

Hammersmith Head 2018 – Abandonment Statement

The committee is obviously very disappointed to have abandoned this year's race on Sunday. We realise that this disappointment is shared by the competitors, many of whom travelled a long way on the day. We aim to run a safe race for all competitors and the decision to abandon was not taken lightly.

During the week before the event the Committee continually monitored the weather forecast, including a meeting on Thursday. Although the forecast for Saturday and Sunday was consistently poor, with a strong easterly wind and very cold weather, the forecast wind strength for Sunday actually reduced during the week.

Because of concerns about the forecast and the impact on less experienced crews it was decided that any "Beginner" or J15/WJ15 and younger crews could withdraw ahead of the event and receive a full refund. The Committee additionally posted to the website and Tweeted advice about the expected cold weather and that should dress warmly.

The committee agreed to make a decision on whether to go ahead with the race after a course inspection on Saturday morning at 10am when the tide and weather conditions were forecast to be similar to race time on Sunday morning.

On Saturday morning the Chief Umpire rowed over the full course on the ebb (in a 4-) and found it rowable though uncomfortable around Chiswick Eyot. The Chief Umpire and Chief Marshal subsequently inspected the course from 10-11am and after observing a number of crews out on the course considered it was perfectly rowable though with some unpleasant water from the Eastern end of Chiswick Eyot to the finish. Based on this we concluded that we could still plan to go ahead.

On Sunday morning the Chief Marshal went afloat at about 1000 at which time the wind was starting to kick up waves and there were a few white horses from the finish towards Chiswick Eyot. On reaching the Mortlake stretch (above Barnes Bridge) in company with one other launch, there were continuous white horses visible from about the Stag Brewery down towards Barnes Bridge. It was clear that the conditions were caused by the deteriorating weather and a shift in the wind direction from the previous day. Conditions would likely worsen with the quickening stream. The Chief Marshal watched an eight row down the fairway with waves breaking over the riggers on every stroke.

The conditions were significantly worse than had been seen on Saturday and following discussion between the umpires on the spot and with the Chief Umpire at Race Control it was agreed that we would abandon the race due to the conditions.

A delay to the start was considered inappropriate given the severe wind chill risk to competitors and the likelihood of conditions not improving significantly in the short term. Similarly changing the course was also considered and rejected due to conditions in the marshalling area.

Refunds have been given based on our published policy and have been processed through BROE back to the payees account. A reminder that the issued Empacher numbers carry a £10 deposit refundable upon return.