

# Royal Docks WATERSPORTS

Operational Procedures  
for use of  
The Royal Albert Dock

2026

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The Royal Albert Dock Trust's Operational Procedures for use of Royal Albert Dock have been formulated to enable our responsibilities to be met, taking due account of advice from the relevant National Governing Bodies (NGBs), Royal Docks Management Authority (RoDMA) and other interested parties including London City Airport (LCA).

Telephone Numbers to be programmed on mobile phones in the event of an emergency:

**Royal Docks WaterSports Centre Reception - 020 7511 2211**



### **Rescue Numbers – London City Airport**

Occasionally the Watch Room may be left unattended if they are already dealing with an incident. The following numbers should be called in this order

1. London City Airport Rapid Response Rescue Boat - 020 7646 0111
2. Emergency Officer in Charge - 07717341645
3. Watchroom Enquiries - 020 7646 0123

**Note:** Airport Fire & Rescue Service operational hours

Monday – Friday 06:00 – 22:30

Saturday – 06:00 – 18:00

Sunday 10:30 – 22:30

## BEFORE GOING AFLOAT

- All water users must sign-out/in **before** they go afloat at reception
- All water users should check the weather condition on the Royal Docks before going afloat
- All water users must check that there are no authorised (RoDMA) vessel movements scheduled
- All water users should understand the circulation pattern (displayed in reception and pontoon embarkation point)
- All water users to comply with the times that they can use the Royal Albert Dock between the hours of sunrise-sunset unless permission has been given from Royal Docks WaterSports Centre staff.
- All water users should wear appropriate PFD if required

## COMMUNICATION WITH OTHER WATER USERS

- Coaches may also communicate with other coaches, athletes, and safety/rescue boat personnel with radios on a standalone safety channel agreed amongst users. Atlantic Pacific and MSSC have a VHF licence and operate on C72.
- People supervising inexperienced water-users are advised not to let them go east beyond the end of the second set of embarkation pontoons (approximately 300m east of the finish line).
- All users are expected to communicate with one another respectfully and in line with the RADT code of conduct.
- On the water in potentially dangerous situations (collision, capsize) users must communicate with each other calmly and concisely.
- In the event of a potential collision with another craft, if you are unable to take evasive action – shout *"TAKE A LOOK [Craft Name]"*. If the approaching craft does not take notice or appropriate action, clearly and loudly repeat "STOP" until they do so.



## FIRST AID

The first-aid point is at reception and will have a trained first-aider available there at most times. Clubs and safety boat personal should ensure that they have sufficient members with first aid qualifications and a comprehensive first aid kit, to include sufficient thermal blankets.

## WEATHER CONDITIONS



## FOG

In the event of fog - unless there is a minimum visibility of 500 metres in 360 degrees direction no-one will be allowed to go on the water.

**For guidance:** London City Airport buildings should be visible to the south and the 1500 metre distance marker on the south wall should be visible from reception. Water Users should consider if the fog is setting in or lifting before planning a session on the water. If the Royal Docks WaterSports Centre have displayed the red traffic light – **THE WATER IS CLOSED**



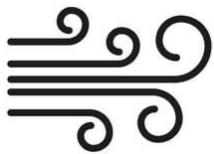
### **ICE**

In the rare event of surface ice on the Royal Albert Dock, no water users will be permitted to go afloat.



### **LIGHTNING**

In the event of lightning, water users are not permitted to go afloat. Users already on the water must disembark at the nearest access point. No persons to return to the water until at least 30 minutes after last lightning strike.



### **WIND**

The Royal Albert Dock, like any area of open water can be subject to wind-formed waves. Because the RAD is situated in an east-west orientation a predominantly east wind will cause waves at the west end of the dock and a

predominantly west wind will cause waves at the east end of the dock. Although it may appear calm at the west end of the dock, conditions may be much worse further east along the dock.

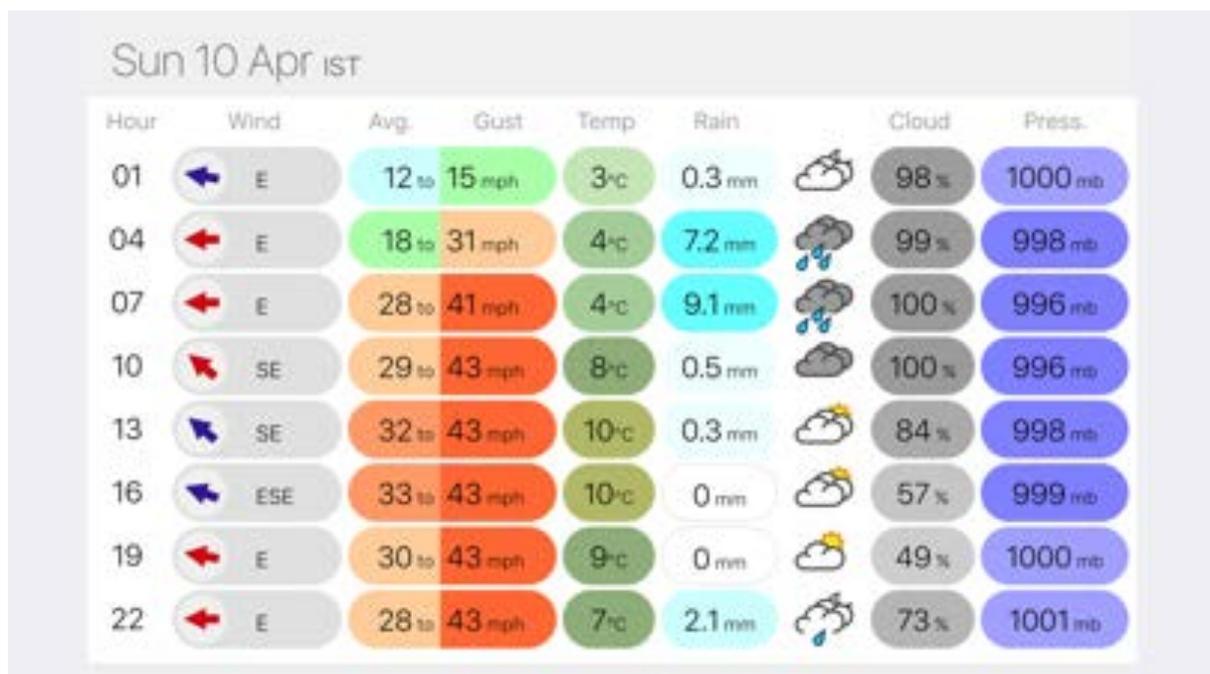
**IF IN DOUBT – DON'T GO AFLOAT**



## WEATHER INFORMATION

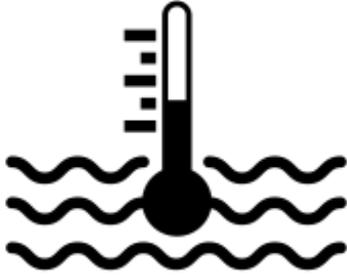
Before planning a session on the Royal Albert Dock, water users are encouraged to check the weather conditions before arriving at the centre.

We recommend that water users download the XC Weather app – [https://www.xcweather.co.uk/forecast/London\\_city\\_airport](https://www.xcweather.co.uk/forecast/London_city_airport)



The weather information is taken from instruments sited at London City Airport, reflecting the conditions on the ground at the time of the observation. The observation maps are updated every 30 minutes. **Red** arrows show that the wind is **gusting**. The wind is said to be gusting if the **maximum** speed is 11.5 mph or more above the current **average** speed. The size of each arrow on the map is always based on the average wind speed.

**Note: if the wind speed average or gusts in an easterly or westerly direction exceeds 17 mph, the Royal Albert Dock will be shut to paddle sport activity.**



## **COLD WATER ADVICE**

Each year there are reported incidences of water users dying due to cold water immersion. The following policy should be adhered to by all water users, particularly small boat users.

Cold water shock (CWS) is an involuntary response by the body being suddenly or unexpectedly immersed into water which has a temperature of **less than 15 °Celsius**. The body's reaction to CWS will affect an individual's capability to move and may seriously affect breathing and the heart.

<https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Safety-Alert-Cold-Water-Kills-1.pdf>

## **ROYAL DOCKS WATERSPORTS CENTRE COLD WATER ADVICE FOR SMALL BOATS, TO INCLUDE:**

Double Sculls (2x)  
Pair Oar (2-)  
Single Scull (1x)  
Outrigger Canoe (O1)  
Solo Canoe/Kayak  
Stand-up Paddleboard (SUP)

When the water/air and temperature falls, water activity should be carried out with great consideration and caution. The RDWC's cold-water advice will go into effect when the combined water and air temperature is  $<14.44^{\circ}\text{C}$ . It is recommended that no water activity in the 'Small Boats' listed should take place without a safety boat being present.

## **Cold Water Safety Advice when the combined water and air temperature falls below 14.44°C (90°F Rule)**

- 1.** Only experienced rowers are allowed on the water in small boats
- 2.** Coaching launches must be on the water within 500 meters of the coached shells
- 3.** Only Boats with 4 or more oars are recommended to be on the water unless there is a safety boat present
- 4.** All safety launches must have enough space blankets for the rowers in a boat that they are coaching
- 5.** Accompanying coaching launches must be able to safely rescue all of the rowers (including coxswain) in the shells being coached
- 6.** Coaches must have mobile phones or radios which are protected and easily accessible

The graphs below show an annual record of weekly measurements of air and water temperature on the Royal Albert Dock.

All clubs should determine the competency of their members who wish to row/paddle in small boats during cold weather and explain the associated risks and explanations of cold shock, its short-term effects.

All single scullers and O1 paddlers are recommended to wear an approved Personal Flotation Device (PFD) and wear thermal layers of clothing to conserve heat. A 'technical' base layer will keep you warm without overheating.

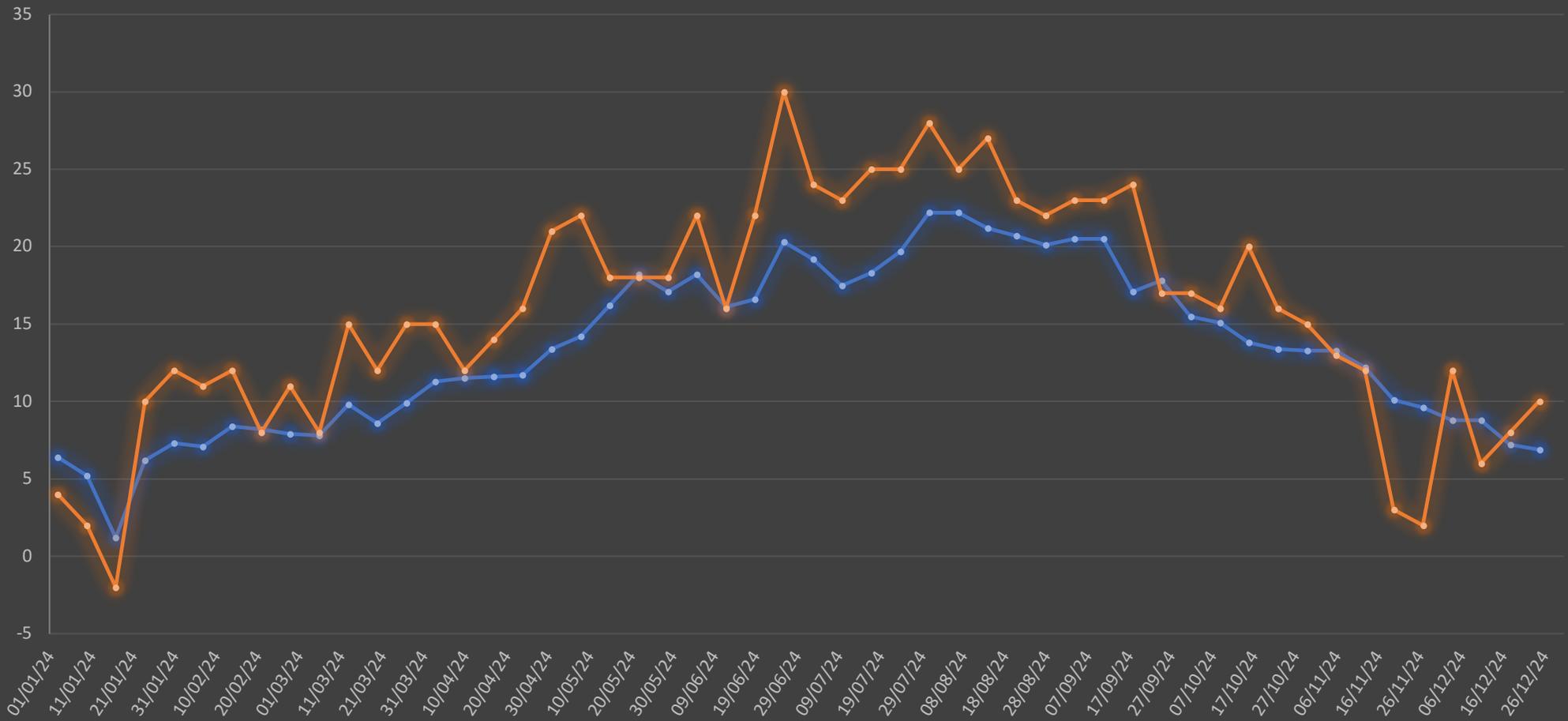
If no dedicated safety boat is present, clubs should consider imposing the following rule:

### **'The Four Oar Rule' 14.44°C (90°F Rule)**

The Four-Oar Rule requires that any outing has at least four oars (paddles) on the water. That makes doubles and fours the smallest option for rowing craft, or a 10-person Dragon Boat when the combined air/ water is deemed too cold for the craft listed above.

# RAD Water/Air Temperature 2024

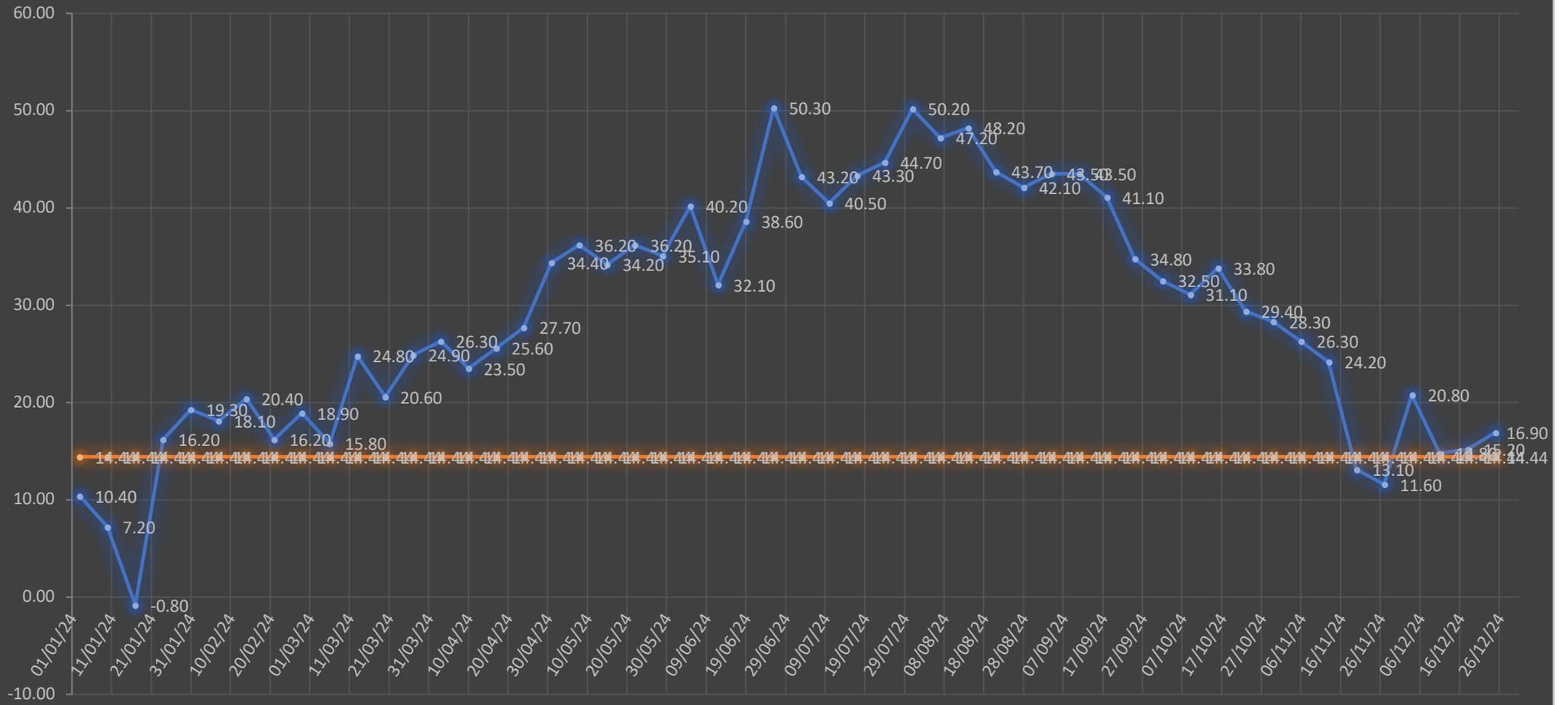
Water Temp (°C)  
Air Temp (°C)



# RAD Water/Air Temperature 2024

Combined Water+Air (°C)

14.44°C Rule



## EFFECTS OF COLD-WATER IMMERSION

Remember, your body loses heat to water 25 times faster than it does to air of the same temperature.

Water Temp (Degrees C)	Loss of Dexterity (no protective clothing)	Time to exhaustion or unconsciousness	Expected survival time
0	<2 mins	Up to 15 minutes	<15 - 30 minutes
0 - 4	<3 mins	15 - 30 minutes	30 - 60 minutes
4 - 10	<5 mins	30 - 60 minutes	1 - 3 hours
10 - 16	10 - 15 minutes	1 - 2 hours	1 - 6 hours
16 - 21	Up to 40 minutes	2 - 7 hours	Up to 40 hours

This table is a guide to help illustrate the effects of cold-water immersion. Differences in body mass, age etc will affect each individual's resilience to cold water immersion.

Below are survival times for persons immersed in cold water. These times are for people in the water, but remember that even if you get out of the water, how long will you be in wet clothing on top of your boat or on the dockside? Uncontrollable shivering, disorientation and impaired judgment start to occur before exhaustion or unconsciousness.

### Further Information –

<https://www.britishrowing.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022-RowSafe.pdf>

[https://worldrowing.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FISA'sMinimumGuidelinesfortheSafePracticeofRowing\\_Neutral.pdf](https://worldrowing.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FISA'sMinimumGuidelinesfortheSafePracticeofRowing_Neutral.pdf)

[https://worldrowing.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FISA'sMinimumGuidelinesfortheSafePracticeofRowing\\_Neutral.pdf](https://worldrowing.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FISA'sMinimumGuidelinesfortheSafePracticeofRowing_Neutral.pdf)

<https://www.dragonboat.org.uk/media/1116/bda-safety-procedures-for-regattas-and-training.pdf>

## TRAFFIC LIGHTS



A traffic light system (red/green) at the front entrance to Royal Docks WaterSports Centre.

**ALL** water users.

In the event of high winds, or if it is otherwise deemed unsafe for water users, the red light will be displayed and the 3 access points to the Royal Albert Dock will be secured with padlocks. No water users (paddle sports) will be allowed to go on the water.

Other times when a **RED** light may be displayed:

- Authorised vessel movements
- Poor visibility
- Surface ice
- Lightning
- Cold water restrictions
- Water pollution

## BOAT LIGHTING

Rowing/Paddling in the evenings after sunset is not permitted, however Rowing/Paddling in the mornings before sunrise (from 06:00) is permitted.

- Bow/Stern single white light 360, static or strobe required. **Preference for strobe (flashing) light on the bow to show direction of travel**
- Visible for 800m and through 180° – the boat must effectively have lighting visible through 360°



## **NATIONAL GOVERNING BODY REQUIREMENTS**

All water-users must comply with their own NGB safety guidelines as well as the Operational Procedures for Royal Docks Adventure.

### **BRITISH CANOEING**

<https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/guidance-resources/safety-1>

### **BRITISH DRAGON BOAT ASSOCIATION**

<https://www.dragonboat.org.uk/the-bda/policy-documents/>

### **BRITISH ROWING**

<https://www.britishrowing.org/about-us/policies-guidance/rowsafe/>

## **ON WATER SAFETY**

Water users are encouraged to deploy safety boats with designated personnel, when available. Fully equipped safety/rescue boats may be available for hire for more vulnerable groups. Permission must be sought, and qualifications verified by the CEO before any motorised craft is deployed.

London City Airport Fire Rescue Service will respond with a manned rapid response rescue boat if requested by phone in the event of an emergency.

**Note: only contact LCA in emergency after all other safety measures have been used.**

**ALL** participants must be able to swim 50m in light clothing otherwise buoyancy aids must be worn.

No boat may go afloat unless both a member of the crew and their designated Buddy have made themselves fully aware of the circulation pattern - a copy of which is available at reception.

No boat may go afloat unless the person responsible for their supervision is satisfied that conditions are safe for a crew or individual of their competence. If fog or adverse wind conditions are apparent, reception staff will close the embarkation pontoons, and no-one will be allowed on the water – see Adverse Conditions below.

No boat may go afloat unless both a member of the crew and their designated Buddy have signed the logbook held at reception (see Buddy System below). By signing in crews confirm that all crew members, Buddies and any other support personnel have read and agree to these Rules for use of the Royal Docks. All users must sign in again at reception when they get off the water.

Water users who use the Royal Albert Dock before sunrise must have approval from the RDA Chief Operations Officer and display navigation lights fore and aft on their craft.

All bank observers/coaches must be in possession of a mobile phone with RDA reception and LCA Rescue Boat telephone numbers programmed in.

NO Adaptive/Para-Rowing is to take place without a suitable safety/rescue boat with two persons aboard being deployed and remaining within 50 metres of the rower.



## Buddy System

### **BUDDY SYSTEM**

This means that any boat going afloat must be accompanied by a designated "*Buddy*" who can be either someone on the bank or someone on the water in another boat.

Each boat must have a mobile phone in a fully waterproof container with all emergency telephone numbers programmed.

Bank observers/coaches should remain in line-of-sight of their crews and have communication by megaphone and/or radio.

**FOR THE AVOIDANCE OF DOUBT**  
**NO WATER-USER/CREW IS TO GO OUT UNACCOMPANIED**



### **SPEED LIMIT ROYAL DOCKS**

All powered craft using the Royal Albert Dock must adhere to the speed limit of 5 knots commensurate with safe navigation and enforced by the Royal Docks Management Agency (RoDMA) unless

they have been given special dispensation from RoDMA, or there is an emergency response to rescue water users.



Please record all incidences of breaches in the speed limit through the following link: <https://forms.gle/y5WrT95onpMegjfQA>

Further reading for safe practice on the water –

[https://worldrowing.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FISA'sMinimumGuidelinesfortheSafePracticeofRowing\\_Neutral.pdf](https://worldrowing.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FISA'sMinimumGuidelinesfortheSafePracticeofRowing_Neutral.pdf)

## **MANDATORY CIRCULATION PATTERN FOR ALL WATER USERS ON THE ROYAL ALBERT DOCK**

In simple terms - the circulation pattern is clockwise.

### **WEST to EAST**

Stay close to north wall until entering the start zone when boats need to move onto the rowing course when entering the `start zone.

#### **Entering the Start Zone (travelling in an easterly direction)**

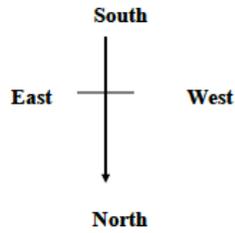
Beyond the 250m is a shared water with dragon boats/kayaks/canoes, proceed with caution and expect other boats to be traveling in a westerly direction

- Stay close to the north wall
- Do not cross over until beyond the 250m mark
- No overtaking beyond 250m, forming an orderly queue.

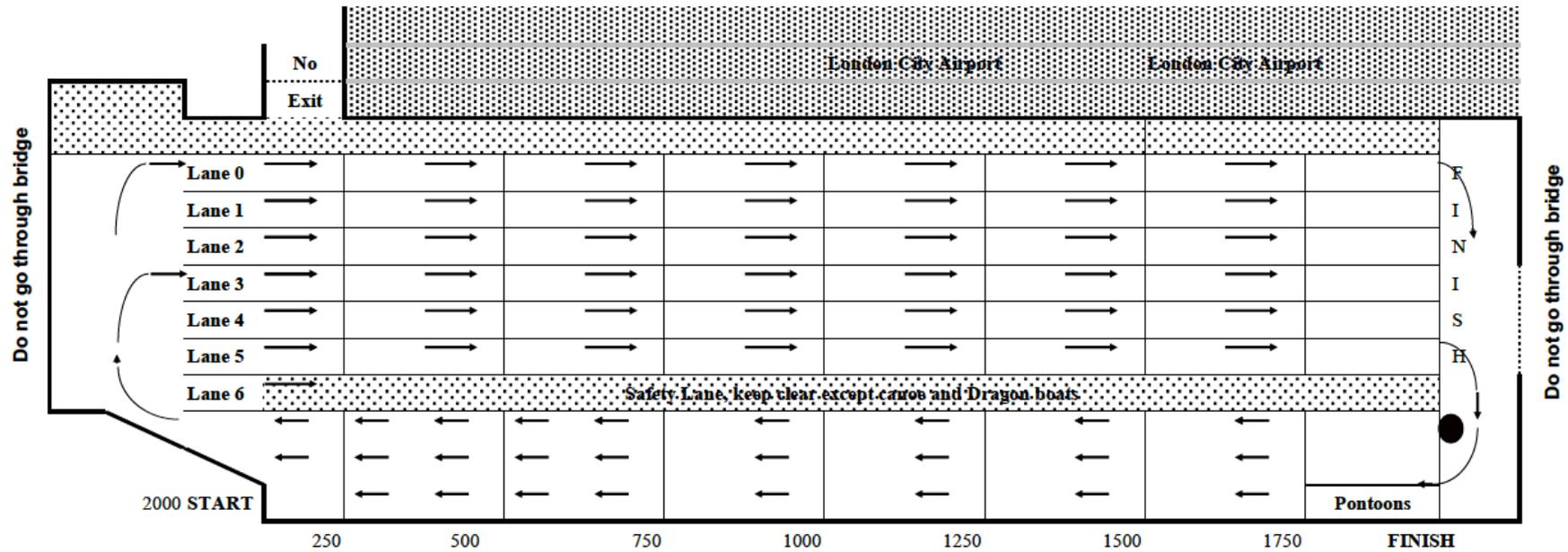
### **EAST to WEST**

Proceed in rowing lanes or stay close to the south wall.

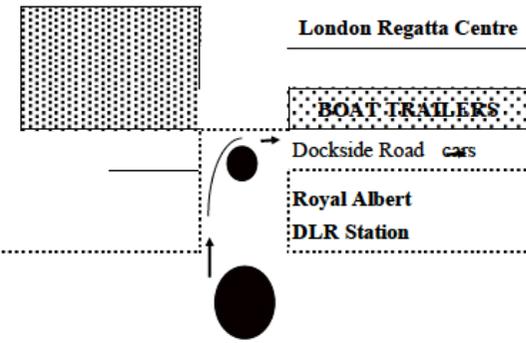
A copy of the circulation pattern is displayed at reception and on the first (west) embarkation gate to the pontoons.



Lane 7, the lane for travelling up to the start, may only be used to travel in a west-to-east direction.  
 will result in you being asked to leave the course you being told to leave the course  
 You may cross onto the course at any point but must not impede crews on the course

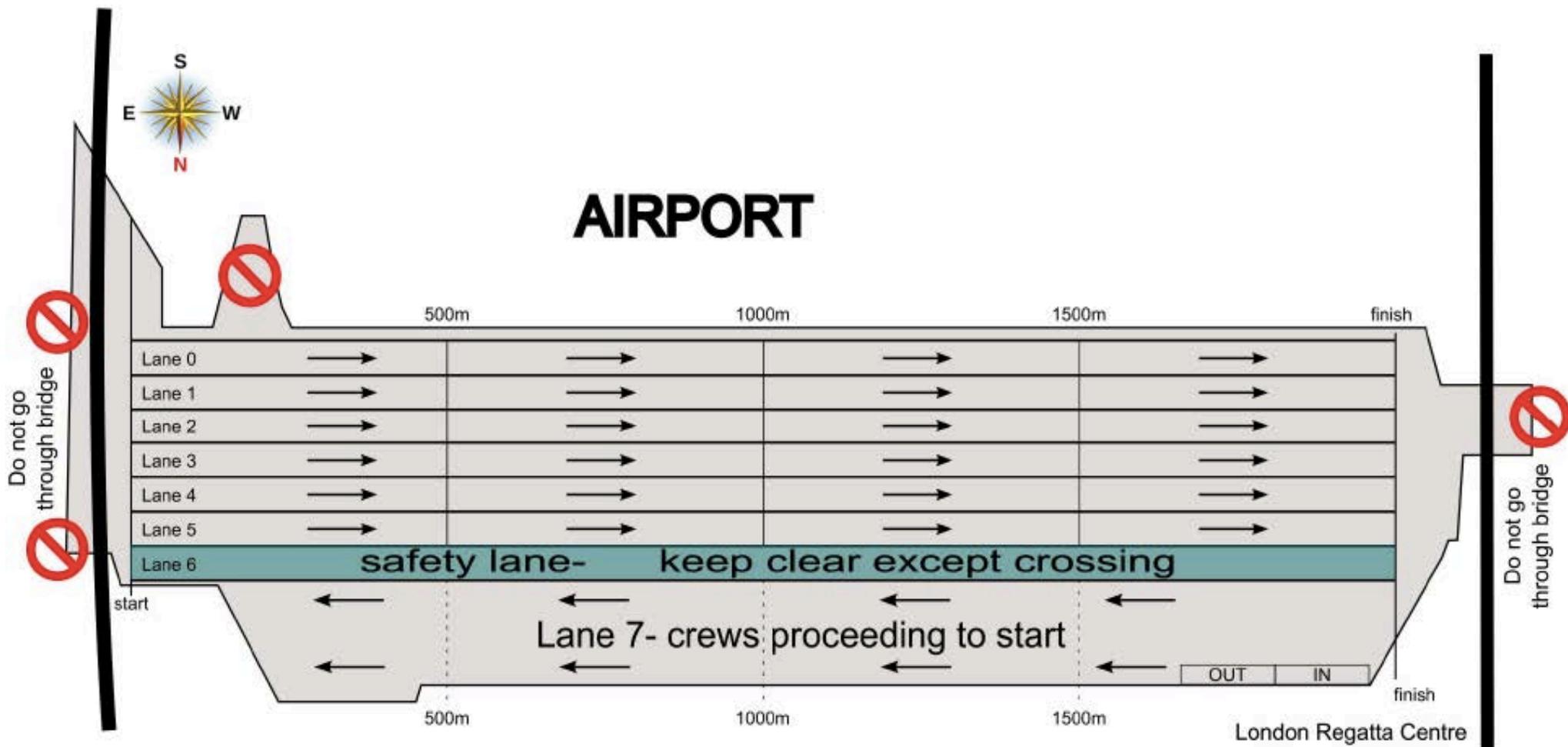


BICYCLES ONLY to follow crews, no cars or motorbikes



# Royal Albert Way

# AIRPORT





## **INCIDENTS & INCIDENT REPORTING**

If you are involved in an incident at Royal Docks Water Sports Centre

- Do not unnecessarily risk your own safety when seeking to aid others
- Call the appropriate emergency services if necessary

Monitoring safety incidents helps to reduce the possibility of them happening again. This is done through incident reporting.

ALL water users who are involved in an incident on the Royal Docks should complete the RDA online incident reporting system (under construction). All water users should in addition complete their NGB's online incident reporting system and submit a copy to Royal Docks Watersports Centre.

### **BRITISH CANOEING:**

<https://www.britishcanoeing.org.uk/go-canoeing/access-and-environment/access-to-water/incident-reporting>

### **BRITISH ROWING:**

<https://incidentreporting.britishrowing.org>

The incident reporting system is confidential and available to everyone; clubs, individuals (members and non-members) and events to report an incident or concern.

Incidents that cause harm or damage, however trivial, should be reported as well as those where an injury, health issue or damage has occurred. Near misses should also be reported as these can provide useful information that may help someone to avoid a serious incident in the future and help to identify trends that can be addressed.

## RADT ONLINE INCIDENT REPORTING

Note: Reports should be made online within 24 hours of the incident



Scan QR Code with mobile phone or submit report online

<https://forms.gle/8ov8LTHrNJ3Bsk5W7>

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF CLUBS

ALL clubs should have a Safety Adviser and Committee to promote to members what constitutes an incident and a near miss that needs reporting and how to do this. Clubs are also required to keep members up to date on incidents that have occurred and ways to mitigate them in the future.

## RISK ASSESMENTS

ALL clubs are required to carry out their own risk assessments and submit this to RADT. The risk assessment should include severity of risk (see below) with mitigation. Sample risk assessments and templates are available from RADT's CEO on request.

		Likelihood						
		A	B	C	D	E		
		Highly Improbable <i>(never heard of in rowing)</i>	Possible <i>(heard of in Rowing)</i>	Occasional <i>(Has happened in local clubs)</i>	Likely <i>(has happened in club or more than once per year in rowing)</i>	Highly Probable <i>(Happens more than once per year at club)</i>		
Severity	1	Slight injury or health Effect	Minor Damage to Equipment (<£100)	Low	Low	Low	Low	Moderate
	2	Minor Injury or health Effect (no potential for time off sport)	Damage Repair Costs Low (£100 - £1,000)	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Substantial
	3	Moderate Injury or Health Effect (potential for time off sport)	High Damage Repair Costs (>£1,000)	Low	Low	Moderate	Substantial	Intolerable
	4	Major injury	Repair Costs (loss of boat, 3rd party damage)	Low	Moderate	Substantial	Intolerable	Intolerable
	5	Fatality	Major Damage & Major Costs (loss of several boats, high 3rd party damage)	Moderate	Substantial	Intolerable	Intolerable	Intolerable

Low	No additional controls required
Moderate	Effort should be made to reduce the risk. Risk reduction measures should be implemented within a defined time period. Where the moderate risk associated with harmful/serious consequences further assessment may be necessary to establish more detail.
Substantial	The activity should not be started until the risk has been adequately managed. Considerable resources may have to be allocated to reduce the risk. Where the risk involves activity already in progress, urgent action should be taken.
Intolerable	Activity should not be started or continued until the risk has been reduced. If it is not possible to reduce risk even with unlimited resources, activity has to remain prohibited.



## WATER QUALITY

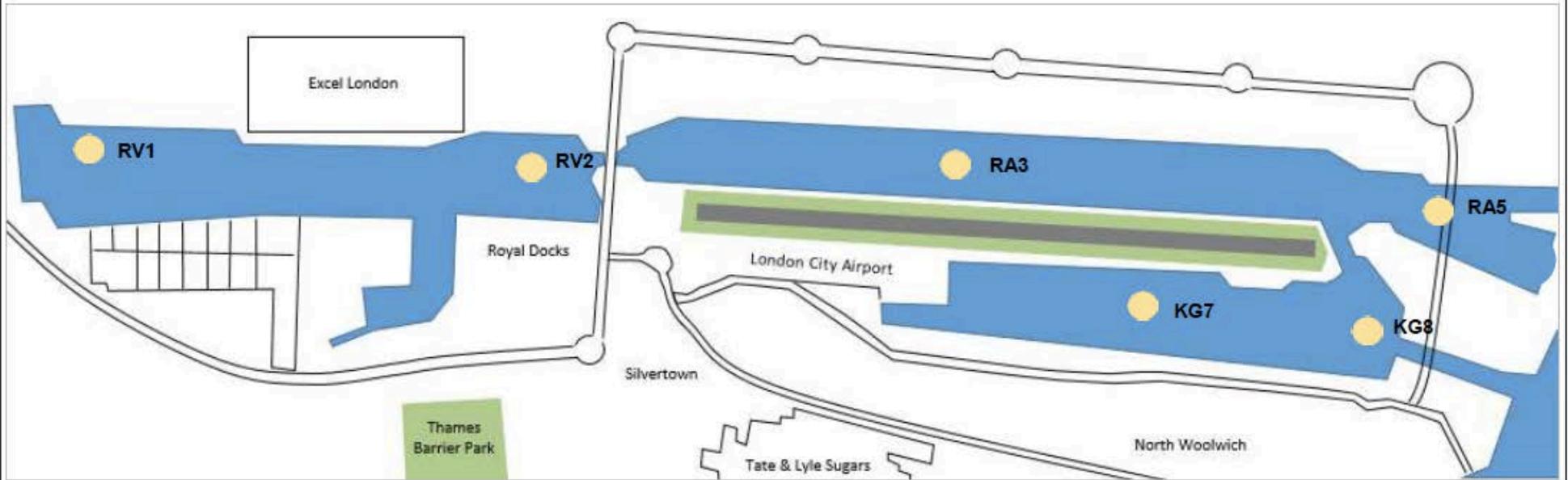
Royal Docks WaterSports Centre offers a wide range of water sports and activities on the Royal Docks. As with any open water it is important to observe some simple rules to remain safe and healthy.

The water in the Royal Docks is generally rated as 'Excellent Quality' with monthly water quality testing by SOCOTEC on behalf of the Royal Docks Management Agency (RoDMA). Sampling is performed from a boat provided by RODMA in 6 locations, approximately 0.3 m below surface level.

The water in the Royal Docks may have fluctuating levels of bacteria but is generally compliant with the guidance for water contact sports and bathing water quality deeming that the water complies with the guidance for water contact sports and bathing water quality.

Although field measurements are no longer required when reporting bathing water, SOCOTEC deem it prudent to continue this monitoring as it will indicate any abnormal characteristics associated with the water. Therefore, monitoring continues with the requirements of the EC Directive concerning the quality of bathing water (76/160/EEC) and The Bathing Waters (Classification) Regulations (SI 1991 No.1597 & SI 2003 No.1238

If at any time an adverse report is received, water users will be notified, and notices displayed at reception and embarkation points to the water.



Legend to symbols:

-  Surface water samples collected by SOCOTEC



Title

**Sample Location Plan**

Project

**RoDMA- Royal Docks**

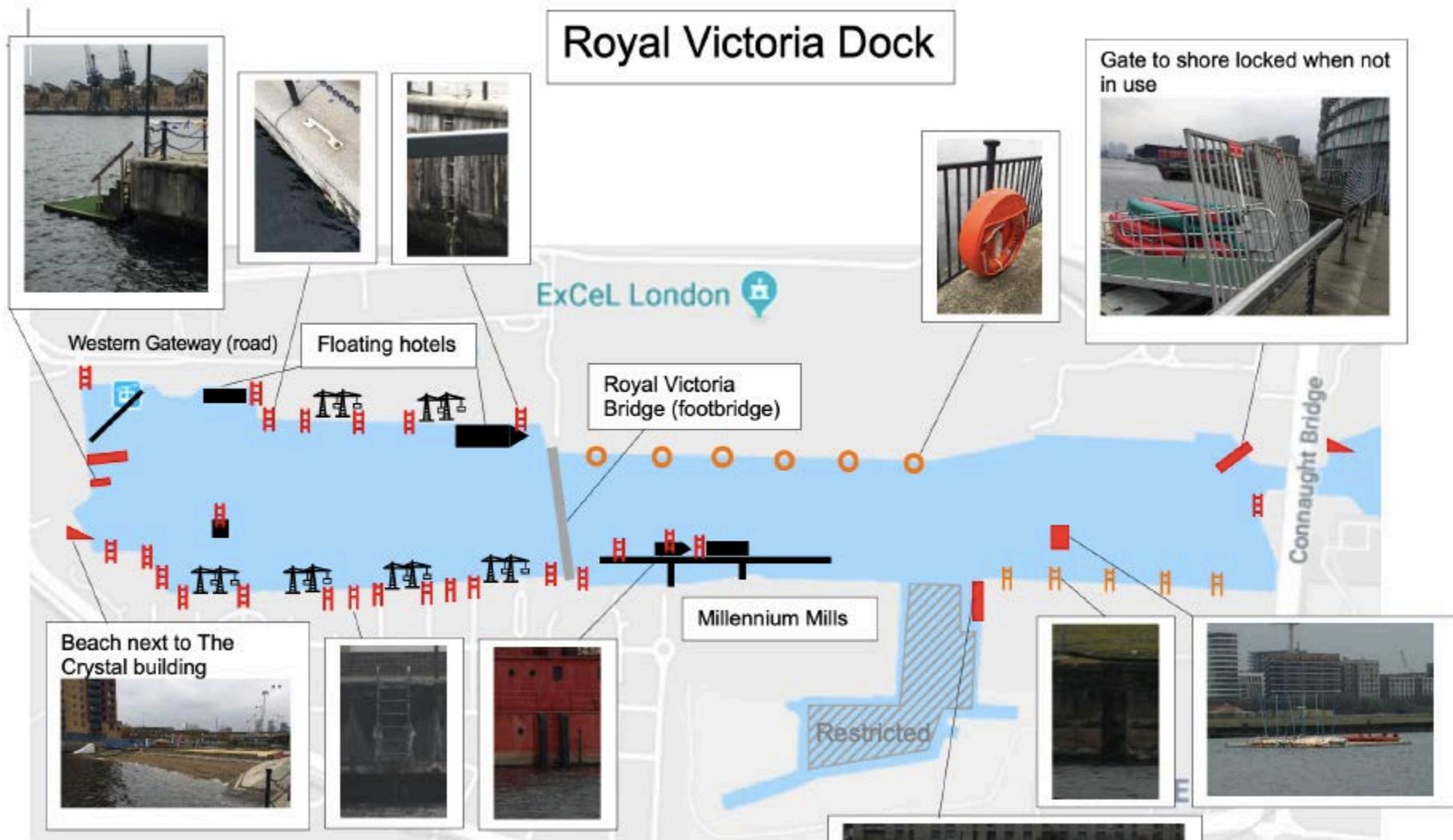
Project No

**R3053**

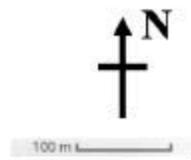
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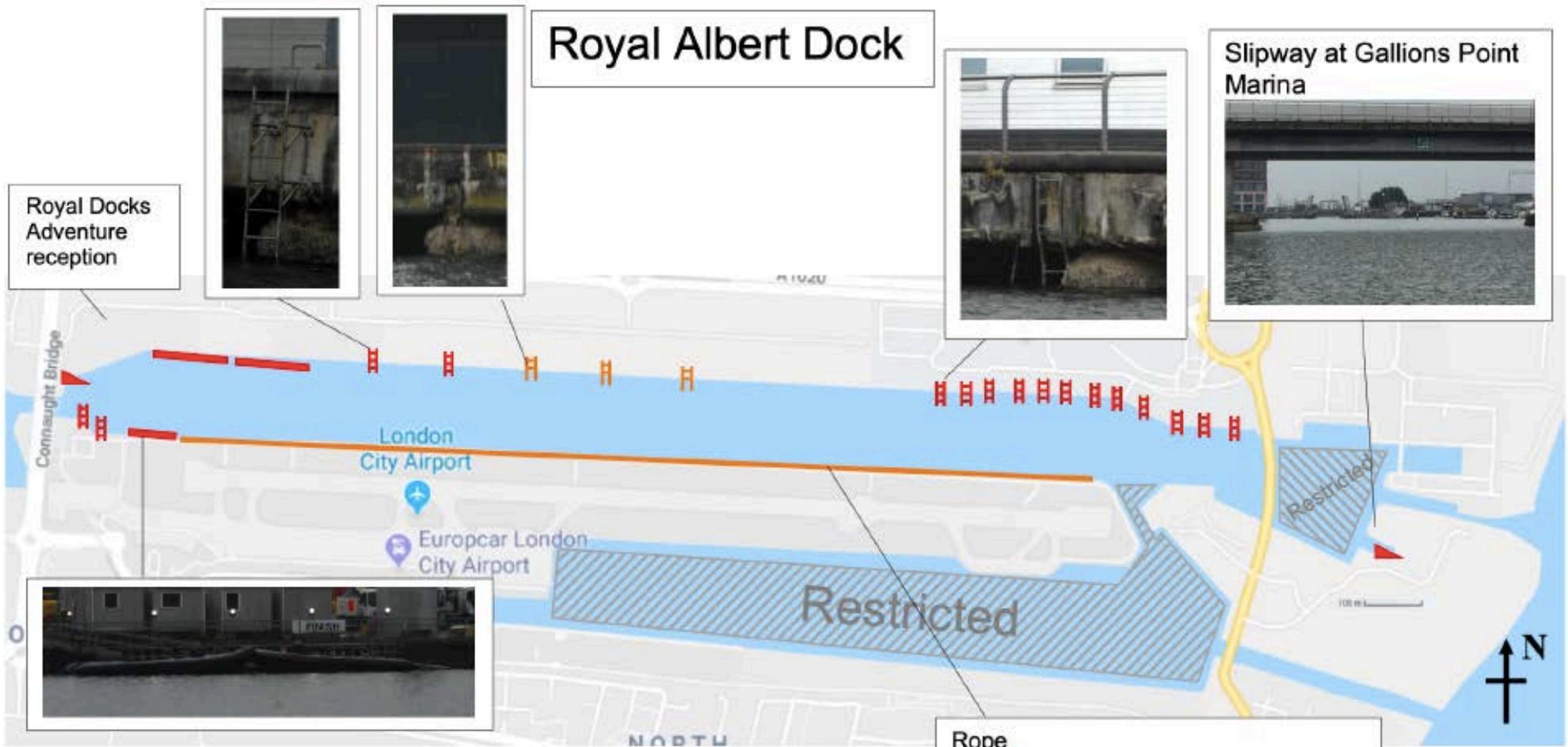
**Figure 1**

# EXIT LOCATIONS ON THE ROYAL DOCKS



- Key**
- Exit ladder
  - Exit ladder (dependent on water level)
  - Old ladder, no exit, assist floating
  - Pontoon
  - Slipway/beach
  - Lifebuoy





- Key**
- Exit ladder
  - Exit ladder (dependent on water level)
  - Old ladder, no exit, assist floating
- Pontoon
  - Slipway/beach
  - Lifebuoy

