



## Pairs Head of the River 2017

### Bad Weather procedure - Race GO/NO-GO

The safe conduct of the race and the safety of the competitors is the number one priority of the race committee. A key element in determining the safe conduct of the race is the weather conditions in the area of the course immediately before, during and immediately after the race.

The race committee will monitor the following elements in order to come to a balanced opinion concerning the running of the race:

- Ambient temperature
- Wind direction and strength
- Precipitation (rain, snow, hail)
- River flow rate (potentially increased from previous heavy rainfall) via the PLA Flag system
- Visibility (either mist / fog or precipitation)
- Lightening / heavy storm

There are a number of absolute weather parameters that will lead to a race **NO-GO**. These are specified below. In addition, a combination of factors may make the river unsafe to marshal / race even though all individual elements appear to be "in range".

The race is run on an outgoing stream (ebb). Therefore conditions tend to become more benign with time.

The marshalling area (Kew bridge down to Chiswick bridge) is a **NNW** to **SSE** direction (boats facing into the stream until ordered to turn and proceed to the start line).

The actual race is primarily run in a **SSW** to **NNE** direction

The race course is a large **S** shape along the **SSW** to **NNE** direction. This means that wind will affect different parts of the course in different ways. As the course only runs from Chiswick to Hammersmith, the course does not have a virtual 180 degree direction change, turning a positive wind into a negative wind or visa versa. Therefore a high wind with a Westerly to Southerly element may be perfectly rowable for the Pairs Head but may have resulted in a no-go decision for a race that went to Putney.

In broad terms, wind coming from the 90 degree axis **North to East** is more likely to negatively affect the condition of the course. This is due to it being wind against tide, often associated with rough water.

Conversely, wind coming from the 90 degree axis **West to South** is less likely to have a negative effect on the condition of the course.

As boats come up from Putney into the marshalling area, the tide may still be incoming (flood) and the river may appear different during this period to the forecast river conditions during the actual race.

The big decision for the race committee is to decide if the race should be cancelled before the actual race day. They have to balance the inconvenience of competitors assembling for the race only for it to be cancelled at the last minute against cancelling it before race day only to have perfect conditions on the day (this has happened with other races previously).

## **Race committee action timeline:**

Seven days leading up to the race date. The safety officer / chief marshal will monitor actual and forecast weather conditions. In addition, they will assess the impact of these conditions on the river along the racing course.

### **1-2 days before race date**

The safety officer / chief marshal will decide, based on current and forecast weather conditions, if the race is "likely" to be run. If the race is a NO-GO, all competitors will be advised via the existing communication channels that the event has been cancelled.

### **4 hours before race start time**

The safety officer / chief marshal will decide, based on current and forecast weather conditions, if the race is "likely" to be run. If the race is a NO-GO, all competitors will be advised via the existing communication channels that the event has been cancelled. In addition, all boathouses that host boating for the event will have a cancellation notice posted in a prominent position and key personnel will be advised to stop large scale boating. We are not able to stop people boating for non race outings if they so choose, based on their own risk assessments.

### **1.5 hours before race start time**

The safety officer / chief marshal will decide, based on current and forecast weather conditions, if the race is "likely" to be run. If the race is a NOGO, boating will be stopped and marshals will be tasked to go afloat and advise any competitors already on the water that the race has been cancelled.

This is the crucial GO/NO-GO decision point. If there is any doubt, a full course inspection may be undertaken and / or advice taken from individuals positioned at different points along the course.

**In addition, advice and input will be sought from the PLA and the Coastguard / RNLI.  
These agencies can advise that the race is a NO-GO.**

A delay may be put in place if after assessing the conditions, the trend and up to date weather forecasts, it is felt that the race can be more safely run at a slightly later time (within the bounds of the river closure).

The course may be shortened (finish upstream of Hammersmith Bridge).

There are two aspects to this decision. Is it safe to marshal the number of boats in the event and is it safe for them to race. The situation can arise where it is unsafe to marshal the boats but it may appear safe for them to row due to the prevailing wind speed and direction.

### **10 minutes before race start time**

The chief marshal will do an all stations broadcast as a final check that there are no reasons to cancel or delay the race.

### During the race

The safety officer / chief marshal will constantly monitor the situation regarding weather and river conditions. If required, the race can be delayed, shortened or cancelled based on this assessment.

Boats swamping due to river conditions is highly unlikely with the boat types in the Pairs Head (relatively small water volume in the foot wells compared to the inherent buoyancy in the bow, stern and under seat compartments). If this boat type is operated within its design limitations with all water tight hatches in place, in virtually all instances it can still be rowed / sculled effectively. In simple terms, this boat type does not readily suffer from swamping like the larger crew boats.

**The Race Committee is not in a position to judge the capability of individual crews to cope with specific conditions. Hence decisions on whether the race will go ahead will assume competence to cope with typical seasonal Tideway conditions. Each crew must take responsibility for assessing the conditions in relation to their own ability, and should not boat if they have doubts, irrespective of whether or not the race is going to be run.**

**Please read the separate Safety Instructions (issued with numbers) for contact points in the event of problems.**

### Weather and Stream Parameters

	3	2	1	0
Wind Speed	Force 5	Force 3-4	Force 1-2	Force 0
Wind Direction		NE	WS	
PLA Flag Status(1)	Red	Yellow		Green
Precipitation(2)	Take Action	Be Prepared	Be aware	None
Air Temperature		<4C		>8C
Visibility(3)	< 200m	Reduced		Good

1 PLA Flag Status <http://www.pla.co.uk/>

2 Precipitation <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/warnings>

3 Visibility <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/guide/weather/severe-weather-advice/fog>

**Any** parameter that meets the column 3 criteria would mean the event is cancelled.

Other columns show the perceived risk level to the event, severity increasing by column number. Any combination of factors may mean restrictions are put on the event escalating to **cancellation** if necessary.

