



# The Women's Eights Head of the River 2026

COURSE: University Stone, Mortlake, downstream to Putney Pier: 4 ¼ miles.

## INFORMATION FOR CAPTAINS AND CREWS

### NAVIGATION RULES

All coxes must be familiar with The Tideway Code – a Code of Practice for Rowing and Paddling on the Tidal Thames. This can be found on the PLA website at <http://www.boatingonthethames.co.uk/>. The Code of Practice contains navigation rules and guidance which must be followed outside of the race river closure. All boats must have Boat IDs as at [www.britishrowing.org/clubs/club--codes](http://www.britishrowing.org/clubs/club--codes) (overseas crews bringing their own boat should contact British Rowing for a code). **Crews breaking this rule may be penalised.** During the river closure (11:15am to the end of the race), crews should be in the middle of the river when travelling with the tide and as near the bank as conditions allow when travelling against the tide. All incidents on the tideway either during the race or otherwise should be reported at <http://incidentreporting.britishrowing.org/>. Incidents during the race should also be reported to the race organisers.

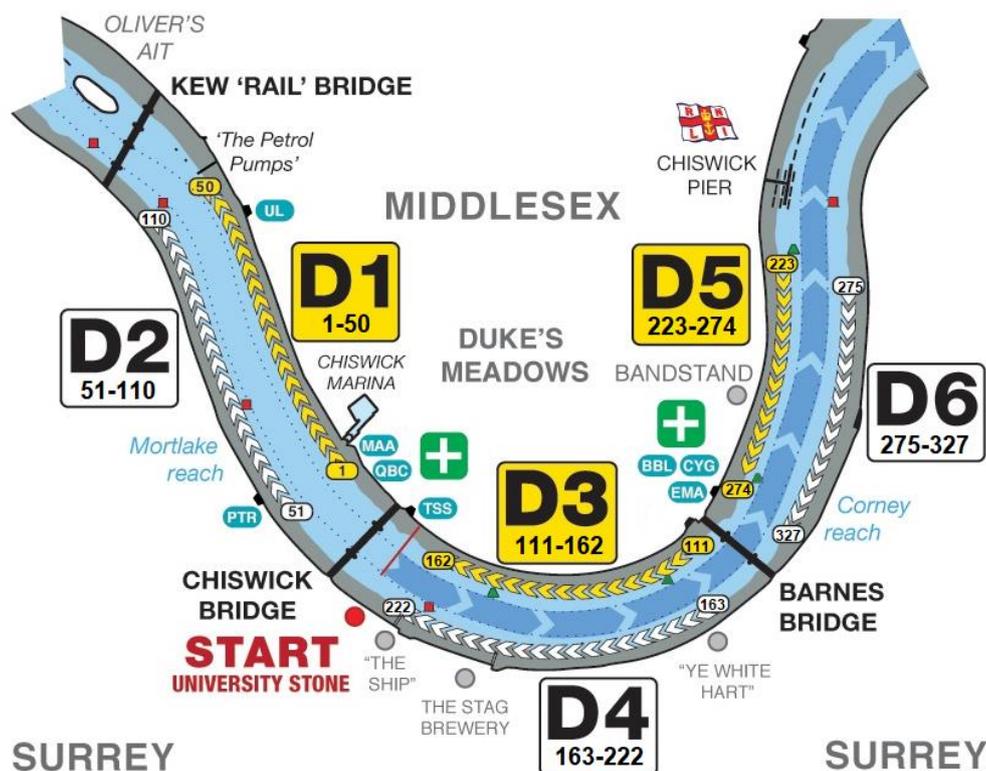
**YOU MUST TAKE GREAT CARE AROUND ALL BRIDGES & FIXED / MOORED OBSTRUCTIONS AT ALL TIMES.**

**2026 – SAFETY PINS WILL NOT BE PROVIDED IN YOUR RACE PACKS THIS YEAR, TO HELP AVOID WASTE. PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN, OR TAKE ONLY WHAT YOU NEED WHEN YOU COLLECT YOUR PACK. CREWS MUST RETURN THEIR BOW NUMBERS ON RACE DAY OR RISK A FINE.**

### NAVIGATION AND MARSHALLING INSTRUCTIONS

**A) MARSHALLING – GENERAL**    **All crews MUST be in position by 12:05pm**    **Late crews may be penalised**

Safety launches will patrol the marshalling area and the course from 11:15am to 2:45pm. In the interest of the crew members' safety, all instructions issued by the marshals must be obeyed immediately. Safety control and a doctor will be at Chiswick Pier House until the end of the river closure - telephone 07967 343 670 (Safety Advisor). Between 11:00am and 2:30pm please contact an event official if there is an incident. Outside of these hours, dial 999 and ask for the Coastguard if there is a waterborne incident.



**EBB TIDE ► DOWNRIVER ►**

Crews will be marshalled in number order by division (see marshalling map on page 1):

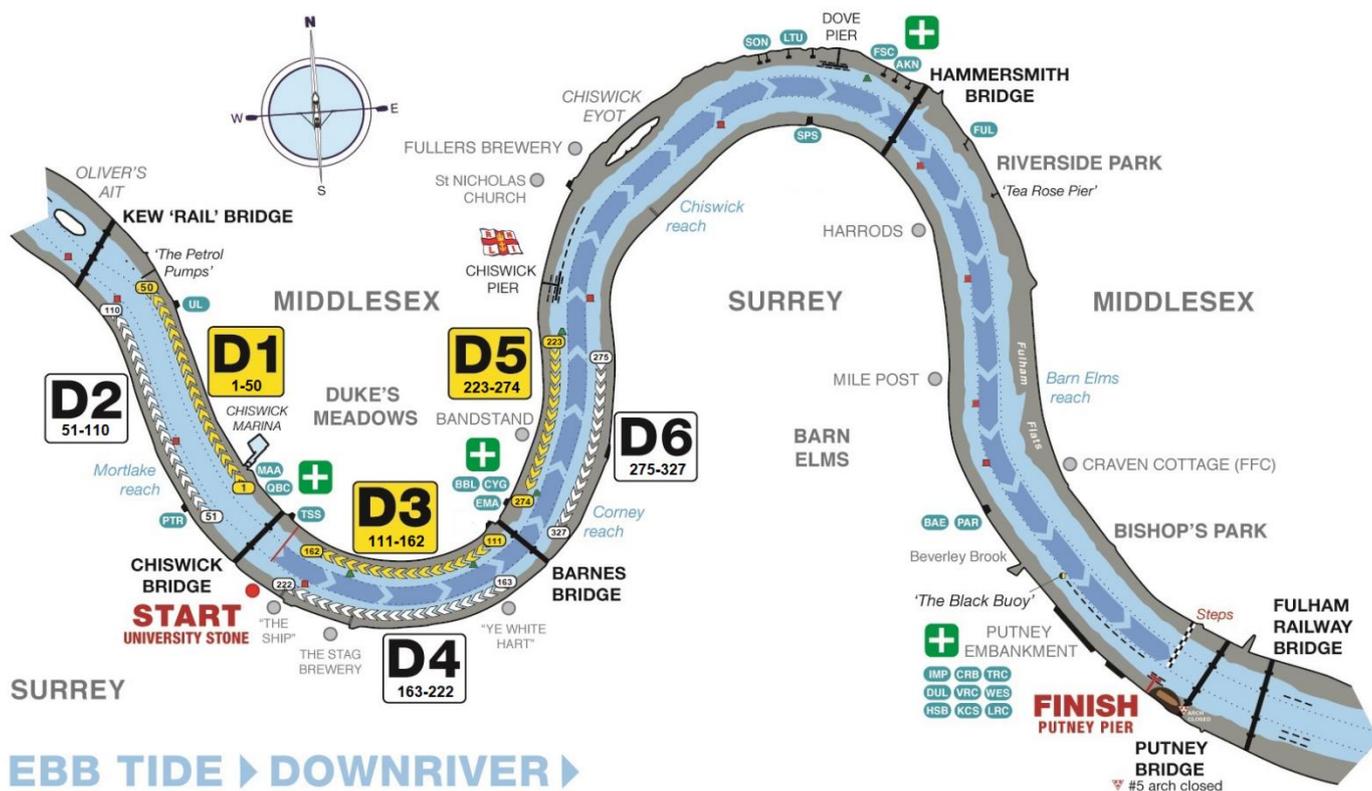
- DIVISION 1 **Crews 1 to 50** MIDDX bank from just above MAA BH to Kew Rail Bridge (1 nearest MAABC)
- DIVISION 2 **Crews 51 to 110** SURREY bank from steps above Chiswick Bridge to Kew Rail Bridge (51 nearest Chiswick Bridge; gap at Putney Town RC steps)
- DIVISION 3 **Crews 111 to 162** MIDDX bank, in descending order below Chiswick Bridge (162 by Chiswick Bridge)
- DIVISION 4 **Crews 163 to 222** SURREY bank, in descending order below Chiswick Bridge (222 by Chiswick Bridge)
- DIVISION 5 **Crews 223 to 274** MIDDX bank, in descending order below Barnes Bridge (274 by Barnes Bridge Ladies RC)
- DIVISION 6 **Crews 275 to 327** SURREY bank, in descending order below Barnes Bridge (327 by Barnes Bridge)

Check on which side and in which area of river you need to marshal. Note that higher number crews are upstream.

**Race numbers must be displayed while marshalling and racing.** All crews will be issued with 3 paper numbers, one for the back of the cox (outside of life jacket), and two for bow (one for back of racing vest and one for outer clothing).

**If numbers are not visible when racing, you are unlikely to be given a time.**

**B) GETTING TO THE MARSHALLING AREA (on the outgoing tide, during the river closure)**



**Crews boating from Putney** should allow **at least** an hour to row to the start, and in strong stream conditions it can take 75 minutes. Allow time to queue and go afloat in addition to this.

Coming up river from Putney or Hammersmith, keep to the SURREY (south) bank between Putney and the Chiswick Steps crossing. On reaching the Chiswick Steps crossing, crews in Divisions **1, 3 & 5** should cross to the MIDDLESEX (north) bank, above the red buoy. Crews in Divisions **2, 4 & 6** should remain on the SURREY side.

Coming down river from Kew or Chiswick, keep to the centre of the river. When turning into your marshalling position, make a U-shaped turn, moving to the bank as you turn to ensure you do not end up sitting in the middle of the river facing the wrong direction.

**Race pace or firm pressure is not permitted in the marshalling area at any time.** On arrival at the marshalling area crews will receive instructions from the marshals. Failure to obey their instructions will result in disqualification.

**CREWS MUST NOT CROSS THE RIVER ABOVE BARNES RAILWAY BRIDGE after 12:00pm**

In other areas, marshals will only allow crews to cross if it is safe to do so. Any crew out of position after the specified times is likely to be marshalled out of order and may be asked to start after the last crew. If you are late, you will most likely be requested to stay on Surrey and go all the way up through Chiswick Bridge on Surrey behind Division 6.

## C) RACE START

The signal to turn by division will be given by the marshals, and crews must immediately turn into the middle of the river and row in number order through the centre arch of Chiswick Bridge to the Starters launch. This will be moored downstream of Chiswick Bridge. **Crews must leave at least one length of clear water between boats** and you may be penalised if you fail to do so. **There is a one-minute gap between division 1 and 2; a two-minute gap between crews 103 and 104; a three-minute gap between crews 142 and 143; and a five-minute gap between crews 274 and 275.**

Crews will have a rolling start. The starter will start each crew by calling its number and saying "Go", e.g. "Number 1, go". Timing will start a little downstream of this point. The start line is marked with a banner saying "START" and is opposite the large pole outside Tideway Scullers, about 90 metres after the bridge.

As Division 1 turns and starts, Division 3 will move into position above Chiswick Bridge; Division 5 moves up likewise. As Division 2 starts, Division 4 will move up above Chiswick Bridge; Division 6 moves up likewise. Divisions must move up as quickly as possible, and crews will be penalised if they cause a delay. **You should row full crew unless you are sorting kit (which should be done in pairs with the other six rowing on).**

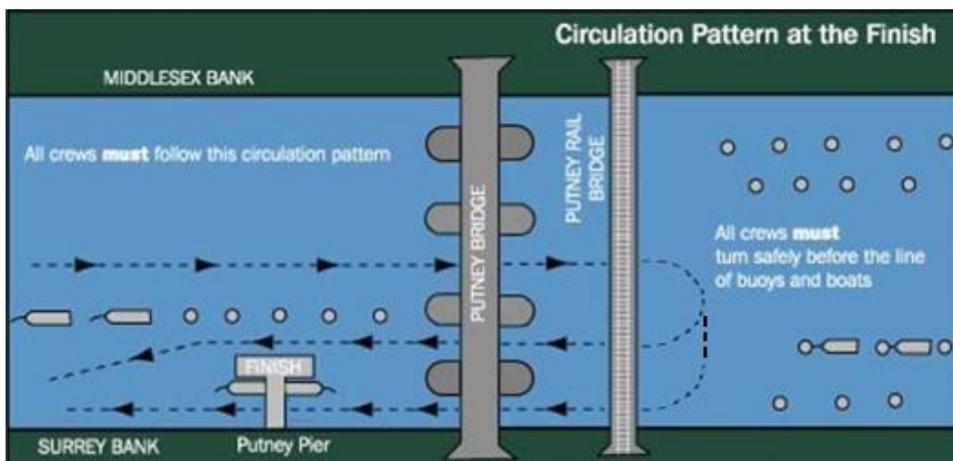
## D) THE RACE

**Safety is paramount. Boats being overtaken MUST give way, and boats overtaking MUST do so safely.**

Observers will be posted along the course, and failure to observe this rule may result in time penalties, or, in extreme cases, lead to disqualification. Crews wishing to register an objection must do so to the Chief Umpire on 07970 252 681 within 30 minutes of the last crew crossing the finish. Note that your time can not be reduced if you are obstructed by another crew.

**The fastest racing line is fairly central in the river at all points.** No crew should attempt to race inside of the green and red permanent navigation channel buoys as they could collide with marshalling or returning crews and may be penalised. Between the start and the Bandstand there will be marshalling crews and launches on both sides of the river, so racing crews **must stay central**. All boats must row through the centre arch of all bridges and must not race between the bank and any moorings. The finish line will be marked by a banner saying "FINISH" on Putney Pier about 150 metres before Putney Bridge

## E) AFTER THE RACE



**At the finish DO NOT STOP.** Returning crews are requested to use both arches of the bridges to the Surrey side of the racing line in order to minimise congestion in the area, provided there is sufficient water to do so. This should be the case for at least Divisions 1 to 3. The route behind Putney Pier should also be open for returning crews in the earlier Divisions. It is imperative that all crews obey the instructions of the marshals in the finish area, particularly as the tide drops and the Surrey arch may no longer be passable. If the Combined Sewer Outfall at Putney shows either a red or amber light, you must **not** use the Surrey arch nor row behind Putney Pier.

Crews going into Putney Clubs should be nearest the bank and crews going back upriver should take the outer lane to avoid congestion. **All crews must proceed to well above the Black Buoy before stopping to put on any additional clothing**, keeping out of the way of the race itself. Be aware of other crews around you and move out of the area as quickly as possible.

Crews returning to upriver boathouses from Putney **must proceed with great caution**. Racing crews are quite often out of the stream and close to the bank – make every effort not to interfere with their race, even if they are out of position on the river. **Stay in single file where possible, and if you move out to overtake do so rapidly and keep a good lookout**. This is when accidents are most likely to happen.

Crews returning to Fulham Reach should report to the marshals in the vicinity of Harrods. Crews returning to boathouses between Hammersmith Bridge and Furnivall should report to the crossing marshals at Hammersmith Bridge who will advise them when they may cross. Crews returning to Sons of the Thames and Latymer should report to the crossing marshal near St Paul's School for permission to cross. Crews disobeying these instructions are liable to disqualification.

All other returning crews must keep to the SURREY bank until you reach the Chiswick Steps crossing where there will be a crossing marshal if the race is still in progress. **If the race is still in progress you must wait to cross under instruction from the crossing marshal**, then cross promptly to the MIDDLESEX bank and stay on that side until you reach your destination or, for crews returning to Putney Town RC, the Chiswick Bridge crossover. Please be patient. **If you are returning to a club upstream of Barnes Bridge you must wait downstream of any crews still marshalling to race**. If you are returning to Putney Town RC, you may need to wait until the last crew has started before using the Chiswick Bridge crossover to return to SURREY.

**ANY CREW INTERFERING WITH RACING CREWS WILL BE DISQUALIFIED.**

#### **F) ABANDONMENT PLAN**

In case the race has to be abandoned at any time while crews are marshalling or racing the following procedure will apply and be strictly adhered to:

- Crews, on hearing sirens and/or seeing marshals waving red flags will immediately STOP. They will wait to be instructed on how and where to proceed by a marshal. They must maintain a sharp lookout for other crews in the vicinity who may not have heard or seen the warnings and are continuing with marshalling or racing. If necessary, they must move to avoid any collision with such a crew.
- Marshals will wait for instructions from the Chief Marshal, who will be in constant communication with the Race Safety Advisor, and once the cause and location of the problem has been determined, the Chief Marshal will put the abandonment plan into operation.
- Depending on where crews have boated, whether or not the Race has started and the number of crews still being marshalled, they may be asked to either paddle lightly downstream under the direction of the marshals (if they have boated from downstream of the marshalling area), or turn on to one of the banks and wait to be sent upstream if they boated from one of the clubs at or above Chiswick Bridge.
- A crew may be asked to proceed downstream of all marshalling crews before turning on to one of the banks.

#### **G) OBJECTIONS or COMPLAINTS**

Crews wishing to register an objection must do so to the Chief Umpire on **07970 252 681** within 30 minutes of the last crew crossing the finish. Note that your time can not be reduced if you are obstructed by another crew.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

It is each crew's responsibility to familiarise itself with these race specific instructions and local rules of the river, and to ensure that your boat conforms to British Rowing's Water Safety Row Safe guidelines. When making an entry, club Captains must ensure that their crews are fully briefed and competent to race in the conditions likely to be experienced on the Tideway. On the day of the event, every individual participant must, with the help of a responsible adult where appropriate, carry out their own personal risk assessment before boating. That risk assessment must include fitness, health, equipment and technique to determine whether or not they are able to race in the conditions as they find them.

**EQUIPMENT** The organisers do not accept responsibility for crews or equipment. Crews race at their own risk. In the event of any failure of the steering mechanism on your boat you must immediately stop racing, slow down, move off the racing line when safe to do so, and seek assistance. It is important that crews do not put themselves or others at risk by trying to finish the race with defective steering.

**LIGHTS** All crews are actively encouraged to have lights on their boats at all times on Tideway. In accordance with Rowing on the Tideway, a flashing white light should be used on the bow, and a steady white light on the stern. Each light should be firmly fixed to the boat, be visible for 800m and through 180°. Spare lights should be carried at all times.

**COACHING** In the interest of public safety, following crews by bicycling along the towpath is not condoned.

**CREW CHANGES** must be given to the Entries Secretary who can be found on race day at Thames RC in Putney. All crew members must be either British/Scottish/Welsh Rowing registered (excluding overseas crews).

**RACE NUMBERS** can be collected from your host club and must be returned to the point from which they were collected or a charge of £30 will be incurred. To minimise waste, safety pins will not be provided in race packs in 2026. Please provide your own, or take only what you need from the box when you collect your race pack.

**BOATING:** Wherever you wish to boat from, please obtain permission from the Clubs involved. **If you are boating from a Putney boathouse** as a visiting crew, please comply with the parking instructions as shown on the parking permit and please obey any instructions you are given by the Police, Traffic Wardens or our stewards. When unloading and loading boats at Putney **you must leave sufficient room for emergency vehicles to pass.** Any failure to comply with parking instructions may lead to all crews from the relevant club being penalised in the race.

If there is a queue to boat at Putney, you may find it quicker to walk your boat along the hard to a quieter area away from your parked trailer. **Boat in time to reach your marshalling spot by 12:00pm**

**CREW COMPETENCE:** If a Club enters a crew (including the coxswain) deemed not to be sufficiently competent to race, the crew will be escorted off the course and action will be taken against the offending club. Captains must ensure that they enter crews that are properly prepared for the race, are medically, physically and technically capable of completing a ten-mile outing on the Tideway and of being on the water for over two hours.

**Hypothermia is a real danger:** crews should take clothing on the water with them that will keep them both warm and dry during marshalling, which can be protracted, and should wear sufficient kit in inclement weather during the race. A plastic bag is always useful for clothing during the race.

**COXSWAIN AGE & LANGUAGE** Captains of Clubs are responsible for ensuring that all coxswains have appropriate experience and knowledge to undertake coxing on the tideway, and are reminded that this is a condition of entry. A minimum age of 15 is normally expected. We expect at least one of either cox or stroke to speak English and understand marshals' instructions.

**RIVER/WEATHER CONDITIONS:** In the event of adverse river/weather conditions:

- **Prior to race day** information will be posted at [x.com/wehorr](http://x.com/wehorr)
- **On race day** please take note of any announcements made by the Control Commission personnel in your area or by your host Club. We will aim to advise crews 2 hours before the race start time (i.e. before crews go afloat) if the start of the race is in question and will also give a time (likely to be within the hour) when a decision will be made as to whether the race will proceed or be cancelled. If you are in any doubt about going afloat please ask. [x.com/wehorr](http://x.com/wehorr) will provide up-to-date information.

**You should be sure that your crew is competent to cope with the prevailing conditions before they boat. In the event of lightning, you must follow marshals' instructions.**

**JUNIOR ATHLETES** It is a condition of entry to the Head that each crew that includes junior (under 18) athletes shall have a named coach or responsible adult present. The name and current mobile telephone number for this person, who must be over the age of 18, must be provided on the entry form. If a substitute coach or responsible adult comes to the Head he/she must contact the race **Welfare Officer (07709 453 058)** and register his/her mobile telephone number. The coach or responsible adult is responsible for the welfare, safety and appropriate supervision of the crew and is expected to know the whereabouts of the crew at all times during the Head.

The coach or responsible adult should have the capability to make an appropriate risk assessment of the conditions and the experience of the crew and coxswain. He/she must ensure that the crews are appropriately dressed for the weather. The Head expects all competing clubs and schools to have their own up-to-date child protection and welfare policies. If a coach, captain or competitor witnesses an incident they should report this to their club's Welfare Officer / the race Welfare Officer / your host club's Welfare Officer / British Rowing - whichever is most appropriate to the incident in question.

**RACE CONTROL** is at Chiswick Pier House, between Barnes and Hammersmith Bridges on the Middlesex bank. Contact via the Chief Umpire, Alison Faiers on 07970 252 681.

**MEDICAL COVER** (varying combinations of paramedics, ambulances & doctors) will be present from 60 minutes before the race outside Vesta RC - Putney, by the Rutland Arms on Lower Mall at Hammersmith, Barnes Bridge Ladies - below Barnes Railway Bridge and MA&A BC - above Chiswick Bridge (map on page 2).

**RESCUE SERVICES:** Safety cover will be provided from 11:15am until 2:45pm. Safety boats will be situated in the marshalling area, along the course and below the finish. Crews going above Kew Rail Bridge or ~50m below Putney Rail Bridge will be off the marshalled course and out of the range of safety cover (see maps of marshalling area and finish circulation, above). Crews having practice outings before the race or who will be returning home well after the finish should carry a mobile phone in a waterproof case: in the event of an incident dial 999 and ask for **Coastguard**.

**WELFARE** The welfare officer will be located at Race Control for the duration of the race; if you have any concerns please let her know at the earliest opportunity so that the matter can be promptly dealt with. Call 07709 453 058.

## **ACCIDENTS**

**Land:** Contact the nearest official or first aid facility.

**Water:** If practical, stay with the boat and wait for the marshal or safety launch. After reaching a landing site the crew must stay together and go to the designated boathouse for head count and medical checks. The designated boathouses along the course are: Mortlake Anglian & Alpha; Barnes Bridge Ladies; Auriol Kensington (AK); and Vesta RC.

**NAVIGATION** Any crew or club which is involved in a verifiable navigation incident on the Tideway in the fourteen days prior to or on the day of the race may be excluded from the race. No refund will be provided.

**RESULTS** Provisional Results will be posted as soon as possible after the race at <http://www.wehorr.org>

**PRIZE GIVING** The presentation will be held on the day of the race, approximately two hours after the last crew finishes, at **Thames Rowing Club, Putney**. The dress code is crew casual (e.g. club tops).

*Comments and suggestions about any aspect of the race are warmly welcomed. Please send to [EventSec@wehorr.org](mailto:EventSec@wehorr.org)*

**The enclosed postcard summarises the guidance in these instructions and must be carried by the cox on race day.**