

**SITE RISK ASSESSMENT 2025**

**OPEN WATER SWIMMING – RIPON RACECOURSE LAKE**

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| **Location** | **Activity** | **Sessions** | **Participants** |
| Ripon racecourse lakeThis site has good access for emergency vehicles if required | Open Water Swimming | Tuesday 1800-2000Thursday 1800-2000Saturday 0700-1000Times are amended to suit daylight hours at the start and end of season | Members of Ripon Triathlon ClubMixed ability Unaccompanied from 18+Competent juniors from 12 (accompanied by 18+) following assessment by an accredited coach/OW Committee Member. |
| **Assessors** | **Assessment signed off by** | **Assessment date** | **Risk assessment review date** |
|  |  |  | April 2025 |

Ripon Triathlon Club has carried out this risk assessment and implemented control measures to ensure that risks are minimized so far as is reasonably practicable. However, due to the nature of open water swimming, an element of risk remains. Participants are informed that these sessions are not coached, nor are there safety boats therefore all participants are at their own risk.

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| **Hazard** | **Who may be****Harmed** | **Control measures in place** | **Person Responsible**  |
| *Slips and falls.* (Entry/exit point. This canBecome slippery due to build-up of slime) | Participants/Spectators  | * Swimmers reminded to take care when entering/exiting the water.
* Visual checks to ensure the area is kept clear of clutter/debris and slime.
* Hand rails are available to hold onto while descending/ascending the steps into the lake.
 | COWS |
| Spectator safety lakeside | Spectators | * Spectators are advised that they are to stay on the grassed area at the registration end of the lake.
* Spectators are not permitted to walk around the perimeter of the lake.
* They are advised not to stand on the wooden steps/jetty and to stand back from the edges of the lake.
 | COWS / OW Swim manager / Safety Crew |
| Drowning due to:* Weak/inexperienced swimmer – causes various from panic attack to exposure.
* Over exertion
* Illness (heart attack, respiratory distress)
* Affected by drugs/alcohol.
* Adverse weather
 | Participants | * Every swimmer must be a registered member on the Spond Membership system (unless completing their free trial session). (*Ref page 4 NOP – Event/Activity Description)*
* Membership list is kept in the COWS folder detailing medical conditions and emergency contact information (this information is also included on the Photo ID cards and in the Spond App).
* Trial members give emergency contact details and any medical conditions to the COWS prior to the session and complete a swim induction.
* Every swimmer must have signed the Open Water Declaration and completed an Induction.
* Every swimmer must declare they are able to swim 1500m or 60x 25m lengths unassisted without stopping in a pool.
* All swimmers must adhere to the OW swimming rules as stated.
* Novice and timid swimmers will have a buddy and mandatory tow float, keeping to the shorter course.
* All swimmers to keep to lake edges where possible.
* All swimmers are advised to swim with a buddy.
* Wetsuits must be worn if the water temperature is below 22 degrees.
 | COWS  |
| Drowning – Lost swimmer | Participants  | * Every swimmer must register with the COWS and exchange their membership card or photo ID for a swim band (worn outside of the wetsuit), this must be returned and swapped on exiting the lake.
* COWS register all swimmers in the registration book when handing them a swim band and check them out against the register when exiting the water and hand back their band *(ref. page 5 NOP – Swimmer Tracking).*
* COWS have a detailed EAP with them at all times and are trained in how to react in case of an emergency
 | COWS |
| Panicking Swimmer | Participants | * Swimmers are advised, if nervous or panicking, to shout for a safety crew and/or lie on their back with their hand in the air to get attention
* PB will approach the swimmer and either assist them to calm and carry on, or take them back to the exit point to exit the water.
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| ColdLeading to hypothermia, inability to swim and the risk of drowning if unconscious)  | Participants  | * COWS will cancel the swim if the temperature is below 12° C.
* Swimmers only permitted to swim with a COW on duty and between the designated dates of 1st April and 31st October, temperature depending.
* Wetsuits, tow floats and swim hats must be worn.
* Participants advised to get out and dress in warm clothing if they feel cold.
* The health advisory document covers the signs and symptoms of hypothermia and what action to take, all swimmers must familiarise themselves with this.
 | COWS |
| Entanglement (weeds)  | Participants | * Swimmers warned of weeds and if concerned/novice advised to swim with a buddy.
* Swimmers instructed to roll onto their backs and raise an arm in the air is assistance is required
 | COWS |
| Impact (collision with objects in the lake) | Participants | * All swimmers to use the designated entry/exit points.
* All swimmers to be advised strictly no diving or jumping into the water.
* Advised of only known fixed object is a tyre at the bottom end of lake, if swimmers stick to the swim course this is avoided.
* Swimmers advised to report hazards so they can be removed.
* All swimmers to swim clockwise in the designated direction of swim
 | COWS / Safety Crew |
| Impact (other lake users) | Participants | * Swimmers to swim clockwise
* Bright coloured hats to be worn to aid visibility.
* Tow Floats mandatory to aid visibility.
* All swimmers to be briefed on the importance of sighting at induction.
* The membership numbers in the club, and the size of the ample swim area available, means that overcrowding is not a risk.
* Max number of 60 swimmers allowed at any one time on the 500m course.
 | COWS / Safety Crew |
| Impact (other users, craft) | Participants | * Access restricted to swimmers only at times of swimming.
* Fishermen are allowed to fish from the designated positions around the lake and they are aware of swim times. The courses are designed to avoid fishing positions.
* No sail or power boats allowed during swim session.
* No other users are booked in to use the lake during the swim sessions.
* Notice is displayed at the entrance advising of this.
 | Landowner |
| Weil’s Disease | Participants  | * The health advisory document clearly states the signs and symptoms of Weil’s disease and what actions to take if a swimmer were to develop any symptoms.
* Swimmers should shower as soon as possible after swimming.
* Not to swim if any open wounds
* To not eat food until hands have been thoroughly washed.
* To seek medical advice if concerned
 | RTC / COWS |
| Poor water quality leading to illness  | Participants  | * Ripon Tri Club will conduct regular water testing to ensure water quality is acceptable. (Prior to lake opening and before Ripon Triathlon in July)
* Swim time limited to session length.
* Swimmers to report any illness so any possible contaminants can be identified and dealt with.
* Any visible signs of pollution are reported immediately to the committee/racecourse.
* Sightings of algae will be reported to all members via the Ripon Tri Club Closed Member Forum; Email to all members; Sign at Entrance to the Lake
 | COWS / OW Swim Manager Participants |
| Swans (physical assault)  | Participants | * Swimmers made aware of waterfowl and to avoid antagonising them.
* Swimmers to be especially aware during breeding season
 | COWS |
| Poor weather (strong wind, poor visibility, lightening) | All | * COWS to cancel the session in the case of adverse weather.
* NO SWIMMING IN THE CASE OF LIGHTNING
 | COWS / OW Swim Manager |
| Change in Swim course | Participants | * Design of the swim course remains the same for the whole season.
* Buoys are weighed down with heavy weights and remain in the same position. Only in very extreme weather conditions might they move. COWS and OW swim manager to make visual checks that buoys are in the same position at each session.
* Emergency access points remain the same throughout the season. There are no hazards or obstructions in front of the emergency exit or evacuation points.
 | COWS / OW Swim Manager / Safety crew |
| Safety Team  |  | * All safety crew (COWS / Spotters / Paddle Boarders) are aware of the 3 emergency evacuation points (as described in the NOP).
* Safety crew are aware of the process required to recover a casualty to the nearest evacuation point (referred to in the NOP).
* Safety crew are able to direct the emergency services to the lakeside (using the W3W location) and are aware that on arrival of the Emergency services they then defer to their expertise and guidance (referred to in the NOP).
* Safety crew all informed of how to use the radios and these are tested at the beginning of every session. Whistles are provided as back up (referred to in the NOP).
* Paddle Boarders are volunteers who participate in a Rescue Training session and are trained how to recover a conscious and unconscious swimmer onto a Paddle Board and bring them to the nearest evacuation point (referred to in the NOP).
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THIS IS A DYNAMIC RISK ASSESSMENT AND WILL BE UPDATED AND CHANGED ACCORDINGLY

THE MOST RECENT COPY WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THE COW BOX LAKESIDE AT EACH SESSION AND EACH MEMBER OF THE SENIOR COMMITTEE AND OWS REPRESENTATIVE

ANY CONCERNS SHOULD BE RAISED IN A TIMELY FASHION TO AVOID INJURY OR INCIDENCE