

Falcon Juniors Plan for going below Iffley Lock including Safety Aspects

There are times when the junior section is forced to use the stretch below the lock because the university colleges or other clubs take over the Isis stretch of the river for competitions. In order to keep outings on the water whenever possible, the only option is to take the juniors below the lock.

Outing which go below Iffley Lock (the lock) require two possible safety plans:

- 1) Without the launch
- 2) With the launch
 - No outings are to go below the lock on Red Flag.
 - Always check the weather forecast before finalising going below the lock.

Options for amber flag will be dependant on the level of ability of those going out. Through the early part of the season, only those considered experienced should be taken below the lock if the river is Amber, and then only if the conditions are considered safe enough for those attending the sessions. Given that there is usually a split between beginners and experienced at the start of the season, this should be easy to appraise. A dynamic risk assessment must be made by the senior coach present, and agreement by those coaching should be unanimous following this assessment. The mantra of "if in doubt, don't go out" should be adhered to over the desire to get on the water.

Additionally, there are only a few occasions when the river will be closed for events if the flag is amber, and those are a small number of regattas run by OURCs (possibly Isis Winter League, which the juniors may take part in, or City Bumps, both of which are able to run in higher stream conditions. Bumps racing may occur under higher stream conditions, but with reduced or changed scheduling.) This means that some events may not happen and the juniors can go out, again if experienced enough to do so, on the normal stretch of the river following the existing rules for such sessions.

When our access is reduced by other events, we need to allow for the following:

- 1) Longer time on the water to allow for transit time down to the lower section. The lock takes approximately 6 minutes to go through, plus waiting time either before or after. That means an additional 20 minutes is required just for transit.
- 2) When we boat, we point downstream, which is not usual. We then have to wait until a division or equivalent point of inactivity becomes available before boating—this means making sure we have as many boats, usually the smaller ones first, ready to go. For this reason we have to meet about 45 minutes before we boat and end later than we would normally.
- 3) Standard times when this occurs are:
 - 1) 11:45 to 14:30
 - 2) 14:15 to 17:00Adjust outing times accordingly, but allow for overlap to allow the juniors to help with the change over.
- 4) Appendix A provides a list of likely events that will interrupt usual times for junior outings.
- 5) Always discuss with the Senior Umpire who is running an event so that they and their marshals are aware and happy for you to make the transit. It is unusual for there to be a refusal for such a transit to take place, but it is important for everyone's safety that all parties are aware of what is happening.

Minimum Requirements for going below the lock

2 coaches and 2 marshals, all with bikes, **or** the launch with 3 marshals on the bank, ideally with bikes. The more people present, the more safety cover is provided. (Note: there are now coaching bikes available locked to the fence to the left of the boat house as you look at it from the river; code is 18690. Please check they are road-worthy before using. The club cannot take responsibility for those using the bikes, so those who do use them do so at their own risk.)

Any additional marshals can walk. If this is the case, they can go ahead and prepare the lock.

All accompanying should have a radio and a mobile phone as a back-up. While not essential, it would be a good idea to have an adult located back at the boat house with both a radio and a phone in case of an emergency. (It is still unclear whether the radios work over the distance to the training area below the lock!)

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Travelling through the lock

The boats enter the lock overlapping their stern and bows and holding on to the boats around them. Don't stack them on the same side, have the bows and stern of one boat be one side, and the next boat be a different side, that way you provide the ability to help keep the boats straight (see diagram below). Having large boats at either end is useful, but experienced singles are also fine in these places.



NOTE:

- When travelling through the lock, the water will try and push the boats towards the lower set of gates. It is advisable to make sure that there is enough space between the lowest boat and the gates. This will also help when leaving the lock as the gates open inwards.
- When raising the lock, the initial influx from the top gates can get quite swirly, so don't send them too close to the upper gates.

IMPORTANT: It is essential to announce the following information before opening the sluices either to raise or lower the lock (so in both directions):

- 1) Watch their blades on the chains and the steps as the water raises or lowers—you do not want to get your blades caught on the chains or the steps.
- 2) Try and keep the boat central by pushing gently off the sides of the lock.
- 3) If no-one else is using the lock, leave it empty with the gates shut.

Transiting to the training area

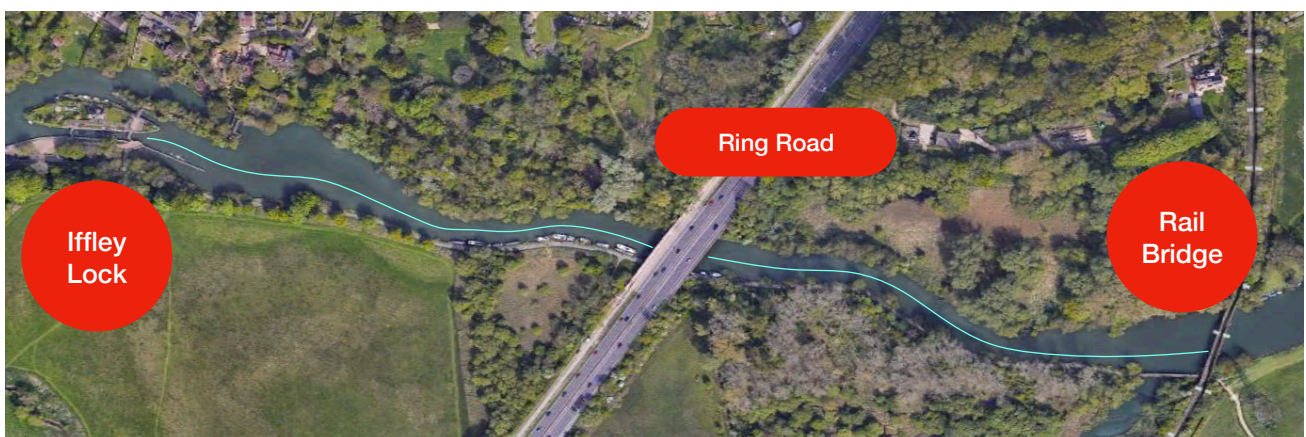
Once through the lock, one marshal or coach should go with the lead boat, and one follow the last boat. This allows the lead cyclist to report any traffic heading towards the athletes on the water.

The route to the training area is fairly straightforward, but narrow in places. Athletes must take care to look a little more frequently than usual in case of other river traffic coming up stream when travelling down stream, and visa versa.

Boats should ideally not overtake in the transit area, at least when it gets narrow. However, sometimes it is necessary to keep the crews moving.

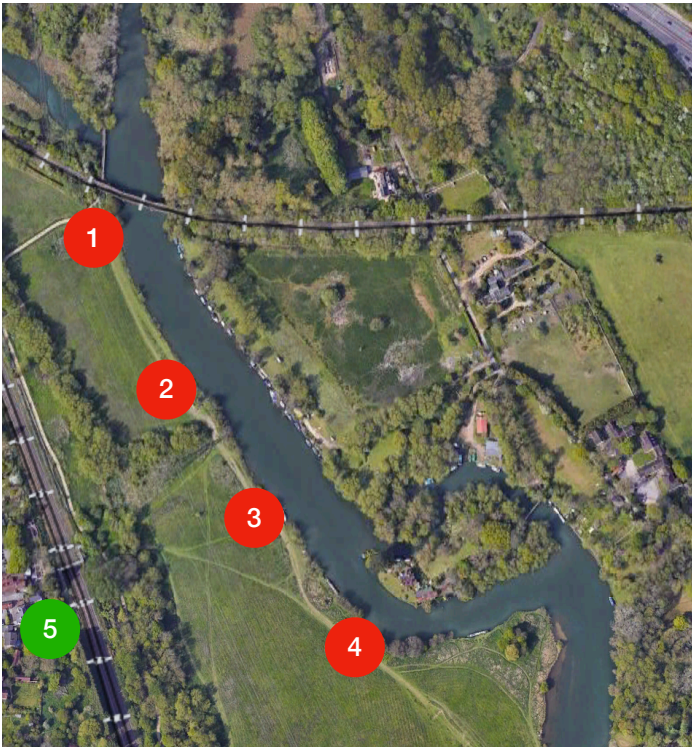
A birds-eye view of the stretch to the lower training area the beginning of which is the Rail Bridge.

The light blue line shows the best path for the boats travelling from the lock to the Rail Bridge.



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The training area



The numbers mark the place where the marshals should stand.

Coaching positions are best at 1 & 4.

Radios are a must.

Spinning Boats

By the rail bridge:

When conditions are green or blue flag, spinning at the rails bridge should take place above the bridge closer to the towpath side of the river. If the conditions are amber, then spinning should begin under the bridge itself.

By the lower marshalling position:

Spinning should begin by the lawn of the house opposite where the 4th marshalling position is. Boats should spin in the usual direction, but should not go around the corner.

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Marks the pub The Tandum: this is the nearest entry point for emergency services accessing this lower stretch. It leads to a bridge across the railway and onto the area beside the training area.

What3Words to mark the entry to the bridge across the railway is: "Custom.Movies.Improving"

No Launch Present Protocols:

- 2 coaches and 2 marshals minimum, plus 1 at the club.
- 8 boats maximum with this
- One additional person at the club.
- Radios for everyone, including the person at the club.
- Phone for everyone with the number for the person at the club in case the radios don't work across that distance.
- Bikes for coaches, and ideally for the marshals.
- Safety bags with safety blankets and first aid kits.
- What3Words on at least 2 working phones.
- If more marshals, then spread along the stretch evenly.
- 2 experienced coaches on land can handle up to 4 experienced singles or larger boats with mixed abilities. The less the experience present, the fewer the boats able to be taken; that goes for the level of experience of the coach and the athletes.
- With the additional marshals, that can be an extra 2 experienced singles per marshal, or larger mixed ability boats, meaning a total of 8 boats maximum plus 2 per additional marshal.

Launch Present Protocols:

- RYA2 Qualified launch driver; ideally a coach.
- All safety launch protocols to be followed.
- 3 marshals along the stretch—position 2 may be left out. 1 person left at the club.
- Radios for everyone, including the person at the club.

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- Phone for everyone with the number for the person at the club in case the radios don't work across that distance.
- Bikes for coaches, and ideally for the marshals.
- Safety bags with safety blankets and first aid kits.
- What3Words on at least 2 working phones.
- 1 launch can cover up to 6 experienced singles, or larger boats with a mixture of abilities. The less the experience present, the fewer the boats able to be taken; that goes for the level of experience of the coach and the athletes.
- With the additional marshals handling 2 experienced singles or larger boats of good ability, that would allow for an additional 6 boats to go. That would mean a maximum of 12 boats with the base level of cover, and an additional 2 per additional marshal, or 4 per experienced coach.

Important Additional Notes for Protocols:

The following section is a guide, and should be adapted according to the actual conditions. Common sense should prevail, but below are some things to consider.

If there is an emergency, then call 999 and request the emergency appropriate services. The use of What3Words will be essential in this process as this will help direct the emergency services to exactly where you need them. The What3Words for the nearest emergency services access point to this stretch of the river is:

- **"Custom.Movies.Improving"** (see the above map of the training area.)

Provision must be made for unexpected events:

- thunder and lightning
- capsize and cold water shock
- injury, and/or collision with other river traffic, plus additional hazards.

Thunder and lightning: this has happened once, and thankfully the storm passed beside rather than over us. It was unexpected as the weather forecast said nothing about storms, so it is always worth being prepared.

- Land the boats along the towpath side immediately and get the athletes onto the bank.
- If the launch is being used, land the launch as well, switch off the engine, and take the keys. If people are left to watch the boats, leave the keys with them, just in case another RYA2 qualified driver is the one to retrieve the launch.
- If the weather is not very warm, keep them active—they will have wet feet due to getting out on a bank and not a landing stage.
- If there is a deluge, seek shelter under the nearest trees or bushes—there are other trees that are taller than those which provide shelter so the risk of a lightening strike is low.
- It will take 30 minutes of no thunder or lightning before it is possible to get back into the boat, in accordance with BR guidance.
- If there are further signs of more thunder or lightning before the 30 minutes elapses, consider carrying some of the boats to the lock, leaving one of the marshals with the boats and bikes. This will depend on whether the storm is heading towards the lock or not.
- Marshals will have to help, and you will need more athletes per boat than for simply putting the boat on the water.
- If the thunder and lightning has not reached the area above the lock, it is possible to boat from the slipway under the small bridge beside the lock. From there the athletes can return to the boat house by rowing the boats back, presuming the storm has not moved in the direction of the boat house, in which case boating would not be appropriate.
- If the storm is heading towards the lock, consider leaving parent marshals with the boats and returning to the boat house to warm-up, change the athletes into ordinary clothing, and return to carry the boats back, or row them after the storm has passed.
- If this is the first session of two below the lock, then the following session's athletes may be able to row the boats back. If it is the second session of two, then parents of those attending need to be informed via the WhatsApp group chat and a request for help to move the boats back, either by rowing or carrying according to the conditions.
- People will get wet in this process—lifting boats out will involve getting the water out of the boats, feet in the river, and possible continued rain—so a further change of clothes may be advisable.

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- A further option is to carry the boats to Long Bridges Boat House and launch from there, presuming it is safe to do so. Some boats may be able to be carried over Donnington Bridge, but navigating the turns of the walkway up to the road may be problematic given the length of even a single, let alone a quad.

Capsize and cold water shock: this is listed here because we are on a separate river section to our boat house. You may have to be prepared to leave the capsized boat behind if the junior athlete becomes too cold and needs to return to the boat house on foot. Standard safety protocols should be followed, with the additional following notes to be aware of:

Without the launch present:

- In the case of a capsize, follow the standard procedures, notes for which are in the safety bags. Make sure the athlete does not leave the boat, and if necessary collects any blades which have been separated from the boat. However...
- ...where necessary, use other juniors to pick up water bottles, seats, blades, or anything else floating from the capsize which may not be able to be picked up by the capsized athlete.
- You may need to project or shout to be heard, and there may be about 30 seconds before the junior is able to process your calls as cold water shock could slow their response time until they have settled themselves. Remind the athlete to breathe and remain calm. Try and reflect this calm in your voice, even if shouting to be heard.
- Keep your instructions short and clear.
- If the capsize takes place across the far side of the river, have the junior straddle the boat and paddle it to the towpath side of the bank. This is because the far bank has too many boats moored along its length for them to be able to stand.
- Once this side, have them get back into the boat as quickly as possible and get them rowing again to get them warm.
- Be aware of their body language and talk to them getting feedback as to how they are feeling and that they are warm enough and happy to row back.
- Rowing back to the club is the quickest and warmest way to have them to return, but if that is not possible because they are already too cold, then leaving the boat behind to be collected later may be the best option.

With the launch present:

- In the case of a capsize, follow the standard procedures, notes for which are in the safety bags. Make sure the athlete does not leave the boat, and if necessary collects any blades which have been separated from the boat. However...
- ...where necessary, the launch can pick up water bottles, seats, blades, or anything else floating from the capsize which may not be able to be picked up by the capsized athlete, but only after they have dealt with and given instruction to the capsized athlete.
- Other junior athletes can also be used to pick up equipment which is floating away should it be needed.
- It is possible to use the launch as a floating dock to get the athlete back into the boat. However, be aware that this on the launch must spread across the boat to keep the balance—despite its appearance, catamarans hulls do capsize, and too much weight on one side while trying to help an athlete into a scull could upturn the safety boat.
- If the rower is unable to row back, use safety blankets to keep the athlete protected from the wind, and look to taking the shell back by either towing it, or loading it onto the launch for transfer.

In both scenarios:

- If a capsize happens, the number of coaches and marshals present will determine whether the whole session has to return or if there are still present enough to make the rest of the session safe. For the session to remain safe, there needs to be the ability to deal with a further capsize, however unlikely.

Injury, and/or collision with other river traffic, plus additional hazards: while unlikely, such scenarios are still worth considering. Additional hazards may include (but not be limited to), damage to a boat from floating debris, sudden changes in weather, collisions with static objects, e.g. trees, sunken boats.

The main things to consider are:

- Do I need to call the emergency services? If someone has been knocked unconscious, or received a knock to the head, whether breaking the skin or not, have a potential broken bone, open wounds, or any injury which the lead coach feels needs attention, then calling the emergency services is appropriate.
- Knowing how and where to call the emergency services to your location—use of What3Words is essential for this.

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- Be aware that the river steamers and other river users still travel on the lower stretch below the railway bridge. All traffic should be made aware that juniors are on the river and a request made, as needed, to reduce the wake or wash of boats traveling past the junior boats.
- Getting the name of the boat involved if a collision has taken place along with any eye witnesses—the lead coach may not have had eyes on the incident.
- Once the immediacy of the emergency has been handled, passing on the information to the relevant authorities, and other river users about hazards such as sunken boats or objects,

The safety of any group of athletes is of primary concern and the above information is designed to help provide aspects which should be considered. However, these should be a starting point from which a dynamic risk assessment can be made, and should be made. Outings below the lock will require constant vigilance, and knowledge of how to make recoveries, return to the boat house, and worse case scenarios should be considered in case they need to be implemented. Thinking ahead and guiding the juniors should help prevent truly problematic issues arising, and the use of radios to provide information on traffic and things that need consideration can help provide a fuller picture of what is happening.

Sessions below the lock have been successfully run for a number of years, and still should be considered possible. Due diligence and care will help keep these outings safe and fruitful to the junior squad, and any other squad which wishes to use the section of river below the lock.

Final notes: below the Sanford lock is the Radley Stretch, providing 7km of excellent river training. It has been suggested that using this section for special outings would be a good way of providing longer sessions for the more experienced athletes. If this were to happen, it is recommended that this only happens with the following restrictions and measures in place:

- a launch must be used
- the number of athletes is restricted,
- those taking part are experienced and strong enough for the extended outing time and work involved
- Radley College is approached in advance to allow for use of their facilities
- if possible, borrow a launch from Radley to provide additional safety cover
- Request Radley College's safety documents and use them as the basis for the risk assessment prior to taking athletes through both locks.