottled water, and limit duration].

- Weather – wind speed & direction: will it cause adverse wind-against tide? (swamping, capsize) [plan ahead and do not go too far down river].

- Tide: when is high or low water? (grounding) [delay outing or return in good time].

- Boat checks: – (equipment failure, entrapment, sinking) [bow balls, heel restraints and buoyancy compartments in good order].

- Athlete competence? (capsize, collision) [beginners and inexperienced rowers to be accompanied by a coach and make sure you are up-to-date with the Clubs safety plan].

- Think ahead – plan for “what if”

  e.g. what if the junior quad I am coaching capsizes? – what is my rescue plan?

- IF IN DOUBT – DO NOT GO OUT”

Be aware that if you choose to risk putting yourself in a position that requires you or your crew to be rescued, then the lives of others - club members or emergency services - may also be put at risk.

8. Club Rowing Safety Advisor.

Ensure club rowing safety advisor is notified of any situation, incident or near miss that affects club safety or highlights a possible weakness.

9. Safety Consideration for Special Events

9.1 DTARC organises a regatta (Totnes and Bridgetown Royal Regatta), usually in June or July of each year, and holds a 3000m head race (DTARC Autumn Head) in November or December. The club also cooperates with Dartmouth Amateur Rowing Club in organising the annual Head of the Dart each spring.

9.2 Each of the events has its own safety plan and risk assessment, however these may refer to this document for some of the standard safety provisions and considerations.

9.3 The club also holds occasional informal time trials and events from time to time. These operate under the general provisions of this safety plan, however organisers may put in place additional measures where these are deemed appropriate sue to heightened risk – eg more competitors, colder waether. Organisers should take care to minimise the risk to other club members engaged in normal club activity, to limit inconvenience to these members and notify them of the intentions for the event.

10. Notes for private scullers and rowers

10.1 No less than any other club member, scullers and rowers using their own boats must be aware of all safety rules and duty of care notes. The club does not take any responsibility for personal injury whatsoever, nor does it take responsibility for damage to a member’s property.

10.2 Boat owners are responsible for ensuring that they have a minimum of third party insurance cover on their boats; boats without third party cover cannot be stored on the club premises.

10.3 Boat owners are also responsible for ensuring that their boats are licensed by the Dart Harbour Navigation Authority for use on the Dart

10.4 The club strongly recommends that single scullers do not venture onto the water alone. Lone scullers choosing to ignore this recommendation do so at their own risk and should leave word with someone that they are going out on the river.

10.5 All crews and scullers must record their details and departure time with expected return time on the Outings Board.

10.6 AGAIN: IF IN DOUBT – DO NOT GO OUT!

If you choose to put yourself in a position that requires you to be rescued, then other club members or members of the emergency services may also be put at risk.

11. Other river users

11.1 It is expected that all members will be polite, considerate and (if required) helpful to other river users. In particular, we should all bear in mind the following points:

11.2 OTHER RIVER USERS MAY NOT KNOW OUR RULES.
We may be strict within the club about keeping to the right hand side of the river, and indeed this is the generally accepted rule of navigation. However, many other river users do not know this, and if they do, by the time they get this far up what they think is a sleepy Devon river they may forget about it.

11.3 SOME LARGER BOATS MAY BE LIMITED IN WHERE THEY CAN GO.
Yachts with deep keels and the ferries have to stay in the deep water channel. If that means they are in your way, you cannot expect them to get out of it!

11.4 MANY PEOPLE WILL MISJUDGE HOW FAST WE ARE GOING.
The speed limit on the river is 6 knots and the majority of smaller boats and yachts will be travelling at this speed or slower. A reasonably good rowing crew can cruise easily at 8 knots, and in a racing piece may be doing over 10 knots. Viewed from ahead, many people will not recognise how fast we are going, and therefore how quickly we will close the gap.

11.5 BE CONSIDERATE.
Think a little about what other river users may be trying to do and be accommodating if you can.

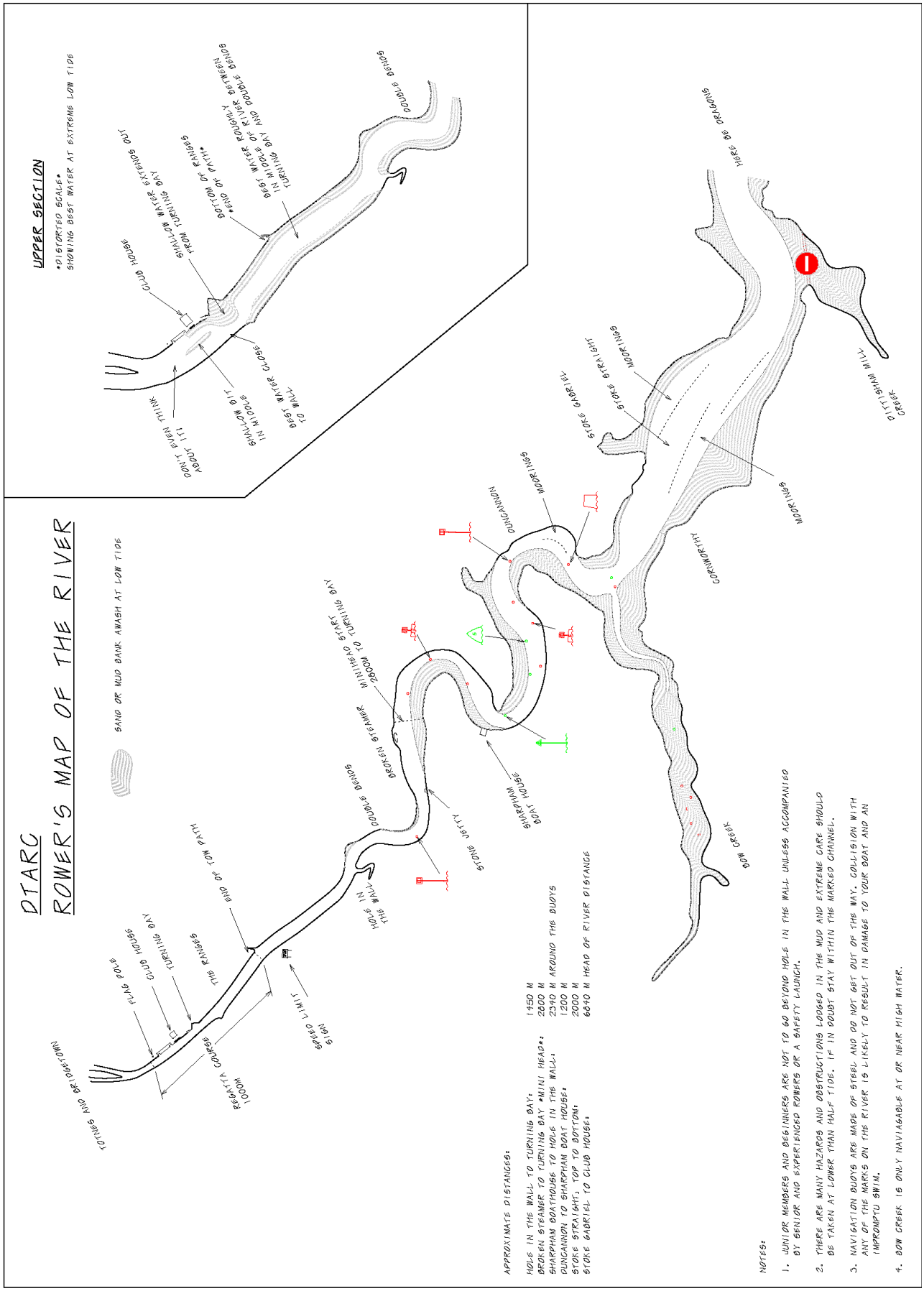
11.6 BE POLITE.
If someone gets in the way or interrupts your piece, bad language or insults are unlikely to help the situation.

11.7 BE HELPFUL.
You can help people in potentially close passing situations by making it clear what your intentions are: make a distinct course change and make it early so they can see how you want to pass. The later you leave it, the more likely they are to do something unpredictable. In some circumstances it might be helpful to explain to other river users that we, in general, will keep to the right hand side of the river so they know what they can expect from us. With a bit of luck they will see sense and do the same.

11.8 ON LAND.
Boats and other equipment should not be left on trestles such that they obstruct the foot path or are in the way of vehicles moving in and out of the car park. Vehicles with trailers aiming to launch or recover boats from the slip way need sufficient space to turn and manoeuvre.

11.9 BE AWARE OF OUR REPUTATION.
We want to be a respected and valued asset to Totnes, and be in a position to benefit from the good will of the town and river authorities. The behaviour of individual members reflects on the club as a whole.

Appendix A: River Map



Appendix B: Risk Assessment for Rowing Club Activity

ACTIVITY	HAZARD	LIKELY INJURY	WHO IS AT RISK	LIKLEHOOD	SEVERITY	RISK	CONTROLS	RESPONSE
Clubhouse	Slips, trips, bumps and falls	Cuts, bruises and fractures	Members, visitors, helpers	Unlikely	Minor	Moderate	Keep boatsheds and all clubhouse areas clean and tidy	Regular cleaning, clear obstructions and projections. Regular safety checks
Access to Water	Slips, trips and falls	Cuts, bruises and fractures	Crews, public, helpers	Possible	Moderate	Significant	Tidy boathouse and surroundings. Keep public routes and steps clear of obstructions	First aid kit and ability to call 999 at boathouse.
Carrying Boats, Boats on trestles	Contact with boats, riggers and blades	Cuts, bruises and fractures	Members, visitors, helpers, public	Possible	Moderate	Significant	Awareness of surroundings and others. Minimise number of boats left on trestles.	Supervision of juniors, regular reminders,
Rowing Outings	Collision with other craft, swimmers or obstructions	Cuts, bruises	Crews, other boat owners, public, ferry passengers, swimmers	Possible	Moderate	Significant	Ensure crews have clear knowledge of navigation and circulation rules. All competitors able to swim and use equipment in accordance with BR Safety Code. Coxes to wear approved lifejackets. Decision on red, yellow or green safety status Safety boat crews or WSO to advise/warn crews. Use of appropriate clothing, asthma puffers, sun cream, fluid intake.	Ensure safety boats carry required kit. Ensure emergency medical cover is accessible. Encourage cohort/buddy rowing and wearing of high viz clothing Advise and remind use of appropriate clothing, asthma puffers, sun cream, fluid intake. Adequate safety cover and shore sanctuary points Liaise with other river users.
	Capsize	Drowning, Hypothermia	Crews	Likely	Major	High		
	Changes in weather	Drowning, hypothermia, collapse, dehydration, asthma, fatigue	Crews, officials, helpers, spectators	Possible	Moderate	Significant		
	Sighting	Spotting boats in difficulty	Crews	Likely	Major	High		

Appendix C: Guidelines for Poor Weather and other Adverse Conditions

CRITERIA involved in decision making

- water temperature
- air temperature
- wind speed and direction
- tide/stream speed and tide times
- debris or obstructions in river
- wind against tide conditions
- poor visibility
- anticipated changes in conditions
- Dartmoor rainfall
- upper Dart river height
- age of athletes
- experience and supervision of athletes

DECISION MAKING

Club Rowing Safety Adviser, Club Captains, Coaches, Chairman or vice Chairman and experienced rowers will assess the conditions. Using the criteria mentioned above a decision will be made whether or not to CANCEL CLUB ROWING or if conditions are less severe to invoke the ADVERSE CONDITIONS GUIDELINES (ACG -code red). If conditions are unfavourable but do not merit invoking ACG then oarsmen may be encouraged to row as a group, 'buddy up' or use a crew boat (code yellow).

In order of precedence in decision making: Safety Advisor, Club Captain, Club Vice-Captains, Coaches and if none of the above available then the most Senior/Experienced rowers present.

CONDITION CODES AND ADVERSE CONDITIONS GUIDELINES:

CODE RED

- Orange rescue launch to be deployed appropriately to conditions (beside slipway or manned on the river) covering the river between Vire Island and Double Bends.
- An additional launch to accompany any boats proceeding beyond double bends.
- Down-river rowers should be in a single cohort (late comers prohibited).
- Particular care to be taken to maintain proper station (starboard bank, ie Baltic Wharf side when heading down river, club-side heading up river) and when overtaking.
- All scullers /oarsmen to wear suitable clothing (including high visibility top).
- A notice of the Decision displayed on Boating Area will be binding for established Club Events eg Vet Scullers 0830 outings; (re-grouping as individuals is disallowed unless conditions have improved and Guidelines revoked)

CODE YELLOW

- Rowing Caution, advice to Scullers: row in a crew boat, as a group or 'buddy up' with another sculler.
- Conditions may be expected to deteriorate, be aware of possible changes.

CODE GREEN

- Conditions good
- Rowing activities may proceed under normal safety guidelines.

Appendix D Tasks for Coach's, Safety Advisors, Captains, & Nominated Club Officials.

CHECKLIST
Please read details overleaf

- Agree the safety state, **Green**, **Yellow** or **Red** and display on safety board.
- Display safety code, water temperature, air temperature, time of low water/high water and write your name up. Check water safety level on Quay, no club boat to go afloat if level is in red of falling tide.
- Check launches – fuel, safety kit
- Check all throw lines are ready for use
- Assist and oversee boats from boathouse and launching
- Walk boathouses, look for hazards, tidy away obstacles, check for dangers
- Walk to the end of the ranges. Ensure crews are following directional code
- Check boats back in and 'off the water'

- IN CASE OF EMERGENCY YOU ARE NOT EXPECTED TO DRIVE THE RESCUE BOAT. IF YOU ARE TRAINED....USE IT....IF NOT, QUICKLY FIND SOMEONE WHO IS OR CAN HELP YOU LAUNCH IT.
- Most important – politely talk to others and make them aware of the club safety rules, tell them what you have done and why and ideally brief the person who will be on duty next. If you spot something you are unsure/unhappy about discuss it with party involved and the advisor of the day. If the party involved is not receptive to your advice, do not argue, simply note it and report it to the advisor

The number of the clubhouse phone is:	01803 863772
River Dart Harbourmaster:	01803 832337
Emergency Ambulance or Coastguard:	999

Appendix E: Sources of safety related information

Weather:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/2635610
https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/forecast/gbvqujhfw
http://www.xcweather.co.uk/
http://www.raintoday.co.uk/

Tide:

http://easytide.ukho.gov.uk/easytide/EasyTide/SelectPrediction.aspx?PortID=0023C

River level:

River and sea levels in England - GOV.UK (check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk)

Ferries:

Dartmouth Steam Railway And River Boat Company (dartmouthrailriver.co.uk)
Greenway & Dittisham Ferry | River Boat Cruises | Party Cruises | Charters (greenwayferry.co.uk)

British Rowing documentation:

http://www.britishrowing.org/taking-part/staying-safe/rowsafe
https://incidentreporting.britishrowing.org/
http://www.britishrowing.org/taking-part/staying-safe/further-guidance

British Rowing COVID-19:

https://www.britishrowing.org/2020/06/latest-british-rowing-advice-on-coronavirus-covid-19/

Appendix F: Summary “Rules of the River”

The DTARC water rules are in place to ensure all activities are carried out in a safe and responsible manner and all members should at some point read these and do their best to abide by them. As a reminder of the more common bits that affect our use of the river, all should please ingest the three cardinal rules set out below and behave accordingly.

This is about safety, avoidance of damage, and ensuring that we all enjoy and get the best out of our rowing.

RULE 1: KEEP TO THE RIGHT

Boats should pass “port to port”. Bear in mind however that there is not always sufficient depth of water for the full breadth of the river, so oncoming boats may be more central or indeed be restricted to the buoyed channel. This is particularly the case for the ferries and other larger vessels.

Overtaking crews or scullers, and those training side by side may take up more space. All scullers, coxes and rowers responsible for steering should maintain awareness of the situation ahead of them and make sensible decisions about how to proceed.

RULE 2: OVERTAKING BOAT KEEPS CLEAR

It is your responsibility to overtake other boats or pass obstacles safely. There is no obligation on the part of a boat being overtaken to get out of your way.

If you see a boat coming up behind you however, it is courteous not to obstruct their progress. If you are stopping, pick a safe place, tuck in to the bank if you can and make your intentions clear.

Under head racing conditions, a boat being overtaken is required not to impede the progress of the faster crew. It does however remain the responsibility of an overtaking boat to do so safely. Experienced and wise athletes will manage passing situations so they have minimal effect on the time of both crews.

RULE 3: BE CONSIDERATE

Respect the rights of others to enjoy the river as they choose; the interests of one are no better than those of another. Those “in training” have no better entitlement or right of way over others.

Give warning to other river users if needed such as calling out to alert scullers to obstructions, and avoid stopping in 'blind spots' such as on bends or at narrow points of the river.

In the event that other river users are behaving in a disruptive or irresponsible manner, it may be appropriate to advise them of your own plans so they are able to avoid disrupting your outing. However under no circumstances is bad language or other abuse acceptable, necessary or helpful in dealing with a situation. Any conduct that gives rise to serious concern should be reported to the Captain who may in turn advise the Harbour Master who is best able to deal with the problem.