

JOG Low-Water Operating Plan (Draft for Committee Approval)

Prepared by: Safety Advisor **Purpose:** To enable safe rowing during periods of unusually low river levels by introducing temporary mitigations, clarifying responsibilities, and updating club safety documentation.

1. Summary Position

Low water introduces several hazards, but none currently require a full suspension of rowing. All risks can be mitigated through practical measures, supervision, and targeted actions. The club has previously operated safely in similar conditions, and with the steps below, rowing can continue.

2. Key Hazards, Mitigations & Required Document Updates

Below are the **eight hazards** that must be managed during low-water conditions. All are considered equally important.

A. Algae / River Pollution

Risk: Low **Issues:** Blade grip interference; hygiene concerns **Mitigations:**

- Maintain standard hygiene: wash hands, clean boats and oar handles.
- Remind members not to ingest river water.
- Add algae awareness to Before Boating and Safety Plan.

Documents to update:

- Safety Plan – Section 11
- Risk Assessment – Water & Rowing (i.1)

B. Fin / Rudder Grounding

Risk: Medium **Issues:** Silt build-up causing fin strikes and boat damage
Mitigations:

- Organise a **silt-clearing work party** to move silt further out.
- Use the **upper end of the landing stage**, where depth is greater.
- Steers to approach/depart at narrower angles.
- Singles and crew boats to launch only from deeper section.
- Temporary signage: “Preferred Launch Zone”.

Documents to update:

- Navigation & Circulation Rules – Launching
- Risk Assessment – i.3 & i.5
- Before Boating – Landing stage hazards

C. Bows Getting Wedged Under Landing Stage

Risk: Medium **Issues:** Hull damage; entrapment; inability to land **Mitigations:**

- Reinstate **front-edge protective boards**.
- Competent crews may continue with normal supervision.
- Less experienced crews require **increased bank support**.
- Competent single scullers may continue to land safely.
- Add a temporary “Low Water Landing Procedure”.

Documents to update:

- Before Boating – Return to Landing Stage
- Navigation & Circulation Rules – Stopping & Landing
- Risk Assessment – i.3

D. Lifting Boats In/Out at Low Water

Risk: Medium **Issues:** Increased drop height; awkward lifting angles; risk of back/shoulder injury **Mitigations:**

- Stronger/more flexible members take primary lifting roles.
- Provide **manual-handling refresher training**.
- Juniors and less able adults must be supervised or excluded from lifting until trained.
- Add guidance on “Low Water Lifting Technique”.

Documents to update:

- Risk Assessment – viii
- Before Boating – Boat handling & lifting
- Safety Plan – Equipment & Boathouse Safety

E. Boarding Boats (Especially Singles)

Risk: Variable **Issues:** Stability challenges when boarding at low water **Mitigations:**

- Competent single scullers may continue to boat.
- Less experienced scullers require bank support.
- Provide additional coaching for those who need help boarding safely.
- Add “Low Water Boarding Procedure”.

Documents to update:

- Before Boating – Boarding
- Risk Assessment – i.4

F. Debris & Submerged Hazards

Risk: Medium **Issues:** Low water exposes rocks, logs, and debris **Mitigations:**

- Launch drivers and steers to perform a **visual sweep** before sessions.
- Add temporary hazard markers if needed.
- Increase lookout responsibilities for all crews.

Documents to update:

- Navigation & Circulation Rules – General Steering
- Risk Assessment – i.1 & iii.4

G. Reduced Manoeuvrability at Push-Off

Risk: Medium **Issues:** Boats sit lower relative to the stage, making push-off harder **Mitigations:**

- Encourage **bowside push-off only**.
- Provide bank assistance for novice crews.
- Add guidance to Before Boating.

Documents to update:

- Before Boating – Push-off procedure
- Navigation & Circulation Rules – Launching

H. Communication & Supervision Requirements

Risk: Medium **Issues:** Low water increases the need for coordinated supervision **Mitigations:**

- Issue a **Low Water Operating Notice** to all members.
- Increase bank supervision for novice crews.
- Ensure steers and scullers understand temporary procedures.
- Add communication requirements to Safety Plan.

Documents to update:

- Safety Plan – Sections 3 & 4
- Before Boating – Crew readiness
- Risk Assessment – i.8

3. Recommended Actions for the Club

Immediate (within 1 week)

- Form a **work party** to:
 - Clear silt
 - Reinstate landing-stage front boards

- Mark deeper launch zones
- Issue a **Low Water Operating Notice** to all members.
- Provide **manual-handling refresher training**.
- Increase bank supervision for novice crews.

Short Term (within 2–3 weeks)

- Update the following documents:
 - Navigation & Circulation Rules
 - Before Boating
 - Safety Plan
 - Risk Assessment (RA-JOG-006)
- Add temporary “Low Water Procedures” appendix.

Ongoing

- Monitor river level daily.
- Review hazards weekly.
- Pause rowing only if:
 - Boats cannot be landed without bow entrapment
 - Fins strike bottom even in deeper section
 - Safe lifting cannot be achieved with available members

4. Final Safety Advisor Position

Rowing **can continue safely** at low water levels **provided the mitigations above are implemented**. None of the current hazards require a full pause in rowing; they require organisation, supervision, and temporary procedural changes.