



BRISTOL CHANNEL
SOCIAL ROWERS

Risk Assessment for Club Activities

Version Control:

Version 2 reviewed and updated by Nick Cowper 11/11/25.

Additions in italic. Deletions in strikethrough. Re-issued as Amendment 3.

Context

Bristol Channel Social Rowers (BCSR) is a club of approximately sixty members. The club provides the opportunity for non-competitive rowing for adults of all ages within Bristol's floating harbour. The club has two in number five person dinghy type boats, namely Egret which is a 'Teignmouth Seine Boat' and Jolly Roger (JR) which is a 'Giglet' and resembles a small version of the seven person Cornish Pilot Gigs.

Who Produced the Risk Assessment?

The risk assessment was jointly produced by Nick Cowper, Chris Funnel and Ian House.

How was the Risk Assessment Done

The authors followed the advice at www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk including the advice for amateur sports clubs (Planning for Safety-Amateur Sports Clubs).

Whilst the HSE does not specifically propose a risk management matrix for sports clubs, the authors selected the HSE's Workplace Risk Assessment Template as it was judged to be appropriate and proportionate.

The risk assessment matrix was undertaken by the authors who jointly have over 20 years experience rowing with the club. The identified risk reduction measures are judged by the authors to be appropriate and proportional.

The club has been provided with two safety related documents by 'Andy' at the Bristol Harbour Master Office. They are attached to this Risk Assessment for information and are:

- (i) Bristol City Council, Bristol City Docks, Pilot Gig Rowing Water Safety Code of Practice [Attachment 1]
- (ii) Risk Assessment, Gig Rowing in Bristol Docks, Dated 21/03/12 (marked as 'Assessed by Steve Hughes') [Attachment 2]

Risk assessment matrix

Organisation name: Bristol Channel Social Rowers

Assessment carried out by: Nick Cowper, Chris Funnel, Ian House

Date of next review / update: Nominally, issue date plus 12 months. See notes for update comments.

Reviewed and Updated by NJC 11/11/25 – additions in italic. Deletions in strikethrough.

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done
Alongside Jetty – Rigging, de-rigging, embarkation and disembarkation	Who – primarily crew. How – slips, trips and falls plus being knocked by mishandled oars. Entry into water possible.	Crew leads encourage crew to keep jetty clear as far as practical. Boat floors painted with non-slip deck paint. Crew encouraged by leads to advise before entering and exiting boat. Crew advised to ask for help (to aid and assist or to 'be on hand') should they feel less confident in boarding or exiting the boat.	Deck paint re-coated annually in summer.	Maintenance Lead	Egret subject to assessment (high grit paint). <i>Egret grit assessed to be in good condition and left. JR repainted with International deck paint. (Spring 25)</i>	
<i>Stepping Out When Coming Alongside</i>	<i>Who – Crew member stepping out.</i>	<i>Club Captain has implemented procedure to reduce risk. Only crew</i>	<i>Monitoring of procedure</i>	<i>Safety Manager</i>	<i>Routinely</i>	

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	<i>How – fall into water with possibility of hitting jetty when falling.</i>	<i>practiced in stepping out with bowline allowed to perform the task. Cox checks that crew member is comfortable undertaking task before coming alongside.</i>				
Rowing – Collision with Another Boat.	Who - Members of either boat. How – (i) Falling from seat (ii) Struck by own oar due to oar clash, (iii) being hit by boat.	Club members are instructed in navigation rules and boat handling and undertake coxing under the authority of boat lead. All-around white pole lights bow and stern in darkness.	Provision of spare lights and batteries checked at least monthly (except summer).	Maintenance Lead	Routinely monthly.	
Rowing – crew position changes	Who – crew. How – slips, trips and falls. In the extreme, entry into water possible.	Policy and practice is for only one person to be moving position at any one time. Boat floors are painted with non-slip deck paint (see above). Throw lines now on both boats. Man Overboard Procedure trialled, issued	Review need for further Man Overboard Training Summer 2025		Summer 2025. <i>Training video distributed again to Leads summer 25. Discussions ongoing with respect to appointing a Safety Training Manager.</i>	

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		and demonstrated. Training video distributed to leads. Summer 2024 (See note 5).				
Rowing – Catching a Crab	Rower	All crew members instructed in managing a crab. Procedure to be re-briefed annually.	None	Captain to action leads.	August 2023 NJC – In practice, routinely briefed after crab event and with new starters.	Routinely
Rowing – Equipment Failure	Who – Crew How – Falling due to item breaking	Dedicated member appointed as Maintenance Lead to manage maintenance. The JR Thule pins are colour coded to avoid pin failure due to use in wrong position.	None			
Coming Along Side	Who - Crew member exiting with bow line. How – Slip, trip	Practice is for cox to identify a crew member who is comfortable being the first to exit boat.	None			

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	and fall.					
Rowing – objects dropped or thrown from bridges	Who – Crew. How – struck by object.	Cox is able to warn of any visible risk	Phone Harbour Master to advise of any serious issues.	Lead	As required	
Rowing – Harbour Events (increased probability of normal risks)	Who – Crew or other harbour user. How – See Collisions and Dropped Objects above.	Nick Cowper and Chris Funnel monitor Harbour Master ‘Announcements’ on the Sail Bristol App for down-briefing if required.	None			
<u>Weirs & Sluices</u>	Danger to crew of drowning	Leads have been briefed on hazards and need to (1) not take turning to Netham weir and (2) not to go to sluice side of pontoon to west of horseshoe. (See Note 4).	None			
<u>Severe Weather (see Note 5)</u> <u>Updated by NJC 11/11/25</u>	Strong winds can lead to loss of steerage way and thus loss of control of the boat. Various scenarios	Club has a nominal upper limit of 20 mph wind speed after which rowing is cancelled. Final decision made by the row lead depending on crew ability and wind direction. Also,	Leads to be briefed on the addition of this hazard to the Safety Risk Assessment.	Nick Cowper	September 2024 <i>Leads re-briefed on weather limits summer 25.</i> <i>Retrain by</i>	

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	possible including collision with another boat and subsequent injury on one or both boats.	club does not row during lightning storms. <i>'Rowsafe' Lightning risk reduction recommendations sent out to leads summer 25.</i>			<i>September 26.</i>	

Notes:

1. This Risk matrix to be briefed to Row Leads when signed and issued.
2. Safety to continue to be an Agenda item at club quarterly member meetings.
3. Code of Practice (statement) and Pilot Gig rowing water safety code of practice to be posted on club website when available and members asked to view.
4. Weirs and sluices added by Nick Cowper on 30-10-23 as Version 1, Amendment 1).
5. Man Overboard Procedure text added by Nick Cowper as part of Amendment 2. All leads have now taken part in or witnessed and discussed a Man Overboard Practice.
6. Severe Weather hazard added after discussion with Harbour Master authority as part of Amendment 2.
7. *'Stepping Out When Coming Alongside'* entry added after incident with crew member entering water Summer 2025.

Pilot gig rowing: water safety code of practice for Bristol Harbour

Safety and insurance

All rowers must be aware of the [CPGA Codes of practice](#) and adhere to them.

The club must appoint a trained Health and Safety advisor to:

- deal with all aspects of club safety
- make sure all rules are adhered to
- make sure risk assessments are carried out for all activities

The club safety officer must ensure that all equipment is in good order and members should report defects as soon as is practicable.

A first aid kit should be available in the clubroom.

All gigs should be licensed by Bristol Harbour Authority and hold £3m third party Insurance liability.

Information on the club notice board or website

You must have the following information available on the club notice board:

- [CPGA Codes of practice](#)
- the local [Notice to Mariners](#)
- a plan of the harbour
- a list of [important telephone numbers](#) containing Harbour Office, Dockmaster, Netham Locks and Committee members

All rowers must be made aware of our [water quality in the harbour](#).

Coxswains

The coxswain is the person in control of the gig (not the coach)

Coxswains must:

- check the local [Notice to Mariners](#) daily before going afloat to ensure there are no conflicts with planned rowing activity
- be familiar with the harbour navigation rules and hazards
- complete the Rowing log prior to going afloat
- not take out rowers who are inexperienced in rough / cold weather conditions

All coxswains and non - swimmers must wear a suitable lifejacket.

Avon Gorge training sessions must not be done with less than 2 gigs experienced coxswains.

Before you get in the water

You must provide full safety equipment (as per CPGA regulations) if you plan to row in tidal river conditions.

Suitable weather conditions clothing must also be worn by all rowers.

All novices must be accompanied by sufficient experienced rowers and a coxswain.

A mobile telephone or VHF radio must be carried when in the tidal river sections and when rowing in the dark.

You must contact the lock keeper on 0117 977 6590 before your trip if you plan to go into the the tidal River Avon at Netham Lock. River conditions can be very unpredictable due to excessive floodwater and high tidal ranges at times. Rowing is not permitted in this area at these times. Netham Weir and sluices are hazardous.

On the water

Once you are on the water you must:

- navigate on the right hand side of the harbour
- give way to craft coming down stream at bridges and at Totterdown lock if you're going upstream towards Netham
- take care at all bends and constricted areas; rowing boats must give way to all other craft in the harbour
- display an all round white light if you are rowing in the dark

You must not:

- pass under Brislington Bridge
- race side by side unless in an organised event

BCSR Specific Variations:

1/ ~~As~~ agreed with Harbour Master's Office:

GPGA Code of Practice – Bristol City Docks Pilot Gig Rowing Water Safety COP to be posted on Club Website

~~Leads~~ to monitor 'Sail Bristol' app in lieu of Notice to Mariners.

First Aid box in each boat

Harbour Masters phone number on plate attached to each boat.

~~Rowter~~ online booking tool used in lieu of log.

2/ ~~For~~ plan of harbour see <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/files/documents/1123-harbour-map-2015/file>

Risk Assessment: Gig Rowing at Bristol Docks		Date 21/01/13	Assessed by Steve Hedges	
Hazard	Risk	Risk Rate	Control Measures	Conclusions
Boarding or Leaving boat	Slips, trips, Falls Skeletal Injuries Head / Eye injuries Cuts, abrasions, bruising Sprains/ strains Back, head, neck Injury	Medium risk rate	Wear suitable footwear Use Landing stages only Craft to be secured whilst boarding/leaving One person at a time only	All rowers must be able to swim or wear buoyancy aid
Oars breaking		No controls in place	Oars inspected regularly by safety officer and discarded if doubts exist.	Experienced Coxswains only
Catching a crab	Propelled into water Wrist/arm injury		Training by recognised coxswain	First Aid kit available
Collision with other craft or Quay wall or bridge	Boat capsizes Skeletal injuries Hypothermia		Experienced Coxswains only Coxswain must wear lifejacket Craft not to be used if conditions are poor	Mobile telephone carried
Foul weather	Tiredness			
Bright sunlight	Sunburn, Dehydration Eye problems increased risk of collision	Low risk with control measures in place	Sun barrier cream to be used Water to be carried in plastic bottles only Suitable clothing to be worn Sunglasses / hat to be worn Coxswain to remain alert and proceed at a slow speed ready to stop	Coxswains to consult harbour office re navigation issues if event occurring
Underfall sluices open creating current	Motor craft Novice sail boats Ferries, canoes etc			
Very busy harbour	Increased risk of collision Objects thrown at rowers Causing skeletal injuries Head/ eye injuries			
Passing under bridges			Coxswain to warn crew of possible attack by assailants Coxswain to check water events schedule to avoid major water events	
Water events in harbour				

Attachment 2 - Risk Assessment, Gig Rowing in Bristol Docks, Dated 21/03/12 (marked as 'Assessed by Steve Hughes')