



Club Safety Boat Policy

Definitions:-

GYC Safety Boats: Currently Safety 1, Safety 2, Safety 3 and any successor boats. Also includes Lucky Les ("LL") when used for safety boat duties. Note, usage of LL for non safety boat duties is covered under the Trot Boat Policy

Helm: Driver of Safety Boat and responsible for all conduct on vessel

Crew: Additional persons supporting helm; on vessel during authorised use

Instructor: Person holding RYA teaching qualification at the right level for the relevant boating activity. Both the teaching qualification and mandatory requirements (e.g. First Aid) must not have expired.

Safety Boat Management Team ("SBMT"): group primarily responsible for maintenance and authorised usage of the safety boats. Current members: Steve Wilson and Paul Brown.

GYC Dinghy Section: Section of GYC club focused on dinghy racing and who's events are recorded within the GYC calendar.

GYC Approved Helm List: GYC official list of approved helms for various GYC vessels.

Duty Officer: Person responsible for overall event management; will usually be a Race Officer for competitive events.

Certificates: Recognised RYA qualifications and course completion certificates. For the purpose of this policy, they become valid for this Policy when an original certificate has been shown to the GYC Training Manager and/or SBMT and recorded. Any time limited Certificates (e.g. First Aid) must be in-date on date of event.

First Aid Certificate: Must be one of RYA First Aid, SCTW Elementary First Aid, SeaFish or MCA-approved Proficiency Courses for any Instructor. Can be any certified First Aid certificate for Safety Boat Helms, Safety Boat Crew and Other Helms.

Scope:-

This policy covers use of GYC Safety Boats. It does not cover Fat Fred, the Trot Boat, the Work Boat (Lily) and such vessels should not be used for safety boat duties.

GYC Safety Boat Usage:-

- The GYC Safety Boats covered under this policy may be used as safety boats for planned GYC Dinghy Section events, unless advised otherwise that they are not in sufficiently good repair as advised by SBMT in the GYC Safety Boat or GYC Dinghy WhatsApp group(s).
- All other uses of GYC Safety Boats, including as trot boats or for training purposes, must only be by prior written approval from SBMT.

- GYC Safety Boats covered in this policy are for use on recognised and approved club events/courses/training only, they are not to be launched/used by members for private purposes under any circumstances, or by any Instructors without approval.
- Use of other vessels (e.g. privately owned powerboats or safety boats/ powerboats owned by other clubs) for safety cover for GYC organised events is under exceptional circumstances, only allowable with prior written permission of SBMT and subject to proof of adequate insurance coverage to the then current level required by RYA for an RTC (currently £3m). Specific crewing requirements will be provided at time of the vessel approval.
- All Helms and Crew are to follow the instructions provided in induction/refresher training and on the provided signage/checklists for each vessel to ensure the vessels are correctly prepared for usage, launched, recovered and closed down.
- GYC Safety Boats are routinely fuelled (or charged) prior to each event, but all Helms should satisfy themselves there is sufficient fuel (or charge) onboard as part of their checks before launching.
- GYC Safety Boats are regularly inspected, maintained and serviced. Any mechanical issues with the vessels should be reported to SBMT ASAP via GYC WhatsApp Safety Boat group, or by phone if immediate assistance is required.
- No-one should remove the engine cowlings (battery casing on Lucky Les) or modify fitments to the vessels in any way other than in an emergency, unless a member of SBMT or LL Core Group (defined within Trot Boat Policy).
- In the event of a breakdown at sea/river that can't be simply resolved (e.g. dislodged kill cord, dislodged fuel connection, unopened fuel breather, fouled propellor, etc.) help should be sought firstly from other GYC vessels or London VTS, and where possible the craft paddled to a safe place outside the main channel where it can be safely moored/anchored and assistance sought.
- Safety Boat Helms are, at all times, to follow the Thames Byelaws, PLA General Directions for Navigation and the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREG's).
- A listening watch must be maintained on Channel 14 (London VTS) by the Helm of each vessel when afloat.
- Under normal circumstances GYC Safety Boats are not to exceed 12kn at any time, unless responding to an urgent safety matter.
- Particularly for recovery of GYC Safety Boats onto the Tetradocks in an adverse (flood) tide, if any skipper is not confident to get the boat safely back onto the Tetradock, they should tie it securely alongside the club pontoon, post on the GYC Safety Boat WhatsApp group and SBMT will recover asap.
- All Helms are required to attend an induction by SBMT for each vessel they intend to Helm.
- All approved GYC Safety Boat Helms must undertake a short refresher with SBMT each year, and the date of successful completion of each refresher will be logged on the GYC Approved Helm's list. In the event that more than 12 months have passed since the last refresher

course then approval as a Helm will be considered to be suspended until such time as the Helm has completed a refresher course.

- In the event no such inductions or refreshers are currently advertised, please contact SBMT who can arrange a session.
- All approved GYC Safety Boat Helms should endeavour to serve as GYC safety boaters at least twice a year in order to keep skills current, and should maintain their own log of the dates when they serve as safety boaters.
- Safety Boat Helms and Crew should attend the advertised event briefing at the advertised time before each event to ensure they are fully aware of the plans/course/vessels afloat, and either attend or receive outcomes of event debriefs to ensure they are aware of and can contribute to any lessons learnt.
- All GYC Safety Boat Helms are reminded that operating as a safety boat is not a “licence to speed” - club vessels are not to exceed 12kn at any time, unless responding to an urgent safety matter.
- Crewing capacity and requirements for helms and crew for the vessels listed in the tables below must be followed at all times, noting the distinction between use as a Safety Boat vs other use. No additional passengers/spectators to be carried when on active safety duty

Crewing Capacity For All Use:-

Vessel	Helm	Crew	Maximum Total On Board
When In Use As Safety Boat			
Safety 1	1	1	5
Safety 2	1	1	5
Safety 3	1	1-2	6
Lucky Les	1	1	3
When In Use For Any Other Authorised Purpose			
Safety 1	1	Not required	5
Safety 2	1	Not required	5
Safety 3	1	Not required	6
Lucky Les	1	Not required	3

Requirements for Helms & Crew:-

Requirements	As Safety Boat		Other Use
	Helm	Crew	Helm
Must be a GYC Member or Applying Member ¹	Yes	Yes	Yes
Age	18	14	18
Attended Induction for the specific vessel	Yes	No	Yes
Required to have attended annual refresher within last 12 months	Yes	No	No
Authorised by GYC as Helm and listed on GYC Approved Helms list for the specific vessel	Yes	No	Yes
RYA Powerboat Level 2	Yes	No	Yes
RYA Safety Boat Qualification	Yes	No	No
VHF SRC Certificate ²	Either Helm Or Crew	Either Helm Or Crew	Yes
First Aid Certificate	Desirable	Desirable	No
Ideally RYA Powerboat Level 1	No	Yes	No
Ensure you have suitably qualified crew	Yes	N/A	No
Maintain VHF Ch 14 ²	Either Helm Or Crew	Either Helm Or Crew	Yes
Maintain VHF Ch 37/M/M1 ²	Either Helm Or Crew	Either Helm Or Crew	Yes

¹ In exceptional circumstances (e.g. RYA training courses being delivered by external RYA instructors), GYC membership requirements may be waived, subject to approval and boat/area familiarisation by SBMT.

² Placeholder: Helm must have SRC if Duty Officer does not, and in all cases where operating without the cover of a Duty Officer.

Requirements When Operating As Safety Boat:-

- When operating as safety boats each vessel must have a Helm and a Crew. Ideally the crew should hold a Powerboat Level 1 certificate or above, but at minimum any crew must be:
 - Confident in the water
 - Dressed ready to enter the water to help in recovery of a capsized or injured person
 - Physically able to assist with recovery of capsized dinghies or people in the water

- Able to tie basic knots (bowline, round turn and two half hitches) to assist with the rigging of tows
- If the crew is not dressed to jump in the water or confident to do so, the Helm must be prepared and in that scenario the Crew must i) hold at least Powerboat Level 2 and ii) have undertaken the club induction on the vessel they are onboard.
- Safety boats must maintain a listening watch on both VHF 37/M/M1 (GYC) and VHF 14 (London VTS) at all times when afloat, using a combination of i) fixed VHF on vessel, ii) members private VHF radio, or ii) signing out a club portable VHF radio (held in the dinghy store) if required to help monitor and respond to both channels.
- If any Safety Boat personnel are also fulfilling the role of Race Officer (“RO”), the following shall apply:-
 - RO shall ideally be Crew, not Helm
 - Other person on board should be a qualified Safety Boat Helm.
 - If RO is to helm the safety boat, there must be a crew member onboard able to assist with RO duties as/when needed.

Essential Equipment To Take On Board For All Helms When In Use As GYC Safety Boats Or Training:-

- One yellow tub and one tool box must be carried on board each vessel when in use as a GYC Safety Boat or for RYA training. A full list of the safety equipment is held inside each yellow tub. This equipment meets RYA / MCA requirements and is regularly inspected.
- Helms must satisfy themselves that all other required larger items of equipment (anchor & rode, pump, paddles/oars, boat hook, throw bag, spare lines, bucket/bailer) are onboard prior to launching.

Use of GYC Safety Boats as Trot Boats:-

- If the Trot Boat is out of action or in exceptional circumstances, the Cruiser Captain can request SBMT to authorise an approved Safety Boat Helm to provide trot boat service using one of the GYC Safety Boats. A Helm is not required to have Crew where solely providing a trot service, in order to maximise capacity.
- Passengers must be seated and holding on to a secure hand hold at all times when the boat is underway. Passengers should first sit on any available seats, and then on the sponsons, equally distributed port/starboard and forward / aft, noting that no passenger should sit forward of the helm console or in the bow area.
- When boarding/disembarking, passengers should carefully step (not jump) only on the sponsons where there are additional black wear patches.

- Helms should not exceed 6kn when in use as a trot boat, and should be exceedingly careful when speeding up, slowing down or turning to ensure passenger safety. Any significant changes in direction and/or speed should be verbally signalled to passengers prior to manoeuvring.
- GYC Safety Boats must not also serve as trot boats whilst dinghies are on the water, although with the Dinghy Captain's approval in exceptional circumstances can assist before dinghies launch and/or after all dinghies are safely ashore.
- To avoid damage to sponsors the use of GYC Safety Boats as trot boats is to be only in exceptional circumstances. The Trot Boat, Lucky Les, Fat Fred and private tenders should be considered in preference wherever possible.

Training:-

- Training/coaching on club powerboats is only to be undertaken by individuals who satisfy the following requirements: i) have presented a valid and in-date RYA Powerboat Instructor certificate (or higher), ii) have presented an in-date RYA First Aid certificate, iii) who are registered with GYC Training as GYC Instructors, iv) have undertaken the GYC vessel induction for the specific vessel and v) have been approved for powerboat instruction at GYC by SBMT.
- Training (whether formal RYA courses, club inductions or adhoc coaching sessions) is to be arranged in advance and agreed with SBMT. Any training or course associated with an RYA qualification must be run according to RYA guidance and policies and authorised by GYC Training Manager. For the avoidance of doubt, no Instructor is to launch or use a GYC Safety Boat for unplanned training/coaching or other activities without explicit approval from SBMT.

Use In Shallow Waters:-

- All Helms should take great care when entering shallow waters particularly around the slipway and the edges of the slipway, and be mindful of the engine/prop location and engine trim at all times
- Minimal speed must be used when in shallow waters
- As soon as any GYC Safety Boat is inshore (south) of the cardinal mark, engine should be trimmed up
- Additionally for GYC Safety Boats fitted with depth sounders, engines should be trimmed up as soon as the depth alarm sounds
- If you hear the engine/prop grounding, then come into neutral immediately and trim up
- If any vessel becomes too shallow, engine should be switched off, fully trimmed up and the craft paddled into deeper water
- Any grounding, however minimal, should be reported to SBMT as soon as it is safe to do so, such that the vessel can be checked and any damage rectified

Safety Boat to Dinghy ratios:-

- Please see GYC Dinghy Risk Assessment found within the Dinghy Group drive which details the requirements for number of safety boats afloat to support the dinghy fleet.

Navigation Lights And Vessel Usage After Sunset:-

- GYC Safety Boats covered by this policy should not plan to be afloat before sunrise or after sunset. Should an event be scheduled particularly on a winter afternoon and potentially finish close to sunset, this must be taken into consideration in the selection of vessels to be used:
 - Safety 1: this vessel has a permanently fitted light pole containing a single all round white light. If approaching sunset this should be switched on (single black toggle switch on top of console) and speed restricted to 7kn maximum.
 - Safety 3: this vessel has a demountable light pole containing a tricolour light held in the dinghy store. If there's a risk of being afloat around sunset, the skipper should collect the light pole after briefing, install in the dedicated fitting on the rear seat backrest, plug in the electric connector and verify that the light functions correctly prior to launching. If approaching sunset this should be switched on (switch in panel on lower dash) and speed restricted to 7kn maximum.
 - Lucky Les: this vessel has no navigation lights, must not be used before sunrise or after sunset and should not be taken afloat if there is a risk of still being afloat after sunset.

GYC RIB Keys / Killcords:-

- For each GYC RIB, the set of keys and two kill cords are to be collected from the dinghy store immediately prior to an event and returned to the designated key hooks in the dinghy store immediately after completion of the event.
- A killcord must be worn around the leg just above the knee at all times when the engine is running
- A spare killcord should be attached to the console where it is visible and immediately available should it be needed
- No member should retain the keys/killcords for longer than necessary for each event, and they should never be taken offsite.
- For a full day event (e.g. RYA training courses), during breaks the keys/killcords should either be returned to the dinghy store or held in another safe place (e.g. the room being used for shorebased training).

Lucky Les Killcords:-

- Killcords for Lucky Les are held onboard the vessel in a coded key safe, the combination made known to approved helms.

- Killcord must be worn around the leg just above the knee or attached to a secure point on a lifejacket/buoyancy aid whenever the motor is powered up
- Killcords are not to be taken off the vessel - if the helm is leaving the boat alongside for any period of time the killcord should immediately be returned to the key safe.

Reporting Issues / Damage:-

- Damage will occasionally happen to all club boats. Any damage should be reported to SBMT as soon as it is safe to do so, such that it can be checked/rectified in a timely fashion and the boat(s) returned to service asap.
- Any other issues experienced with these vessels or lessons learned from use must be reported to SBMT without delay.

Misuse:-

- Complaints that a member is not following the rules set out here should be sent by email to the Captain of the relevant event, or any Flag Officer. Captain's and any Flag Officer have the authority to temporarily remove a member from the approved helm list for a period of up to one month. Permanent removal is subject to a vote of Council.
- If a member helms a safety boat but is not on the approved GYC Helm List for that specific vessel, they may be subject to disciplinary action by Council.

Approved at Council meeting: 26 January 2026

Questions to vice@greenwichyachtclub.co.uk

Appendix A - Change Control

As of 2026, This Policy is subject to biannual review.

Approval Date / Version	Reason for Revision	Change Made
26/01/2026	New Policy	New version / nothing prior