

BRITISH ROWING NATIONAL TOUR 2025
River Weaver Navigation & River Dee 29-31 August
Winsford Marina to Runcorn Rowing Club
Chester to Aldford Iron Bridge

SAFETY PLAN

Introduction

Each year a tour is organised on different waterways around the UK to promote recreational rowing for adults of all ages for fitness and fun. Touring rowing is not competitive, appeals to all who love the water and is a great way to keep fit at any age, as it is low impact, exercises the whole body and is very social.

Description of Tour

This year's tour is planned to take place on the River Weaver Navigation and River Dee on 29th – 31st August. Participants will travel by coach to and from the rowing start and end points each day.

The rowing stages will be:

- Friday 29th August – Winsford Marina to Northwich Rowing Club
- Saturday 30th August – Northwich Rowing Club to Runcorn Rowing Club
- Sunday 31st August – Chester Sailing Club to Aldford Iron Bridge & return

There will be a total of approx 80 participants who will be experienced oarsmen and women ranging in age from mid thirties to late seventies. British Rowing membership is a requirement for the event.

There will be approx. 16 touring coxed quads (4x+) taking part. These are stable and buoyant with sufficient freeboard for expected conditions. Some boats will be from local clubs who normally row on the Weaver Navigation or River Dee

Organisation

A sub-group of the British Rowing Recreational Committee (RRC) is organising the tour with support from rowing clubs on the route.

The organisers have considerable experience gained over some 20 years of touring rowing around the UK and abroad including regularly planning major events. Previous events have been held without incident on other C&RT waterways, notably: Aire & Calder Navigation, Fosdyke Navigation, Gloucester & Sharpness canal, Lancaster Canal, Lee Navigation, New Junction canal, River Ouse (Yorks), River Severn, River Trent.

The tour will follow BR RowSafe guidance, in particular tour guidance, and take account of specific C&RT requirements including Safeguarding standards.

Tour Coordinator & Safety Adviser is John Turnbull, Chair of the British Rowing RRC:
Email: Chairman@recrowing.org.uk Mob: **07771 807993**

The Welfare Officer will be Jane Smith of Upton RC

A team will be formed to provide tour support on land.

A Safety and Emergency information handbook with details of crews, route, key contact details and emergency procedures will be issued to the support team

Boat Captains

The Organisers will appoint appropriately experienced participants as Boat Captains. Each will be responsible for a nominated boat during the Tour.

They will be required to:

- ensure that their boat is in a safe condition at all times
- manage crew welfare during rowing by ensuring provision of water, suitable rest periods, checking for injuries and reporting any concerns to the Tour Coordinator and/or Welfare Officer
- determine the crew order
- ensure whoever is coxing navigates the boat in accordance with the agreed instructions and with due regard to hazards and conditions
- communicate with the designated Tour Coordinator in the event of emergencies afloat, using "What 3 Words" app for location as appropriate
- attend briefings daily or as circumstances dictate to receive guidance from the Tour Coordinator on the itinerary, route, hazards and other safety matters.

Captains will be issued with a set of laminated maps for each stage of the tour route, showing waterway information and land access points together with a laminated summary Emergency Procedure and Contact Number card, for use in the boat.

Captains will ensure that there is a mobile phone operational and accessible in a waterproof container.

Captains will be provided with a summary of their duties and emergency procedures

Participants

All participants will be required to:

- be members of British Rowing with related third party insurance cover
- certify that they are fit to cover the distances involved and are competent rowers - verified by their Club Captain
- declare any medical conditions that might affect them or require attention
- sign a waiver in relation to any injuries or damage to personal property arising from participation

All participants will be provided with joining instructions which will include tour safety guidance reflecting the risk assessment and how to report welfare concerns.

Communications

Mobile phones will be used for communication between the participating boats and the tour organisers and support team.

Each boat will carry at least one mobile phone with numbers held by organisers.

Contact details for C&RT management and lock staff en route will be maintained and included in the tour management handbook

Emergency Procedures

The Tour Management Handbook will cover safety and emergency procedures and will be issued to the Tour Support Team. It will include the following:

- the itinerary
- list of participants and crews with mobile phone contact numbers
- navigation information and maps
- contact numbers and location information for local medical services
- emergency service contact numbers
- the Risk Assessment and Welfare Statement

Any accident or emergency on land or on water should be reported to the Tour Coordinator without delay. In the event of a serious medical problem the emergency services can be called directly and the Tour Coordinator informed.

For incidents afloat, Boat Captains should notify the Tour & Safety Coordinator by phone of the nature of the problem and the boat location.

Access points will be identified and located using “what 3 words”

AED locations will be checked with C&RT and also using:

<https://www.nddb.uk/> or <https://www.defibfinder.uk/>

In case of access difficulties a portable AED is being sourced for bank support team.

General Navigation Considerations

Particular attention will be paid in conjunction with the C&RT to understanding hazards associated with each lock such as the approach route, boat handling in the lock and exit path.

Care is also needed with regard to other river traffic at narrow points such as approaches to locks and bridges. Account will also be taken of areas where there may be possible encounter with pleasure craft, paddleboarders and swimmers.

The Weaver and Dee are considered unlikely to suffer rough water conditions beyond the capabilities of the boats used. However, the prevailing winds could result in ‘wind over current’ on some reaches with resulting rough water if the wind is particularly strong (i.e. gusting in excess of 40mph). The XC Weather website provides forecasts in a useful format.

[Forecast for Runcorn | XCWeather](#)

[Forecast for Chester | XCWeather](#)

Account will be taken of any strong stream conditions that may arise due to heavy rain. Flow height is provided by the EA website with readings from gauging stations along the whole length of the tour.

[Check for flooding in Runcorn, Halton - GOV.UK](#)

[Check for flooding in Chester, Cheshire West and Chester - GOV.UK](#)

For the Dee, a height of 6m at Aldford is understood to be the limit for rowing. Tide conditions have been checked with a high of less than 2m on the day which is below the 3.5m threshold for the weir at Chester so no tide influence expected.

C&RT Notices will be monitored and taken into account

Life jackets or buoyancy aids will be worn by coxes at all times on the water in accordance with BR rules. In addition, all rowers shall wear life jackets or buoyancy aids when passing through locks

Biohazards

Boats and equipment coming from other waterways will be washed before loading to avoid cross contamination when launching onto the Weaver Navigation

Briefing / Training

As well as reading the safety procedures, participants will be advised to familiarise themselves with the “RowSafe” touring guidance available on the recreational rowing website

A number of online seminars on tour rowing will be offered before the tour.

Boat captains will be briefed at the start of each day’s rowing on the route, water and weather conditions and any known hazards, which they should pass on to their crews.

Welfare Statement

In accordance with the British Rowing Safeguarding and Protecting Children Policy, the organising committee of the tour believe that the welfare and wellbeing of all children and adults at risk is paramount. Everyone, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion or ability, should have equal rights to be treated with dignity and respect and account taken of their safety and protection needs.

A Welfare Officer familiar with BR procedures will be appointed for the tour and briefed on the C&RT Safeguarding Standard. They will act as the point of contact for any concerns or allegations as well as observing the conduct of the tour. They will accompany the tour and be introduced to the participants. Their contact number will be included in the briefing notes issued to all participants and helpers. All suspicions, concerns and allegations of harm will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

All participants will be over 18 and asked to declare that they are fit and able to take part in the tour and to notify the organisers of any medical or care needs.

The tour is a non-competitive, recreational event and no participant will be expected to perform beyond their level of fitness and ability. Boat captains will check the condition of their crew members and make regular stops for rest and rehydration. If any participant appears distressed or injured, the boat captain or Welfare Officer will call the Tour Coordinator, who will take appropriate action, such as removing that person from the boat and transferring them to a vehicle and if necessary summoning medical assistance.

Risk Assessment

Assessment Methodology

Hazards have been considered based on the nature of the event and expected conditions. Risks have been assessed using the classification table below:

RISK	SEVERITY		
	Low	Medium	High
Unlikely	1	2	3
Fairly Likely	2	4	6
Very Likely	3	6	9

Risks scoring

- 1 or 2 are acceptable (green).
- 3 or 4 are acceptable with mitigation (yellow).
- 6 or 9 are unacceptable and measures to reduce them to a lower category are needed (red).

An assessment for the event is given in the attached table below but there are specific risks associated with the section of river and canal along which the tour is passing and which deserve their own consideration and mitigation.

Specific risks and mitigations associated with water conditions and traffic

A. Locks

On the Weaver Navigation the crews will be ‘locking down’ through 4 locks. The first 2, Vale Royal and Hunts, will use the smaller chamber which may accommodate 6 boats. The next 2, Saltersford and Dutton locks, use the larger chamber which may take 12 boats.

All locks will be operated by trained C&RT staff and the position of the paddles in the walls or floor of the locks means that the level change is very gentle with no turbulence to contend with. Boats can be positioned upstream of the side paddle openings in the larger chambers to avoid the slight draw.

Boats are stable and will be equipped with boat hooks, paddles and ropes for maintaining position and manoeuvring in locks.

All crew members will wear life jackets in locks.

A bank party wearing life jackets and carrying throw lines can if appropriate assist in boat guidance and rope handling.

Crews will be briefed on locking procedures.

A briefing note on the tour will be provided to lock keepers

B. Low bridges

There are several swing bridges along the Weaver but very little headroom is required for rowing boats to go under so no opening felt to be essential.

C. Pleasure craft around Chester

Between Grosvenor BC and Sandy Lane there may be commercial cruise boats, paddleboarders, sailing boats and swimmers on late Sunday morning.

Crew will be briefed and navigation rules followed. If necessary the route could be modified

Risk Assessment - general

Hazard	Risk	Initial assessment	Control Measures/ Mitigation	Assessment after mitigation.
Travel	Road accident	2	Coaches hired for event with professional drivers	1
		2	Other support cars have experienced drivers	1
Boat handling	Muscular strains/sprains	2	Group is experienced and will assist each other	1
	Slips, trips and falls	2	One boating area is from a low bank (Winsford Marina) and others at established rowing clubs with even terrain. Participants will be instructed to assist other crews with boating. Everyone will be advised to keep areas tidy and remove loose items from boating areas.	1
	Cuts / grazes on sharp objects	2	Participants advised to wear suitable footwear if required to wade in the river. Clean open wounds, such as blisters or calf abrasions with an anti-bacterial substance. First aid kit available for minor injuries.	1
Weather & water conditions	Extreme heat	2	Participants instructed to bring suitable clothing e.g. hats and sunscreen and carry water. Rest periods allowed in schedule	1
	Cold / wet	3	Participants instructed to bring suitable clothing. Weather forecast monitored.. Duration of exposure limited by short distances and recovery possible if necessary at stopping points.	1
	Flooding / debris	3	In event of heavy rain in Weaver catchment area, assess flow and debris conditions. Cancel day's rowing if dangerous	1
	Winds cause rough water	2	Boat types are such that they are not readily prone to swamping. Weather forecast will be checked each morning and rowing rescheduled if severe conditions likely.	1
	Thunderstorm	3	Safety coordinator to check weather conditions and instruct crews to land, deboat and seek shelter until conditions improve, applying the "30/30" rule (wait 30 minutes after a 30 second gap between lightning and thunder).	1

Hazard	Risk	Initial assessment	Control Measures/ Mitigation	Assessment after mitigation.
Navigational accident	Taking wrong channel	3	All boats are coxed. Maps will be provided to coxes showing correct channels e.g. approaching exiting locks. Crews briefed on route each day.	1
	Collision with other craft	3	Traffic conditions will be monitored. All boats are coxed and crews experienced therefore risk is low. Crews are not racing, further reducing risk and speed of any impact and therefore low risk of damage. Boats are more robust than racing craft and not easily damaged. Capsize or sinking considered very unlikely	1
	Grounding	2	Water / bank conditions such that grounding and any damage unlikely	1
	Accident while climbing onto bank	2	Landing stages and access points for stops identified and shown on maps. It should not be necessary to climb onto the bank but crews will be advised to look for low points or beaches if necessary and have boat hooks to assist.	1
Entering locks	Side weir streams on lock approach	4	Approach route briefed, no waiting for lock entry in proximity to weir channel. If very strong stream conditions advised, passage will be avoided.	1
In locks	Fouling lock sides, ladders cills etc risking capsize or damage	4	Crews briefed to be alert and position boat appropriately Canoe paddle and boathook available to manoeuvre and ropes to hold position. Boats stable and can "raft up" with neighbouring boats to increase stability All locks staffed and lock keepers briefed	1
	Being swept down on to lower gates as lock drains	3	Side or bottom paddles in locks generate no significant pull to bottom gates. Crews briefed on risk and equipped with canoe paddle, boathook and ropes to hold position All locks staffed and lock keepers briefed	1

D10 – 07/07/2025

Hazard	Risk	Initial assessment	Control Measures/ Mitigation	Assessment after mitigation.
Exiting lock	Being swept against bank by cross current	3	Briefing given on where such risks present. Cox leaves space behind boat ahead to enable crew to row through stream.	1
Low clearance swing bridges on canal	Boat crews hitting heads on low bridges	4	Crews can pass under bridges with about 1m headroom. Route surveyed and subject to water level no apparent issue. crews will be briefed on hazards and to approach bridges with caution. Arrangements may be made to open very low bridges as appropriate	1
Pleasure craft / other river users	Collision	3	Crews are coxed and will be briefed on areas of risk. It is not a race and crews will have scope to give way or stop. Boats are stable, quad sculled and robust with very low risk of capsize	1
Equipment failure	Broken blade	2	Equipment checked for defects before boating. Quad sculls able to carry on with 3 of crew rowing. Spares available via support from land party. Communications available by mobile phone to call help.	1
	Damage to rigger/ gate	2	Robust and unlikely to break. Spare gates and fixings available. Equipment checked for defects before boating	1
	Damage / loss of rudder	2	Sculled crew boats can proceed using oars to steer	1

Hazard	Risk	Initial assessment	Control Measures/ Mitigation	Assessment after mitigation.
Minor rowing injuries	Blisters and sores	2	Participants instructed to protect hands with tape or gloves before boating if sensitive. First aid kits available from land support.	1
Medical emergencies	Extreme exhaustion	3	Distances reasonable relative to age, experience and weather expected. Arrangement of crews will allow for balancing strength. Spare rower available for crew change if necessary, Sculled crew boats can carry on with a member resting. Help can be called by mobile phone or from other boats in flotilla.	1
	Serious illness	3	Any known conditions declared and allowed for beforehand. Checks made each morning as to condition of party. Emergency situations to be reported by mobile phone to tour support party. Emergency service response will be co-ordinated through land party using pre-determined emergency numbers for appropriate support, knowledge of incident location and landing points	2
	Weil's disease (leptospirosis)	3	Precautions will be advised in accordance with RowSafe section 8.4, in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover any open wounds with waterproof dressings • Avoid contact with river water to eyes and mouth • Wash hands or use sanitiser after contact with water and especially before eating. • Seek medical attention if any flu-like symptoms develop 	1