

MAIDSTONE SMALL BOATS HEAD

SAFETY PLAN

Sunday 1st March 2026

River Medway at Maidstone, Kent

What is it?

A processional timed race over approximately 2500m upstream on non-tidal water on the River Medway in Maidstone, Kent, organised by Maidstone Invicta Rowing Club (MIRC) under the rules of British Rowing and the guidance in Row Safe. For course map see Appendix One.

Participants

The race is open to any gender appropriate for the event entered as determined by BROE, and to any British Rowing affiliated rowing club. The race is open to single and double sculls, pairs, coxed quads and coxed fours. All competitors must be registered with British Rowing with an Adult or Junior RACE Membership, or have purchased a British Rowing day-ticket membership for the competition.

Safety duties of umpires and race officials

The Small Boats Head (SBH) Event Rowing Safety Adviser is Suzanne Davies (ERSA). The Race Committee Chair is Sam Gilbert Ward (RCC).

Safety is the prime duty of umpires and all race officials. They will be positioned at the key points on the course and be equipped with a radio, and a megaphone if appropriate. They should also carry mobile telephones and have essential telephone numbers set up as contacts. Officials will be positioned to ensure control of the start and finish areas and that there are no parts of the course not covered by a line of sight (see Appendix Two).

Their role is:

- To ensure that the event is run in accordance with the rules and procedures laid down in this Safety Plan.
- To inspect the course and surroundings, in their vicinity, for hazards and suggest any improvement action that may be necessary.
- To study the proposed plan for the running of the event and identify any shortcomings or improvements and communicate these to the Organising Committee via the RCC or ERSA.
- To observe competitors and spectators for any behavior likely to cause a hazard and take preventive action.
- To institute any immediate changes to safety practices that they deem may be desirable or necessary and report same to the RCC or ERSA.
- To submit a written report on any accident observed or any hazardous action that has taken place to the RCC or ERSA.
- To promptly report any urgent or immediate problems on the day of the event to the RCC and/or the ERSA.
- To use their 'best endeavours' to ensure that the guidance contained in Row Safe is followed by the event and competitors.

Training of officials

As the SBH takes place on a single day, training in safety can only be carried out to a limited degree, mainly with respect to specific hazards. The committee will therefore only use helpers who are competent for their tasks or, under strict supervision.

Emergency Assistance

If safety help or emergency services are needed the umpires and race officials on the spot should decide whether they should summon safety boat support either directly or via the RCC, or should dial 999. Preference is to contact the RCC by radio or mobile telephone (as he/she is best placed to direct assistance to the correct location), relaying, if necessary, via other umpires/officials, stating the type and location of the accident that has occurred and the help that is required. If summoning the emergency services the location should be clearly stated by reference to the nearest road access e.g. 200m from Moncktons Lane going towards Allington Lock, or, at Springfield 200m from Moncktons Lane towards Maidstone etc.

Vehicle access points to the course:

- **Race start:** Lock Lane, Forstal Road, ME14 3AU, at the Malta Inn downstream of the start marshalling area. Town/Towpath side.
- **Race start:** Allington Marina, Castle Road, ME16 0NH, just downstream of timed start location. Far bank side.
- **Mid course:** Moncktons Lane, ME14 2PY. Town/Towpath side.
- **Opposite Rowing Club:** LA Fitness and Canoe Club, ME16 0SN. Far bank side
- **MIRC Clubhouse:** James Whatman Way, ME14 1LQ. Town/Towpath side.
- **Race finish:** Archbishop's Palace, Bishops Way, ME15 6YE. Town/Towpath side.

First Aid

First Aid will be provided by qualified First Aider, Leighton Cooley, positioned at MIRC Clubhouse with access to the course via a bike/launch if needed and who will be in radio communication with the RCC and race officials.

Casualty Department

The nearest is at Maidstone Hospital, Hermitage Lane, Barming, reached via the A26 Tonbridge Road or via the A20 London Road.

Telephone 999 in an emergency and state which service is required (Ambulance).

Safety Boats

Safety boats will be positioned on the course, and should all have boat equipment bags, as per British Rowing Row Safe guidelines, and survival blankets. Drivers should be RYA level 2 qualified or have been approved by the Organising Committee as competent. Locations of safety boats are shown in Appendix Two. There will be a minimum of three safety boats positioned at the start, mid course and finish. Safety boats will be equipped with radios and can be summoned by a course umpire/marshal or the RCC as appropriate.

Row Safe

All competing boats and crews are expected to comply with the minimum standards set out in the British Rowing 'Rules of Racing' and the guidance in 'Row Safe'. A Control Commission will be in place at the boating area to carry out a random check on boats and will prevent crews boating if necessary. Particular attention will be paid to bow balls (in good condition), heel restraints (shoe heel not able to rise higher than horizontal to the shoe fixing to the stretcher), steering, lifejackets (no self inflating lifejackets or flotation suits in front-loader boats and properly fastened) and appropriate crew clothing. This however does not relieve coaches and clubs from their responsibility to enter only competent crews and "safe" boats that are able to deal with all prevailing conditions and potential race situations. As recommended in Row Safe, all boats other than single sculls should have a backstay fitted to the bow rigger(s).

Race cancellation

Weather forecasts will be monitored for a minimum of one week prior to the competition date. The ERSA and RCC will consult with the Organising Committee if there is any concern over the likely conditions. When considering if conditions in the run up to, or on the day of, the competition whether conditions will be safe for racing the race organisers will take into account the following details:

- The level of experience of the competitors.
- The age range of the junior competitors.
- The time on and off the water competitors will spend waiting to boat and marshal.
- The narrow nature of the course and specific hazards around boating and marshalling.

Should the weather be of concern in advance of the day of the competition a decision will be taken jointly by the RCC and the ERSA, in consultation with the Organising Committee as to whether the competition should be cancelled or certain competitors excluded on safety grounds. If the conditions are a concern on the day of the competition the ERSA and RCC will assess whether the start of the event, or division, should be delayed or in an extreme case, cancelled.

The criteria listed in the competition Risk Assessment will be used when assessing if the event should be cancelled which take account of:

- Water flow rate
- Water and air temperature
- Wind speed
- Other weather conditions such as snowfall or high levels of rainfall which could make travelling to the competition and conditions on the club site dangerous.

Please refer to the competition Risk Assessment on the competition website for the full criteria.

Updates and timelines on possible cancellation of the race will be published on the competition website at <https://maidstoneinvicta.co.uk/msbh/msbh/>

Hazards and Risk reduction.

These have been identified in the competition Risk Assessment which is available on the competition website page. A summary together with the actions required is as follows:

- **Movement of boats within the trailer park, boathouse area and launching area:** Marshals will be responsible for ensuring that boats are brought to the launching area in an orderly fashion with boats for launching kept back from the ramp gates until those coming off the water are clear. Supporters and others must be warned to keep clear. Marshals must ensure that boats are launched without delay and not left unattended. Adjustments must be carried out away from the launching area.
- **Moored boats:** Competitors should note that there are moored boats at various places along the river bank. Yellow buoys are positioned on the approach to and along the Ford's Wharf/Castle Quay (Sewage Works) bend, on the bend opposite the club and to mark any temporary hazards. Officials will be located in these areas to give warning to approaching crews.
- **Capsize:** Should a capsize occur the nearest umpire/official shall contact a safety boat for assistance by a method agreed before the race with the RCC, meanwhile making the area safe by advising the RCC (who will give notice to all other officials), forewarning other competitors approaching the area and rendering assistance.
- **Other boat movements on the course or on the approaches:** The river is not subject to a closure. A Notice to Mariners will have been issued by the Environment Agency advising that the race is taking place and letters sent to boat owners and boatyards. All officials should be aware that a boat entering the course is a possibility and should it occur they must contact the RCC.

Meanwhile request the boat to pull over, in a safe place, to allow the race to continue. In the event of non-cooperation, advise the RCC immediately and assess whether the race should be stopped.

- **Crews marshalling at the start and finish:** At the start, bank and water marshals will instruct competitors to form up in numerical order along one or other bank thereby keeping the centre of the river clear. At the finish, competitors must row clear of the finishing line and follow the instructions of the marshals and marshal as indicated in the race circulation plan. The centre of the river must be kept clear for other boats finishing. Competitors disobeying this rule may incur a time penalty. See Appendix Three for Circulation Diagrams.

Dangerous/Anti-social behavior:

Marshals, other officials and umpires should warn competitors or any other person whose behavior could impair the safety of themselves, or others and details should be recorded. The RCC must be informed. Persistent offences can be identified and appropriate disciplinary action taken which can include the disqualification of the competitor, crew or whole club concerned. In the event of serious anti-social behaviour by a member of the public towards competitors or spectators the RCC should be informed so that appropriate action can be taken.

Race Suspension:

In the event that an incident arises which means that the division is not able to safely continue, then the following action should be taken by race officials. A likely incident causing a suspension of racing will be either a capsized or collision (or both) which causes either a total or partial obstruction to the course. Under these circumstances the closest umpire must make a decision as to whether racing can continue. If the obstruction is only partial it may be possible for racing to continue with boats being slowed and steered around the incident. This should only be considered if this presents no potential hazard to the rowers concerned in the incident. Also, the umpire's first consideration must be to render assistance to the affected crews until additional assistance arrives, which may mean that he/she cannot keep an eye on other racing crews.

If there is a judgement that racing can safely continue ensure that the start umpire and RCC are aware of the incident and of the decision before rendering assistance to crews. Umpires on the start side of the incident should then warn crews as they pass of the incident ahead of them and the starter should hold back any further crews from starting until clarification that it is safe to proceed with the race.

In the event that the umpire on the spot decides that racing cannot safely continue (and this should always be the fall-back decision which will be fully backed by the Race Committee) take the following action.

Put out blanket call to all locations – 'All Stations, All Stations'.

Give your umpire call sign (name) and location (eg Springfield Bridge).

State 'STOP RACING, STOP RACING, STOP RACING'

Give reason 'CAPSIZED CREW IN WATER, CAPSIZED CREW IN WATER'

Ensure that at least one other umpire acknowledges and then you can get on to dealing with the incident on hand. Other umpires hearing this over the radio should take the following action.

STARTER. Stop the start immediately

BANK UMPIRES. If you are umpiring on the start side of the incident instruct crews to stop and await instructions. If you are on the finish side of the incident you can allow racing to continue so times can be taken. Be aware that safety boats may be making their way along the course to the incident and that this may interfere with racing crews.

Once the incident has been cleared, and it is safe to do so, the umpire on the spot should radio the start.

The start umpire should then check in with the RCC that it is safe to restart the race and then get the start under way. Crews which were on the course and had to stop racing will not be able to re-row the race unless it is possible to safely return them to the start or accommodate them in a later division.

Course evacuation for thunderstorm:

In the event of a thunderstorm the Race Committee will use the 30/30 criteria as a minimum to decide on whether to suspend and when to restart racing. Due to the time required to return crews from the start to

the club and then get them ashore (estimated at 15 to 20 minutes) an earlier decision may be taken to suspend based on forecast data.

If the RCC and ERSA decide that is if unsafe to continue racing, then the following procedure will be followed:

1. Radio messages will be sent to all officials saying that racing is to be abandoned, and to await further instructions.
2. If boating is still under way then no further crews will be allowed to boat, and the landing stage cleared to receive incoming crews.
3. All safety boats to remain where they are to monitor / assist crews returning to pontoons.
4. Crews marshalling at the start and on the course should be instructed to return (at best safe speed) to the club landing stage. Once ashore they should take shelter in the boathouses or training hut. Crews close to, or marshalling at the finish, should be instructed to leave their boats and take shelter under the two large concrete road bridges.

Accident log:

An accident log should be kept by the event secretary, or alternatively, radio traffic may be recorded and officials/umpires shall provide written evidence to the Race Committee of any dangerous occurrence, warnings given etc. Accidents should be reported to BR via the online reporting system.

Course safety:

A plan of the course will be displayed at Crew Registration and at the boathouse, copies of which will be sent to each of the competing clubs with their entry details. The course will be inspected by the event secretary or other agreed person on the day of the event prior to the race commencing. Any new hazards identified will be added to the course plan at Crew Registration.

Junior competitors and helpers

Officials and representatives of the Clubs involved will be acting in 'Loco Parentis', and supervision will need to be more intense and careful because of the higher degree of risk, and the expectation of a high degree of care by parents and others that are responsible for them. Particular care must be taken to ensure that all equipment is in safe and full working order and that appropriate clothing is worn to provide adequate protection during the event. Competitors not suitably attired will not be allowed to compete. Clubs must ensure that Race Registration has a contact telephone number for a responsible club adult who is attending the race.

Safety Plan

A copy of this Safety Plan should be made available to each club with their entry details. It is acceptable for a link to be sent to the event website.

Copies of the Safety Plan will be sent to each marshal, official and umpire who will be briefed on the contents together with their own specific responsibilities before commencement of the event.

The Race Committee Chair and Crew Registration will have a mobile telephone to summon assistance if requested by a race official over the short wave radios.

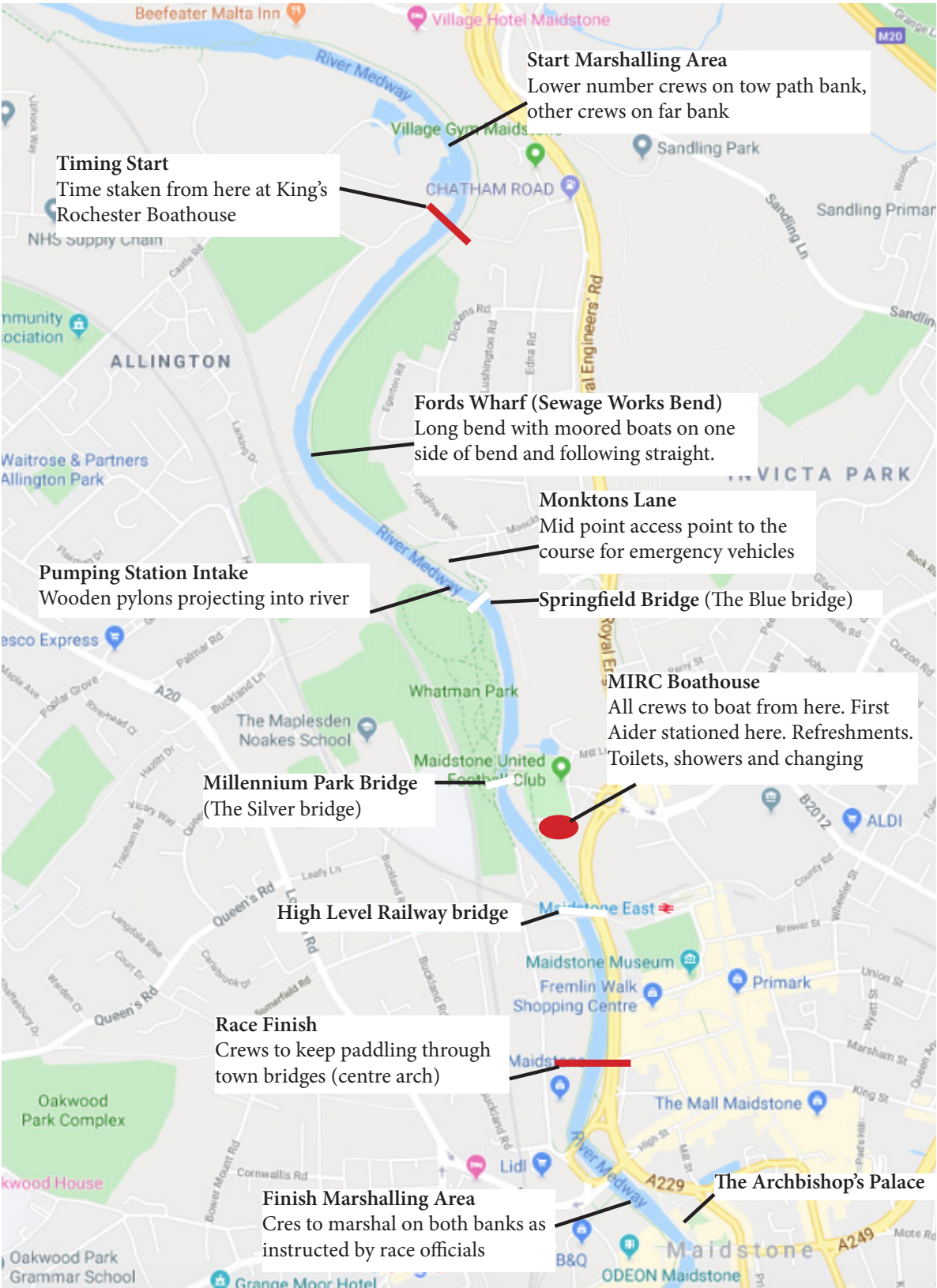
Showers and changing rooms are available within the MIRC training hut. Due to the fact that we have seniors and juniors sharing the facilities the showers and changing rooms should only be used with permission from Race Registration. Juniors must be chaperoned at all times by an adult nominated by their own, or the Event's, Welfare Officer. Competitors are reminded to bring a complete change of clothes with them on the day.

Appendix One – Course Map

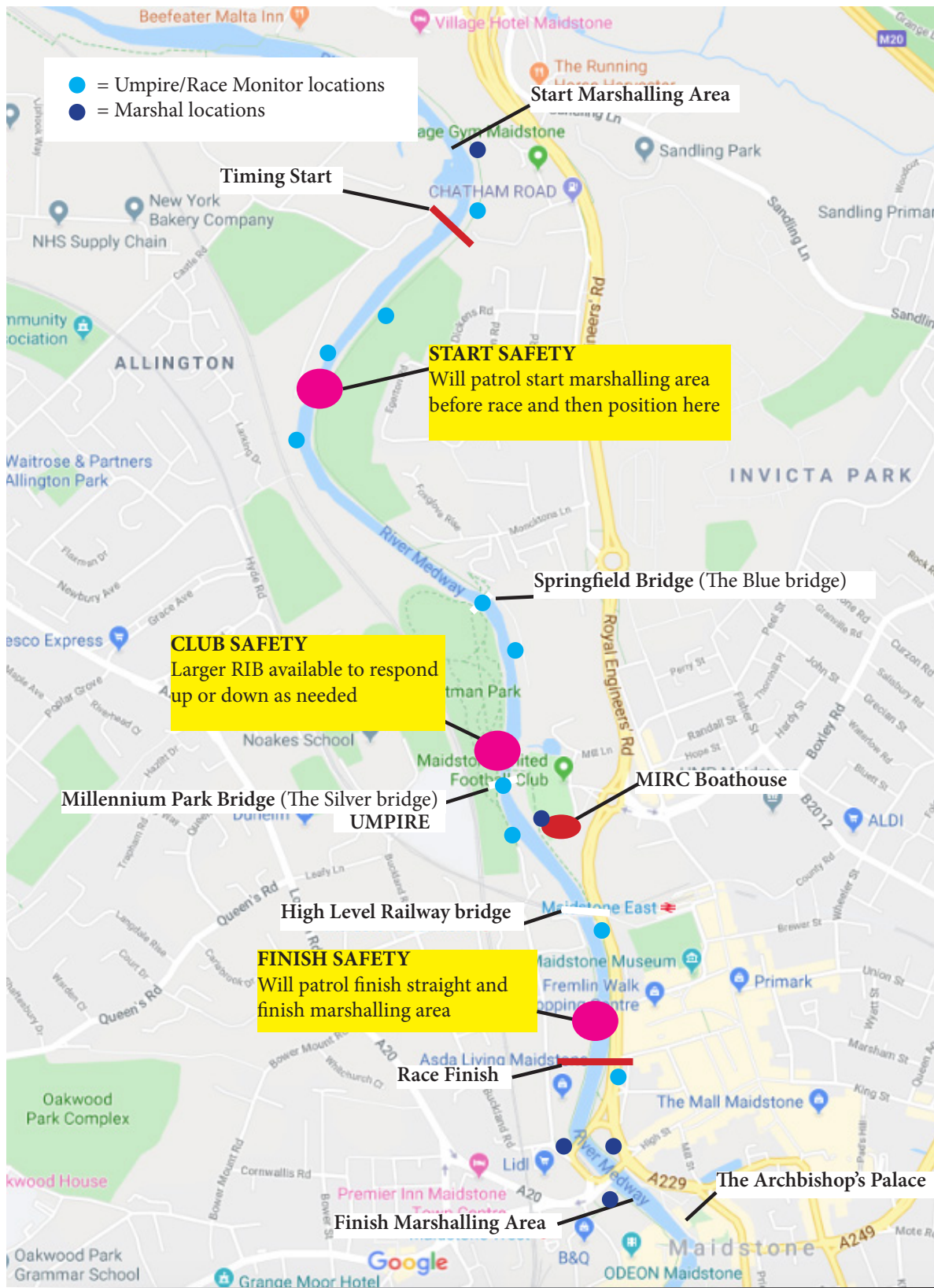
Appendix Two – Position of Safety Boats, umpires, race monitors and marshals

Appendix Three - Circulation Patterns

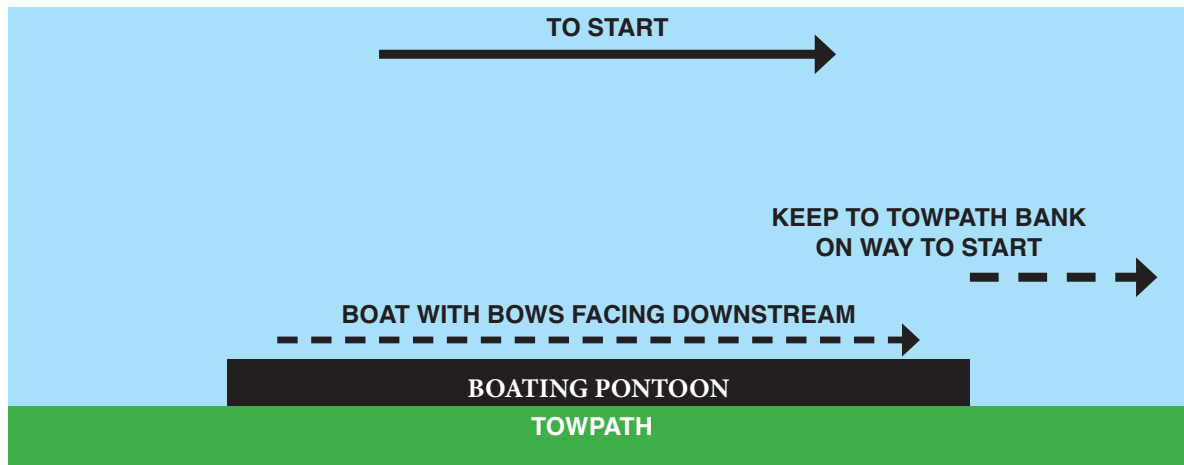
MSBH Course Map



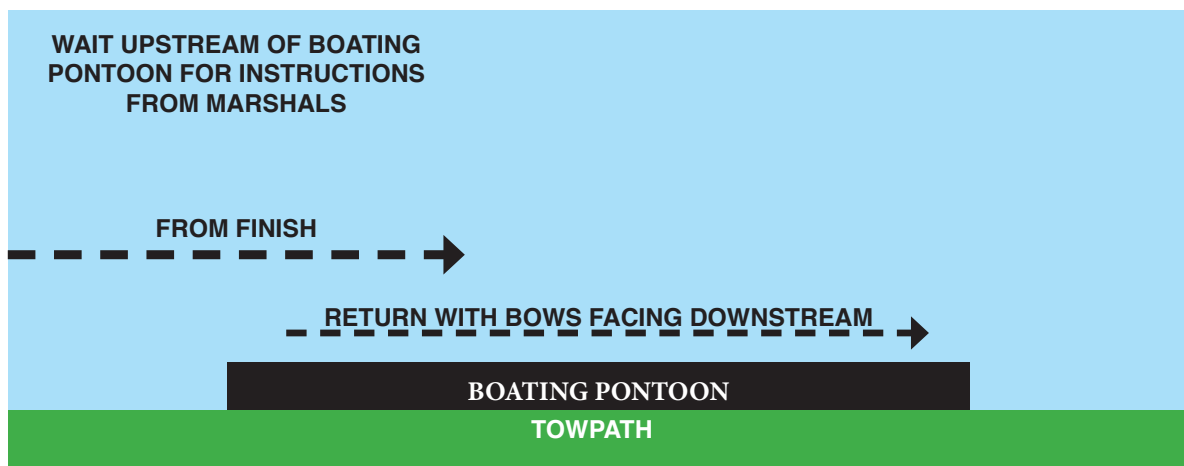
MSBH Safety Boats, Umpires/Race Monitors and Marshals



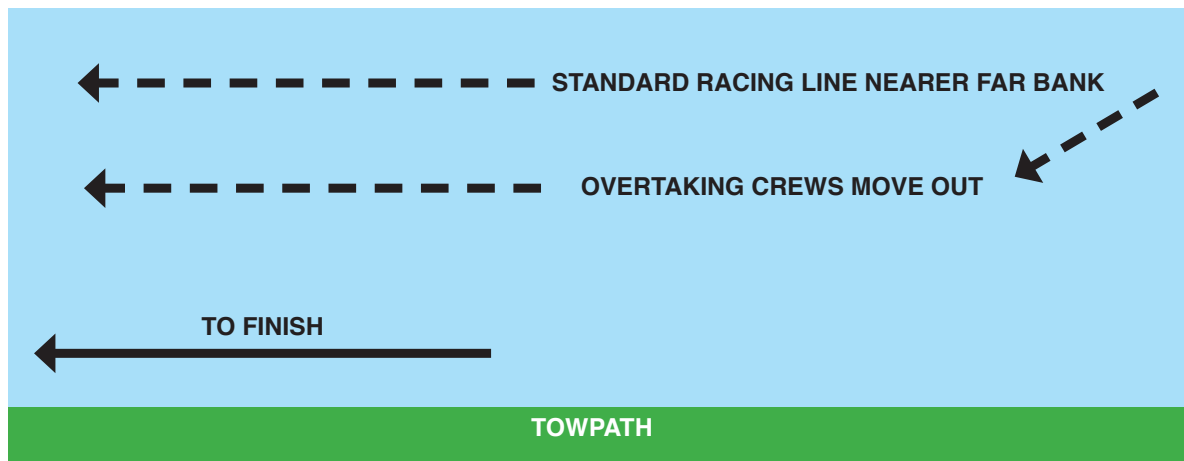
BOATING



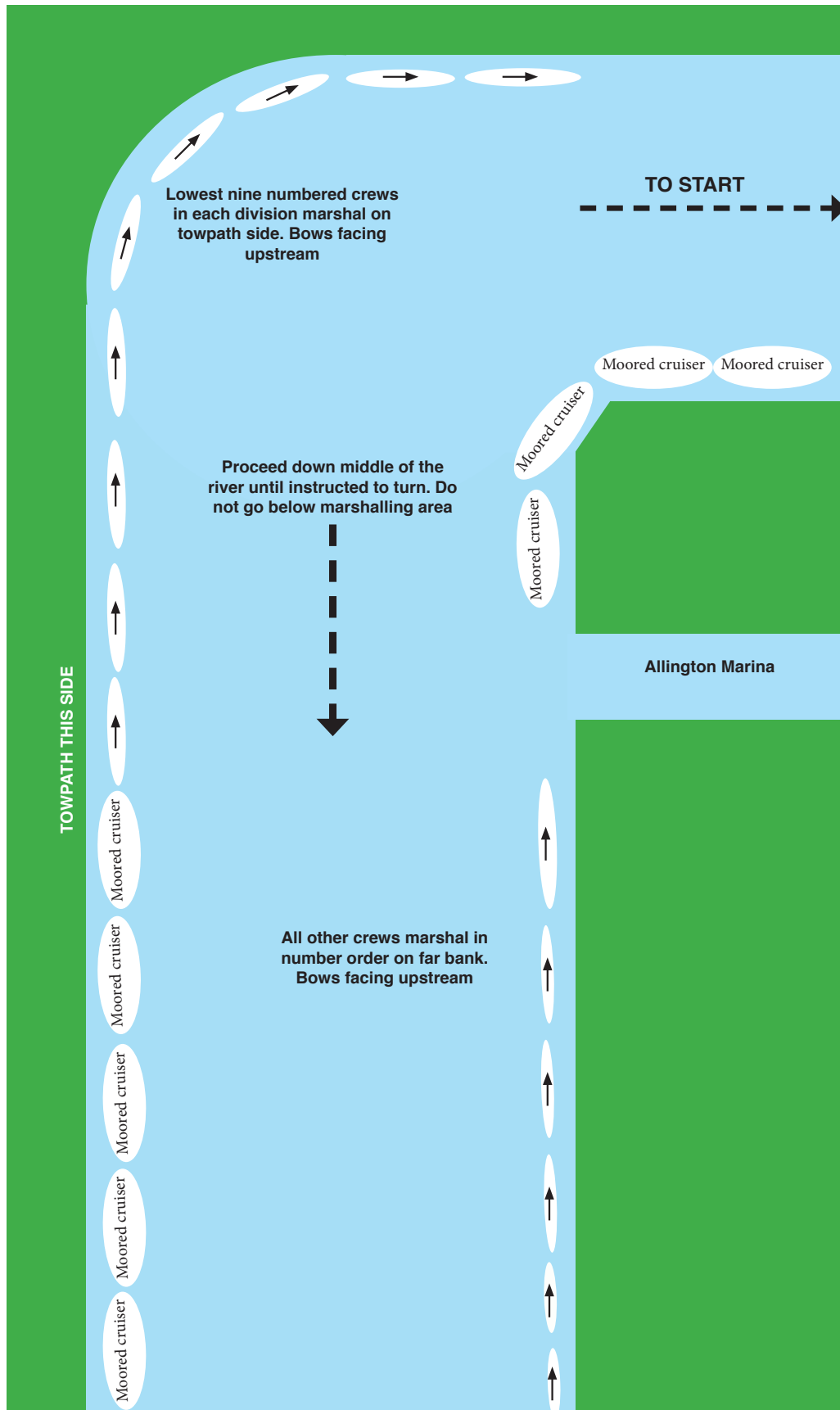
LANDING



RACING NAVIGATION



START MARSHALLING AREA CIRCULATION PATTERN



FINISH MARSHALLING AREA CIRCULATION PATTERN

