



Water Safety Plan and Rules

Introduction

This document covers how those involved in rowing activities at Henley Rowing Club must act in particular circumstances to keep themselves and others safe.



Although the information included within this policy is aimed at specific elements for rowing safety at Henley Rowing Club, please also reference the British Rowing RowSafe online document.

This resource covers a much wider spectrum of guidance and is designed to help people participate in rowing without putting themselves and others at unacceptable risk. It makes clear that everyone is expected to take care of their own safety and the safety of others.

<https://www.britishrowing.org/about-us/policies-guidance/rowsafe/>



Contents

Introduction	1
Contents	2
Safety Policy	3
Is it Safe to Row?	4
Flowrate / Levels	5
Weather	7
Temperature	8
Time of Day and Year	8
Visibility	9
Navigation & Hazard Map	10
Navigation Rules	11
Overtaking / Give Way	11
Navigation	12
Rowing Downstream (Henley Rowing Club towards Hambleden Lock)	12
Rowing Upstream (Temple Island / Hambleden Lock towards Marsh Lock)	15
Local Hazards	18
Dealing with an Emergency	19
Club Launches	20



Safety Policy

Henley Rowing Club has a zero tolerance for anyone being harmed as a result of our members' participation in the sport.

We believe that harm is not an inevitable consequence of our activities and that incidents that cause harm can be avoided. We strive to provide an environment in which the sport can be practised safely and enjoyably by our members. We guide and lead our members in a way that fulfils these aims.

We recognise that our members have primary responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others. The Club, through its Trustees, Officers and Committee, encourages safe practice having due regard for the guidance provided by British Rowing in RowSafe

<https://www.britishrowing.org/about-us/policies-guidance/rowsafe/>.

The Club is also committed to learn from the incidents it becomes aware of and will share this information to help others in the sport to learn too. We are committed to make appropriate use of British Rowing's Incident Reporting System

<https://incidentreporting.britishrowing.org>.



Is it Safe to Row?

It is everyone's responsibility to consider their own safety and the safety of others involved in the activity being undertaken.

Irrespective of the other factors:

- **Never take unnecessary risks.**
- **Operate within your competence level.**
- **Consider impacts of your health, injuries, fitness, and wellbeing.**
- **Avoid single sculling when dark or no one else around.**

Whether it is safe to row must be based on (but is not limited to) the factors below. The club guidelines related to these, are available further down this document.



Flowrate / Level

The Environment Agency website displays river conditions. **RED** indicates strong flows making the river difficult and dangerous to navigate.



Weather

Weather covers several factors - temperature (high or low), wind speed and direction, the potential for being affected by rain, thunder & lightning. All of which go towards risk assessments.



Temperature

Risk must be assessed based upon the time of year and ambient air temperature. These also give an indication of the water temperature. It is important to be aware of the dangers of cold water.



Time of Day
and Year

Rowing in the dark is not encouraged. Due to reduced visibility near sunset and sunrise, suitable clothing and lighting need to be used.



Visibility

Conditions will dictate visibility. For the safety of the crew and other potential river users, it is not just the need to see and be able to navigate BUT also the need to be seen.

These factors can be used as guidance before going out on the water. **However, members must always carry out their own risk assessment to decide whether it is safe to go out. IF IN DOUBT, DO NOT GO OUT!**



Flowrate / Levels

The main stretch of the River Thames used by Henley Rowing Club for regular training sessions is between **Marsh Lock** and **Hambleden Lock**.

The stretch of water by Henley Rowing Club's boathouse can vary from other parts of the river, due to its proximity to Marsh Lock weir, the islands opposite the club and Henley Bridge. These are all factors for consideration, irrespective of any data that may be available for reference.

Members must be aware that the flow of the river can change during the day, or even during an outing, as the Environment Agency may open or close sluice gates further up or downstream.



The Environment Agency's current river condition status and any associated stream warnings between the locks can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/river-thames-current-river-conditions>

A red **CAUTION STRONG STREAM** status indicates strong flows / high water levels, making the river difficult and dangerous to navigate, especially near to locks/weirs.

However, the chart below can be used to understand when crews can potentially still boat.

The cut-off points in the chart are based on defined flowrates. As there is no flowmeter at Henley, the **flowrate at Reading** will be used for Henley Rowing Club guidance.

Reading flowrate - http://environment.data.gov.uk/flood-monitoring/id/measures/2200TH-flow--Mean-15_min-m3_s or <https://www.gaugemap.co.uk/#!/Map/Summary/1070/1139>

Also, be aware of the guidance on rowing when the **water quality is poor** <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Guidance-for-Rowing-When-Water-Quality-is-Poor-March2025.pdf>.



EA Status	Flowrate	HRC Rowing Activity
Amber	35 to 69m ³ /s	No Learn to Row No inexperienced rowers in small boats (singles, doubles, and pairs). All other boats should • have experienced steerspersons, • have experienced coxes, or • be supervised by a coach. All rowers to have completed a club approved capsized drill. All launch drivers must be club approved.
Amber / Red	70 to 99 m ³ /s	No novice rowers or scullers No J13 or J14 squad rowing Junior squads (excl. J13 & J14) may row if approved and accompanied by their coach, who is responsible for the decision. Only experienced adult crews and regular scullers who are sufficiently competent and experienced to undertake their own risk assessment, or if required with assistance from the captain, safety adviser or a senior coach. Boats must have experienced coxes or experienced steerspersons ...and should have at least 4 blades (i.e. no singles or pairs). All rowers to have completed a club approved capsized drill. Ideally and where possible, safety launch must be on duty, or an experienced coach must accompany crews / squads. All launch drivers must be club approved.



Red	> = 100 m ³ /s	No Rowing from HRC Following a risk assessment, experienced crews may seek permission from other local clubs to boat from a pontoon below the bridge. In this case: All rowers to have completed a club approved capsized drill. Safety launch must be on duty, or an experienced coach must accompany crews / squads. All launch drivers must be club approved.
-----	---------------------------	--



Weather

When undertaking water-based activities, before going out, refer to weather sites such as www.metoffice.gov.uk or various phone-based apps to understand what the weather will look like during any outing.

Outside of temperature considerations, wind is a significant factor when deciding if water activities should take place. Between Henley Rowing Club and Hambleden Lock, wind can drastically affect the safety of anyone on the water.

Wind conditions can be looked up on the Met Office website or via dedicated services such as www.windy.com (also available as a phone app). This enables a basic understanding of localised wind speeds, potential for gusts and their associated direction.

If white crests are visible on waves, rowing must not take place.

If thunder & lightning has occurred or is expected, use the 30/30 rule.

- DO NOT go on the water if the time from flash to bang is < 30 secs.
- DO NOT go on the water until 30 minutes past the last clap of thunder.

If **lightning** occurs whilst out on the water, get off the water and into shelter as quickly as possible. Refer to the British Rowing Safety Alert for further information <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Safety-Alert-Lightning-August-2020.pdf>.



Temperature

Rowers must ensure they are wearing suitable clothing and must have a change of clothes available when undertaking water-based activities.

Irrespective of an individual's experience, rowing is a water sport and events such as capsizing, swamping and even pontoon-based accidents still occur. When the ambient air temperature and water temperature are low, the risk of cold-water shock leading to hypothermia and drowning significantly increases.

Be aware of the dangers experienced when an unexpected cold-water immersion occurs. The table below highlights the four stages of cold-water immersion and how it can lead to escalating outcomes.

Stages		Predominant Risk	Approx. Timings
Stage 1	Initial immersion	Cold water shock	0-3 minutes
Stage 2	Short term immersion	Swim failure	3-15 minutes
Stage 3	Long term immersion	Hypothermia	~30 minutes
Stage 4	Post rescue	Collapse hours after rescue	Hours afterwards

A useful website to understand the temperature of the water at Henley is available here <https://dl1.findlays.net/show/temp/thames1> (although monitored at Shiplake).

Refer to British Rowing 'Cold Water Immersion & Hypothermia' for more information <https://www.britishrowing.org/knowledge/online-learning/safety/cold-water-and-hypothermia/>.



Time of Day and Year

Rowing in the dark or in poor visibility is not encouraged. Those going out in the dark, must consider whether their outing is necessary.

Any boat expected to be on the water during night hours or at low light such as dawn/dusk, **must be mounted with lights at the bow and stern** (not on the riggers, unobstructed non-flashing white lights). Refer to the Safety Alert for additional information <https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Safety-Alert-Lights-on-Rowing-Boats.pdf>

Those at bow and single scullers **MUST** wear high visibility top during any low visibility outing. This is strongly advised for all crewmembers.

From 1st October to 31st March the bow rower and single scullers **MUST** wear a high visibility top for all outings. During this autumn/winter period, it is mandatory for all Juniors to wear high-viz and strongly advised for all adult crew members. Crews/scullers not complying with this requirement will not be permitted to boat.



Visibility

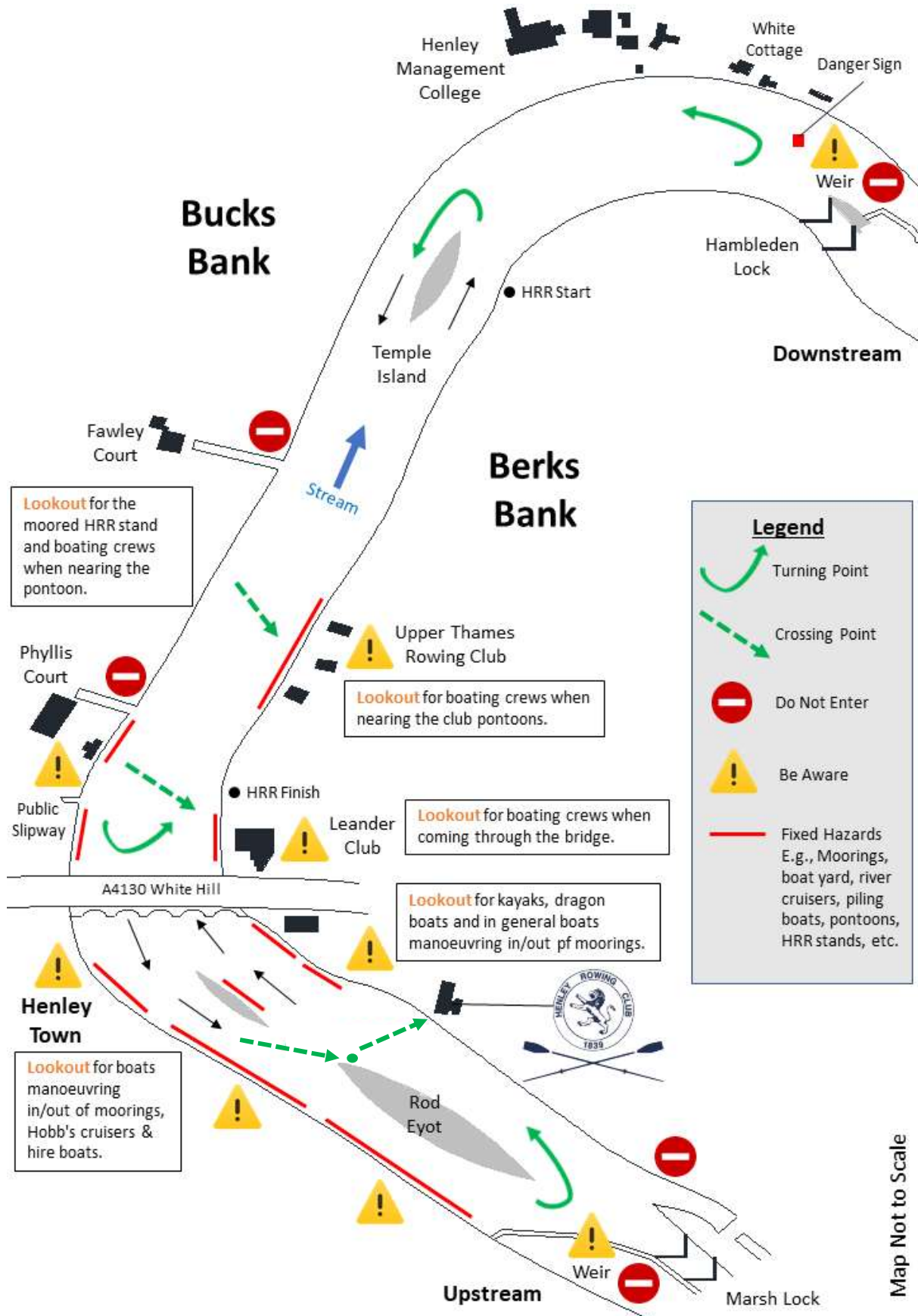
Although visibility can be open to interpretation, it is expected that common sense is used. Visibility at the club (fog or other) may differ from further downstream, so when conditions dictate a suitable risk assessment must be made.

NO CREWS ARE ALLOWED TO BOAT WHEN VISIBILITY IS LESS THAN 150m.

When visibility is 500m or less, as per rowing in the dark, lights must be used, and high visibility clothing must be worn by the crew. Refer to the time of day section above to see requirements for lighting on rowing boats.



Navigation & Hazard Map





Navigation Rules

- Rule is to *keep to the right* to avoid risk of head on collision.
- **Downstream** – keep to the **Berkshire** Bank (same side as Henley Rowing Club, Leander & Upper Thames).
- **Upstream** – keep to the **Buckinghamshire** bank (Henley town side).

Overtaking / Give Way

- **Always move out of the way of faster boats.**
- When travelling **downstream**, stick to the bank (or move into the bank) and let the faster boat pass.
- When travelling **upstream**, move out from the bank to let faster crew go past, although don't go too far over towards the centre of the river. Move back into the bank immediately afterwards.
- Remember, as we are rowing backwards, faster crews can't see you – **calling out to make a crew aware is a good habit but move out of the way too.**
- Also, crews returning after their outing have priority at HRC landing stages/pontoons over crews that are going afloat.



Navigation

Rowing Downstream (Henley Rowing Club towards Hambleden Lock)

From Henley Rowing Club

Go afloat with bows facing upstream. Boats coming off the water have pontoon priority.

Before pushing off, check that it is clear and give way to boats coming downstream. Especially when busy (e.g. at peak weekend times) or the river flow rate is fast (red or yellow EA stream warnings), cross the river rowing over to the island and proceed upstream until your boat is at least fully upstream of the pontoons, and give space for other crews.

When it is busy or the river flow rate is fast, avoid turning immediately in front of the Club. When safe to do so, turn quickly (anticlockwise) into the downstream navigation channel on the Berkshire/Club side. Turn with plenty of space from other boats.



Henley Bridge

Then proceed downstream to Henley bridge always keeping a good lookout and not at full pressure when passing in front of the Club.

Pass through the bridge using the **2nd arch from the Berks bank.**

Never use the centre arch, leave clear for cruiser traffic and always avoid the outside arches.

In a faster stream, take a line parallel to piers of bridge.





Leander Club

Look out for:

- Crews boating from Leander.
- Crews crossing to Leander.
- Other crews turning.



Upper Thames Rowing Club

Look out for crews boating from or returning to Upper Thames.

Crews may be crossing to or from the Bucks side bank.



Fawley Court

Beware of the kink in the river.

There is a potential for a dangerous situation with crews rowing upstream moving out from the bank to let faster crews past. Crews choosing a faster line downstream, may stray past the centre of the river.



Temple Island

When travelling downstream, Temple Island must be the left-hand side for the cox or stroke side (red blades).

Look out for crews turning near the bottom of the island.

When turning here, do so between the bottom of Temple Island and the public footpath gate.





Coaching near Temple Island

When rowing past the island, always stick to the bank with your crews whilst instructing.

Under **NO CIRCUMSTANCE** are boats allowed to wait side by side and block the river from others.

Seasonal : Henley Royal Regatta

Please be aware, navigation changes come into effect during regatta session.

During this time, make yourself aware of what has changed. If in doubt, ask a coach or captain or safety officer.



Henley Management College

The river turns sharply between Temple Island and Hambleden Lock. Here it is easy to stray into the middle of the river when trying to navigate the bend.

Beware of crews travelling in the opposite direction and try to stay as close to the respective bank as possible.



Hambleden Lock

Stay at least 100m away from the entrance to the lock and **DO NOT** turn around or get close to the **DANGER** board.

Turn anticlockwise before reaching the White Cottage. Turn opposite the flint house or earlier upstream when the river is flowing fast.





Rowing Upstream (Temple Island / Hambleden Lock towards Marsh Lock)

Henley Floating Grandstand

Once past Upper Thames, be careful when staying close to the Bucks bank by Fawley Meadows. Ensure enough space is left to pass the floating grandstand, which is usually docked here when not in use.



Phyllis Court

Look out for crews boating from or returning to the pontoons at Phyllis Court.

Also be aware of boats that may be mooring up or casting off between here and Henley Bridge.



Turning Point / Public slip way

The turning point is alongside the public slip way **NOT** the regatta finish which is just after Phyllis Court.

Beware of boats mooring or casting off.





Henley Bridge

Pass upstream through the bridge using the **2nd arch from the Bucks bank.**

Never use the centre arch, leave clear for cruiser traffic and always avoid the outside arches.



Hobbs of Henley

Be extra vigilant when coming past the Hobbs of Henley boating area. River cruisers may be birthed in parallel, whilst hire boats may not always follow the navigation rules depending on the experience of the person in control.



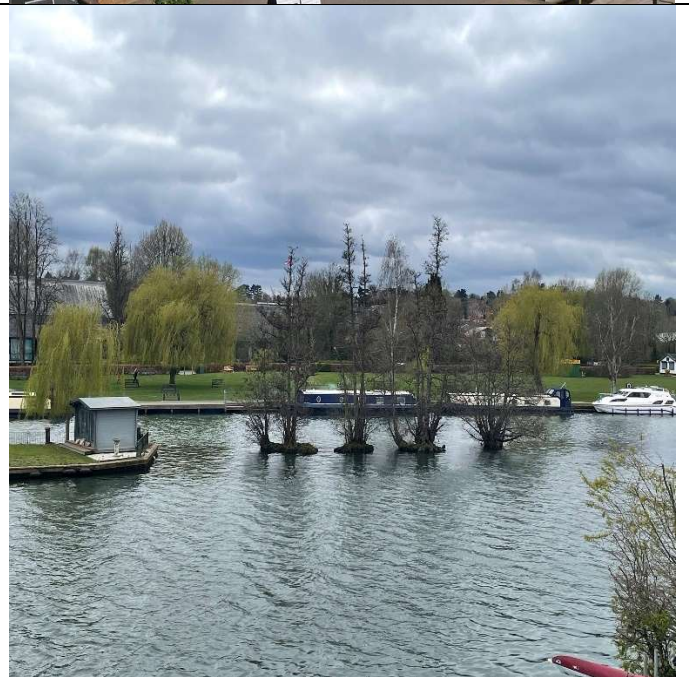
Returning to Henley Rowing Club

When returning to the club, row upstream between Catherine's Island and the Bucks bank. Then paddle between the two islands, watch out for boats coming downstream and stop close to the 2nd island (Rod Eyot) opposite the Club. When it is safe and there is space on the pontoons, then cross the river carefully and go onto a landing raft.

If no landing space, queue by the trees in the middle of the river (not outside Hobbs boat yard), until a raft available.

Returning crews have priority over crews that are boating.

Crews must always paddle light in front of the boathouse, continually looking out for other craft.





Rod Eyot and Marsh Lock

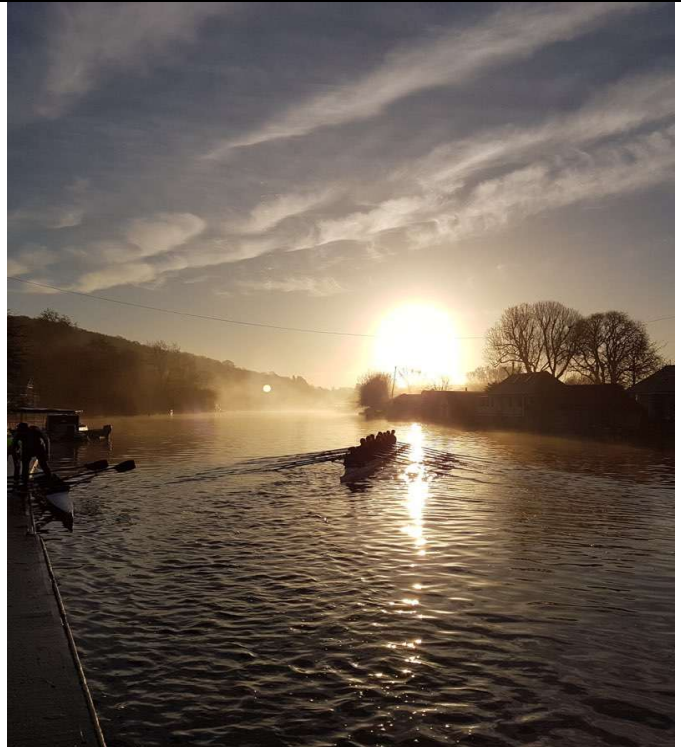
If turning upstream of Rod Eyot, be aware of traffic coming out of Marsh Lock and the strong stream from the Weir.

Turn quickly, well upstream of the eyot.

Once moving downstream, keep to the Berks side. Returning crews must go downstream past the Club and both islands, before turning anticlockwise at Hobbs boat hire (not their boat yard) and return to the Club as above.

Look out for beginners in this area.

Irrespective of direction of travel, all boats must come into the pontoons, with the bow upstream.



Additional Information

Further information related to navigation rules can be found here

<https://www.henleyrowingclub.co.uk/safety/>.



Local Hazards

The stretch of the River Thames used by Henley Rowing Club can be a busy throughout the year and is used by various types of craft.

Just because members of the club know the navigation rules, never assume river users are as knowledgeable.

At suitable intervals, look over you left and right shoulder, whilst also listening out for other river users or calls from other boats.

If required to make other river users aware of your presence - call out.

Although not limited too, below are some hazards to be conscious of when out on the clubs stretch of water:

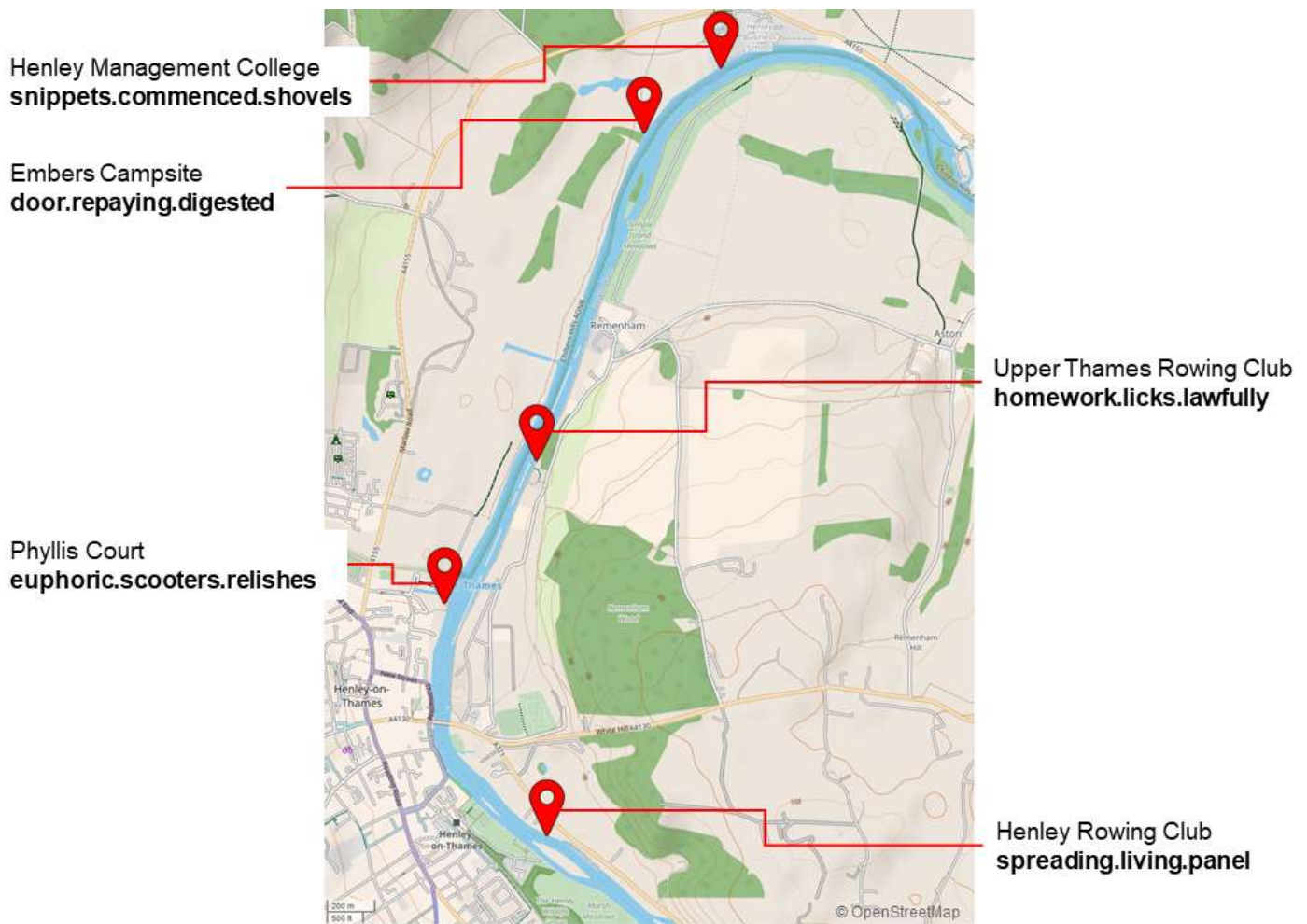
- Stream
- Weather conditions
- Henley Bridge
- Temple Island
- Catherines Island
- Rod Eyot
- Hambleden Lock and Weir
- Marsh Lock and Weir
- Booms
- Other clubs' pontoons
- Moorings & moored craft
- Other leisure craft – Barges, Canal Boats, Hire Boats, Cruisers, etc.
- Other club crews – Canoes / Kayaks, Dragon Boats, Paddle Boarders, etc.
- Open water swimmers
- Crews undertaking time trials.



Dealing with an Emergency

Whilst out on the water, each boat (without an accompanying coach) must carry a mobile phone in a waterproof container, so that, if necessary, the safety launch (if on duty) or contact emergency services can be contacted.

Club members must be aware of the locations along the local stretch of the river where emergency vehicle access is possible. This and the associated what3word locations are shown below.





Club Launches

Coaches and club members using launches must be authorised and preferably RYA power boating level II certified. Authorisation must be sought from the Captain or Water Safety Officer.

On Saturdays and Sundays between 7am and 13pm, launches must stay upstream of Henley Bridge unless the launch is called to provide assistance downstream of the bridge.

In addition to the launch requirements mentioned in the 'Is it safe to row?' section above, one launch should always be available for emergency during Saturday and Sunday training sessions.

- Anyone using a launch must wear the appropriate life jacket.
 - These are available in the old boathouse, alongside the keys & drybags.
 - Always check the life jackets condition & trigger mechanism before use.
- Ensure all launch basic checks are undertaken **before** starting the engine.
- Always wear a kill cord attached to the driver's leg when the engine is running.
- Ensure any onboard launch equipment is left in position after use.
- When using a launch, ensure the drybag containing the appropriate safety gear is onboard during use, returning it to the boathouse once the activity has finished. Notify the Water Safety Officer or Captain if items have been consumed, so they can be replaced.
- Log the date and hours of usage in the logbook once finished.
- Spare petrol is to be kept in locked up in flame proof cabinet.
- Do not leave the launches empty of petrol after use (If you are not able to fill up, please notify the Captain or Boatman).

[---End of Document---]