



NOWCA.org

"Safe, Fun and Affordable. Now we can all go swimming"

CHELMARSH SAILING CLUB

SUP

Standard Operating Procedures

Chelmarsh Sailing Club

Chelmarsh Reservoir

Hampton Loade

Bridgnorth

WV16 6BL

Revisions and Review List

To be incorporated in full annual review of document

Date	OWS Review	Dynamic review: Club Risk Register updates
21 August 2020	Draft DP	
20 September 2020	Completion of NOWCA venue information and risks review (Appx A)	
1 October 2020	Presented to committee and H and S team	Review by full Chelmarsh SC committee, Risk Register to risk team.
4 December 2020	Clarification re water testing	
19 July 2022	Revision and simplification, inclusion of triangular courses Proposed CH DP	No risk register changes
19 July 2022	RAMS Review	RAMS herein reviewed CH DP

Contents:

Revisions and Review List	0
Contents:	2
Overview	3
Introduction	4
Extensive research and consultation have been undertaken:	4
Info Sources:	4
Key drivers for Proposed Development Routes:.....	4
Framework.....	5
Operations:	5
Method Statement:	5
Procedures:.....	5
Chelmarsh Sailing Club Sup Membership.....	6
Risk Management Plan.....	7
Location:	7
Summary Of Briefing (Location):	8
Dynamic Assessment.....	8
Chelmarsh Sailing Club SUP Emergency Plan	10
Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS)	11
Appendices	17
Chelmarsh Open Water Swim Management	17
Open Water General Swim Format	18
Responsibilities For Delivery	19
Registration Procedure	20
Relevant Health & Safety Policies, Procedures & Documentation	21
Other Relevant Safety Considerations.....	23
General advice to swimmers.....	24

Overview

Open Water Swimming (OWS) was proposed to the Sailing Club Membership at the AGM in December 2018 as part of a Diversification Strategy within the Clubs Development Plan. The committee had previously unanimously agreed on the Development Plan and this was approved by a majority at the AGM.

Sailing clubs nationally have broadened their offer and Chelmarsh has been proactive. The Club has introduced Stand UP Paddle boarding (SUP) and Radio-Controlled Sailing, learning from these changes and has revised and reviewed its Risk Registers and Procedures to allow for this diversification. At the same time there has been a high level of interest in OWS.

A draft paper on OWS was presented to the club Committee and to South Staffs to propose and scope the activity. This was approved and both asked for detail and Operating Procedures and Risk Registers to be developed. Through 2019 and 2020 extensive research and detailed frameworks have been developed. After one year's operation, during 2022, lessons that were learnt lead to simplification of the Operating Procedures, which was then presented for review.

Safety is, and will remain, our key driver. The success of the sailing club and our continued operation is dependent on safe operations. This Standard Operating Policy seeks to ensure OWS is conducted in a safe and effective manner and in a way that complements the ongoing activities. Chelmarsh Sailing Club has a strongly developed Health and Safety Culture and members have always been aware of the risks of water use.

Our membership has been very clear in their support for diversification but equally is consistent in the demand for safe regulated activity. This SOP provides a mechanism to ensure safety and to communicate with all water users how OWS is regulated and governed at Chelmarsh. We have proven safety and administrative systems to control and regulate "new activities" This is a "live" document and should be reviewed and updated on a six monthly basis.

The document includes background, Chelmarsh specific Standard Operating Procedures and a detailed appendix with inclusion of standard NOWCA venue review detail and procedures which we have adopted.

Introduction

Extensive research and consultation have been undertaken:

- Several members have expressed interest in OWS. Specifically, one member has recently swum the channel and another is a swimming teacher and tri swim coach. In addition, Club Officers have consulted with Netherton (a successful venue), Blithfield Tri Club and others. We are also indebted to NOWCA for their guidance and support.
- OWS is fast growing and new regulatory frameworks have made the sport more controllable and safer. This SOP uses the NOWCA framework which provides the highest safety standards

Info Sources:

- National Open Water Coaching Association (NOWCA) <https://nowca.org/>
- <https://www.rlss.org.uk/open-water-safety>
- <https://www.swimming.org/swimengland/>
- <https://www.swimming.org/swimengland/updated-guidance-lockdown-eased/> (specific guidance for OWS in coronavirus crisis June 2020)

Key drivers for Proposed Development Routes:

- All activity must be carefully regulated and conducted in a controlled manner with appropriately qualified people and appropriate structures and admin.
- Our experience with SUP shows the club can embody other activity and our safety and risk controls can be utilised to ensure safety.
- Using third parties to deliver services is useful but control of risks and regulating activity is easier if the activity is a club activity as such working arrangements need to be active and co-operative, we do not envisage a “sub contract” type arrangement as servicing the long term club needs.
- Existing Members of the sailing club are vested in building OWS and keeping this as part of the clubs’ diversification within the development plan
- We have reviewed safety arrangements at other venues specifically <http://staffordtri.net/blithfield-open-water-swim-instructions> and are confident the procedures herein exceed these minimum safety standards and will ensure regular review and analysis of any events.

In 2022 a full and detailed review of the SOP was undertaken to include lessons learnt during a very successful period of Operations.

Framework

Operations:

- OWS will be conducted under NOWCA rules and regulation.
- The club and venue will be registered as a NOWCA venue
- The club will ensure facilities, safety procedures and controls match all required and advised regulation. A Swim Manager will be appointed for each session.
- Two sessions per week are envisaged:
 - o Saturday am 7.00-9.00
 - o Thursday Evening 18.00-19.15

Method Statement:

- Members work from NOWCA guidance as detailed below and to their session 'normal operating procedures.' There will be regular training and supervision of admin and safety volunteers.
- Every session will be managed by the appointed Swim Manager who will ensure adequate members are available at every session which includes safety and reception. Safety comprises land and on water spotters. Safety SUP to be on the beach and prepared for use or launched on the water.
- All swimmers must have a valid NOWCA wristband when they enter the water. They will be recognized with their full profile, when onsite, time in water and out of water. No session can close completely until every swimmer has exited the water and scanned out on the NOWCA system. Each session is deemed closed only when the session has been pushed to the NOWCA server.

Procedures:

- All swimmers are pre-registered with NOWCA and will use electronic arm bands NOWCA swim bands: <https://nowca.org/> these provide a robust system to ensure increased safety and monitoring.
- First Aid and safety training modules for SUP members so they can assist in safety (the club has safe boards with high capacity to allow water rescue) some members hold safety certificates and we will provide update courses
- The club has an induction for SUP support with full training all participants are booked and attendance recorded and an online video briefing www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxcPTZoQ8J0

Chelmarsh Sailing Club Sup Membership

OWS Membership is a Restricted Membership of Chelmarsh Sailing Club.

Members join a sociable sailing club and can use the clubhouse, showers and facilities as well as having access to club swim equipment. (Subject to COVID-19 restrictions)

OWS Membership is paid annually and is set at the social membership rate for Chelmarsh Sailing (£58 per annum for 2022).

OWS Members can use their own equipment or rent Chelmarsh equipment at agreed rates (tow floats etc).

Only Chelmarsh Members or NOWCA members who pre-register for swims may swim at Chelmarsh and NOWCA pre-registration confers temporary Club membership for that session. Temporary Members will pay a swimming fee of £6 per session.

Ordinary Sailing Club members and SUP members may also participate in swims but must satisfy the requirements of NOWCA/Chelmarsh OWS with reference to competency and must become NOWCA members and use the arm bands.

Club members may swim FOC but are expected to help at a number of sessions each year.

Risk Management Plan

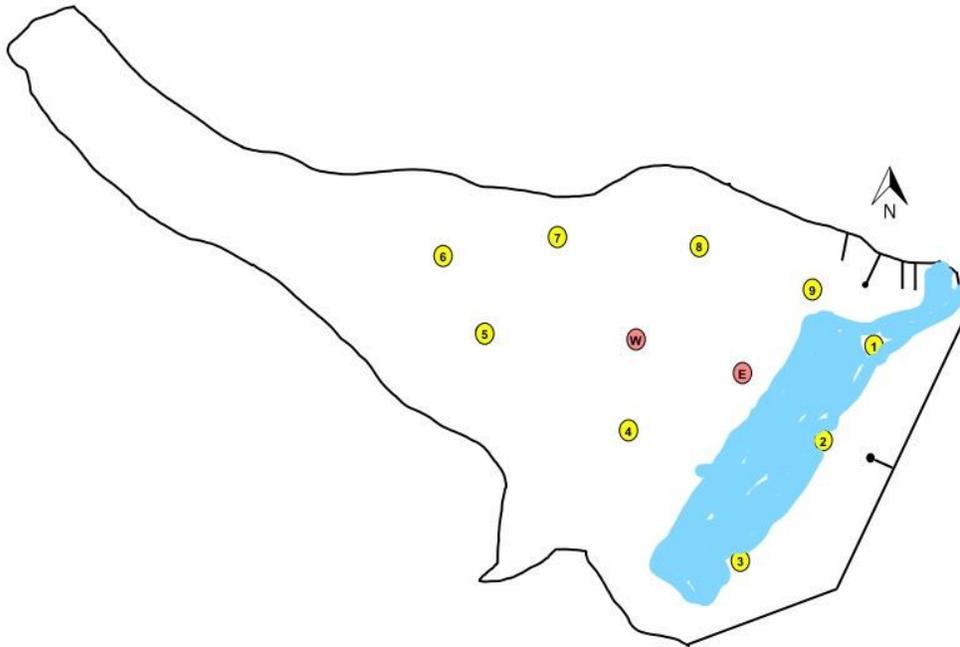
Location:

Chelmarsh Reservoir

The reservoir has minimal current although care should be taken near inlet/outlet pipes. For this reason, the Swimming Area has been defined.

Swimming Area: Around buoys marked 1-3 on the map below and to the East of a line from the pontoon to Buoy East. No swimming within 100 M of inlet outlet towers.

On discretion of Swim Manager and taking into account Dynamic Risks as below courses can be set using buoys 1,2,3 and East. All courses are readily visible from the admin station.



The Reservoir has steeply shelving beaches and the water rapidly deepens, this is an advantage as shallow water is a risk. Swimmers will be briefed on appropriate footwear and the nature of the beaches and also the slippery launch road (which should be avoided or used with care by SUP and swimmers).

The pontoons are floating and can move slightly, they also are often covered in bird excrement so students should be warned of this hazard. Buoyancy aids to be worn on all pontoons at all times.

Summary Of Briefing (Location):

- Weather on the day; assess risks of exposure to cold, water and sun. Wind conditions direction speed and forecast changes. Any thunder or other risks. Brief swimmers appropriately.
- Water temperature and air temperature are recorded on Info board at admin station along with course markers for the day
- Location Hazards: Any other water activity Session Times Procedures
- Hygiene: Wash hands after activity

Dynamic Assessment

Weather

- Wind: ensure weather is as forecast, assess any deviation. Operating Limits can be imposed if winds are strong/creating significant chop.
- Cold: Ensure wetsuits worn if water temp below 12°C, and for beginners wetsuits advised if temp below 16°C.
- Sun and Heat: Adequate supplies of drinking water and sun screen.
- Lightening: All activity must be cancelled if there is a storm risk. The 30 30 rule should be applied: if it takes less than 30s to hear thunder after seeing the flash activity must stop, not to resume until 30 minutes after event.

Water Hazards

- See location at Chelmarsh Reservoir check water levels beach hazards
- Other Craft: No powered craft should be operating in Swim sessions, only SUP. No SUPs to be in swimming area during sessions except for launch and /or SUPs being used for safety.
- Operating Area: Swimming is limited to the declared swimming areas; this mitigates against any event being un-witnessed and complies with Chelmarsh general rules.

Equipment Hazards

- All Tow floats to be safe and approved for swimming.
- SUP spotters: a leash to be worn at all times on the water, mobile phone to be carried in protective case, buoyancy aid to be worn on beach or on water.
- Any club wetsuits used to be rinsed after use and machine washed.
- Clothing: Swim Manager/Instructor/coach to check personal clothing subject to water temperature. Club has emergency space blankets and dry towels available by rear door.

User Risks

- Swimming Ability: All swimmers are pre assessed and have completed NOWCA entry and can be requested to have a formal swim test to ensure they are competent swimmers.
- Low Fitness Levels: Prior to activity fitness levels are assessed as OWS requires a basic level of fitness.
- Medical Conditions: A medical declaration is completed by all participants as a condition of NOWCA membership. For any coached or instructional sessions, the Instructor will ask generally about health on the day and specifically ask about any communication difficulties.
- COVID-19: Information is available and the club operates in accordance with current government guidelines. General Club COVID-19 regulations are updated in line with government guidance.

All swimmers will be identified and record of attendance kept through NOWCA software. The Swim Manager on the day will also hold record of all volunteers and assistants.

A specific risk assessment should be made and advice sought about any particular medical condition prior to undertaking activity.

Opportunity should be explicit for a "private word" about any medical condition to avoid any risks of non-disclosure through group pressures.

Activity Risk

- Specific Activity Risks (such as coaching, training etc) are covered under the detailed NOWCA procedures adopted by Chelmarsh reference attached in Appendix A

Chelmarsh Sailing Club SUP Emergency Plan

The Emergency Plan is published as a flow chart and available on club notice boards and on the website: <http://chelmarshsailing.org.uk/downloads.html>

Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS)

<p>Method Statement</p>	<p>Chelmarsh Sailing Club has: Carried out an up to date venue survey, hazards and risks identified herein South Staffs to provide information and provide any detail required by NOWCA on water quality.</p> <p>Carried out and established:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk assessments • Emergency action plans • Standard operating procedures • Qualified Staff onsite during operations <p>Members work from these procedures.</p> <p>There will be regular training and testing to ensure appropriate safe operation. (see risk assessment)</p> <p>Every session will be managed by the appointed Swim Manager who will ensure adequate members are available at every session which includes safety and reception. Safety comprises of land and on water spotters. Safety SUP to be dockside and prepared for use or launched on the water.</p> <p>All swimmers must have a valid NOWCA wristband when they enter the water. They will be recognized with their full profile, when onsite, time in water and out of water. No session can close completely until every swimmer has exited the water and scanned out on the NOWCA system. Each session is deemed closed only when the session has been pushed to the NOWCA server.</p>
<p>Safety Qualifications</p>	<p>All personnel wherever relevant – have First Aid at Work and have watched and reviewed the online training and had individual briefing on safety procedures.</p> <p>SUP Safety Qualification: WoW course and approval for SUP safety from SUP Instructor (good competency, instruction on Torpedo floats and recovery techniques). Aquatic First Aid recommended for Swim Manager or one assistant at all sessions</p>

Coaches	<p>STA / NOWCA Level 2 OWS Coaching Qualification</p> <p>Level 2 Award in British Open Water Swimming</p> <p>Level 2/3 BTF Coach</p> <p>NOWCA In-house training</p>
Age categories	<p>8 – 16-year-old participants must have a parent or guardian onsite for the duration of the activity and child to wear a tow float and consider wetsuit if water temperature below 16 degrees.</p> <p>Note: swimmers can swim without wetsuits dependant on cold water experience, acclimatisation skills, water temperatures and weather. (dynamic risk assessment conducted every session)</p>
Swimmer staff ratios: Reception, Coach, Lifeguard	<p>8-16yrs Children: courses and coaching (see risk assessment for safety staff, coach numbers, quantity of children to each coach and placement during child coaching/courses)</p> <p><i>NB: there is also an option for additional support for the coaches using adult supervision by OWSwimmer parents and guardians who are experienced open water swimmers. Their role is solely to help their own children and no one else's.</i></p> <p>All children to be directed to specific course layouts depending on ability and experience.</p> <p>Adults: general ratios. One SUP support/land spotter to approximately 20 swimmers (see risk assessment for staff placements on water or land. Adjustments: time of year, water and weather conditions, course layout, number of swimmers in the water.</p>

<p>Venue and Staff Equipment requirements</p>	<p>Android device(S) with NOWCA Venue Manager downloaded (1xhost device, options for – unlimited remote host devices, remote scanning devices availability) dependant on numbers, activities and events.</p> <p>NOWCA Scanners (attached to devices – above)</p> <p>Un-processed RFID wristbands (two sizes)</p> <p>SUP boards available including paddles (quantity according to: staff provisions, time of year, size of courses, swimmer numbers)</p> <p>Throw Lines and radios for minimum 2 SUP</p> <p>Buoyancy aids for safety staff</p> <p>2 way radios or working and waterproof mobile phones (each member of swim organising team to have a means of communication at all times)</p> <p>Whistles for SUP crew beach and swim manager.</p> <p>Sheltered facilities available for all sessions including hot drinks and warm showers</p> <p>Thermometer (water temperature taken before every session – Review risk assessment for criteria on who can swim and any restrictions. Swim Manager has final decision.</p> <p>Wetsuit loan and hire - dependant on level of ability and offer.</p> <p>Neoprene loan and hire - dependant on level of ability and offer.</p> <p>Swimming caps are mandatory and must be highly visible (available to purchase or borrow)</p>
--	---

<p>Staff Operating Positions</p>	<p>Reception based as near to entry exit as possible Note: wherever possible under cover and weather dependant</p> <p>Safety craft to be stationed at strategic placement depending on: response times, size of course, water temperatures, number of swimmers (see risk assessment options)</p>
<p>Water Temperature</p>	<p>Minimum water temperature and maximum temperatures.</p> <p>Minimum swim temperature 10C degrees Minimum wetsuit temperature 12°C but advised if water temp less than 16°C unless proven experience</p> <p>Maximum temperature of water with wetsuit 25°C</p> <p>Water temp to be tested at start of each session</p> <p>Water temperature records to be held with report of each session.</p>
<p>Water Quality</p>	<p>Water is pumped river water from the River Severn allowed to settle and used after full purification as drinking water. The club will report any evident change to Quality (such as algae etc) and also monitor any adverse effects and immediately inform Swimmers.</p> <p>All swimmers should exercise normal precaution and avoid ingesting the water and where possible shower after swimming. Any health effect suspected of being related to Water Quality should be reported to the club.</p> <p>The sailing club ensures that potential pollution is minimal and has agreed procedures for preventing pollution or bio risks to the water.</p>

<p>Normal Operations handbook. Including Staff information</p>	<p>This procedure is made available for all members and attendees – held on website and up to date. Includes procedures: Risk assessments, Emergency action plans, Operating Procedure, Method Statement.</p> <p>Contact information and copies of Staff qualifications, staff training records will be held on file</p>
<p>Venue Signage</p>	<p>Buoyancy aids to be worn signs</p> <p>Safety signs posted around venue to prevent unauthorised access - Including relevant information on who can swim and when</p>
<p>Member signs</p>	<p>Member rules and procedure. Rules and procedures available for all members on website and social media pages</p>
<p>Other Safety Considerations</p>	<p>Other water users not permitted in water or near swim courses during swim hours. SUP may operate but in distanced location.</p> <p>Anglers do not use areas designated for swimming, Swimmers will swim within swimmer course and direction. See venue risk assessment doc.</p>

<p>Swimmers Ratio to rescue personnel, SUP <i>(Advised by Jim Hawkins, Medical & Aquatics Health & Safety Expert and RLSS Tutor Assessor)</i></p>	<p>Provision A. 1 safety/rescue person on shore <u>or</u> with SUP on shore = 200m or smaller loop open Booking slots capped to 10 per half hour</p> <p>Provision B. 2 safety/rescue persons (can include) 1 spotting from shore & 1 SUP on water = 400m loop Note: SUP sits in middle of 400m loop Booking slots capped to 20 per hour</p> <p>Provision C. 2 safety/rescue persons (can include) 1 spotting from shore & 1 SUP on water = 400m, 750m loops open Note: SUP sits on edge of 400m loop Booking slots capped to 25 per hour</p> <p>Provision D. 2 safety/ rescue person & 2 SUPs = 400 or 750m loops available to swimmers <i>NOTE: Provision A-D protocol allows increase of swimmers in water per half hour or hour (booking slots amended to reflect changes)</i> <i>NOTE: Swim Manager to dynamically risk asses where SUP or safety staff should be situated depending on weather, water temperature and numbers in water</i> <i>NOTE: Ratios above can be used to increase numbers with increased safety cover.</i></p>
---	---

Appendices

Chelmarsh Open Water Swim Management



Includes all standard NOWCA procedures adopted by Chelmarsh

Key Personnel

Chelmarsh Open Water Swim Team

Sponsor David Partridge

Key personnel/review of SOP Risk Plans Charlotte Hewer,

Chelmarsh Sailing Club Risk Team: Terry Gumbley, Richard Woods, David Bibby.

NOWCA – Rick Kiddle Provision of detailed guidance overarching NOWCA guidance

POLICE /EMERGENCY SERVICES – 999

NON-EMERGENCY POLICE ASSISTANCE – 101

NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAL ASSISTANCE - 111

Open Water General Swim Format

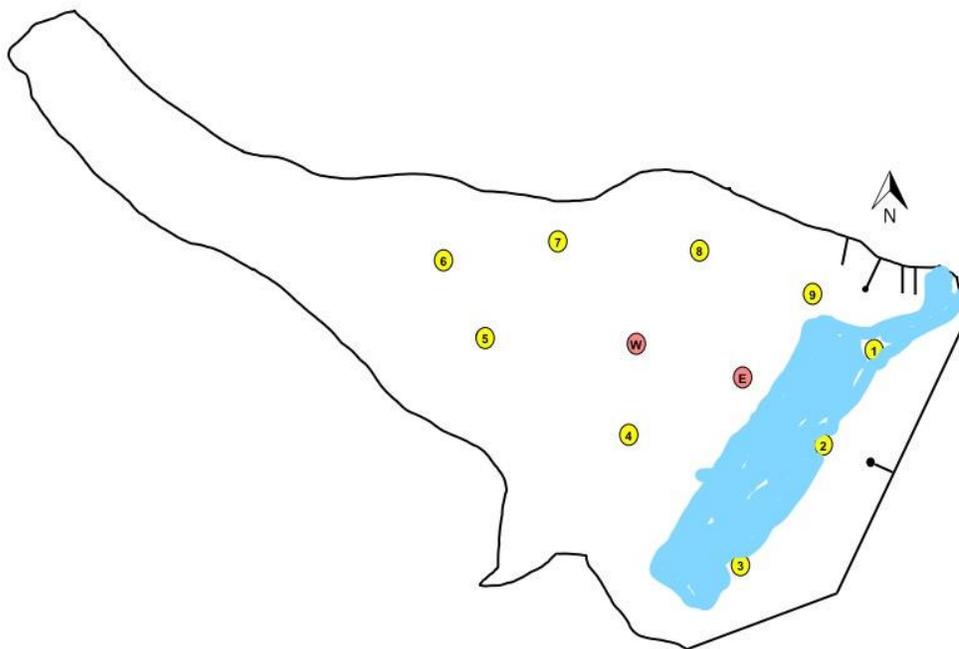
A measured distance based on permanent Buoys, with options for short medium and long markers.

Safety support equipment SUPs provided from the club.

Items stored on site and made available to NOWCA and Chelmarsh Swim Club SUP, Club Buoyancy aids and specific swim safety equipment to meet water safety requirements for sessions. Torpedo Buoys. Waterproof whistles and swim hats.

Lake Entry and Exit: Via beach area with in and out lanes to ensure social distancing between swimmers starting and completing swims.

Schematic showing approx. location of swim courses for 2022 Any course comprising Buoys 1,2,3, and East with swimmers rounding Buoys in an anticlockwise direction.



Responsibilities For Delivery

Chelmarsh Sailing Club will own the following responsibilities:

- Upkeep & General Maintenance of grounds
- Access to building units on site for use as storage facilities including use of electricity and water *

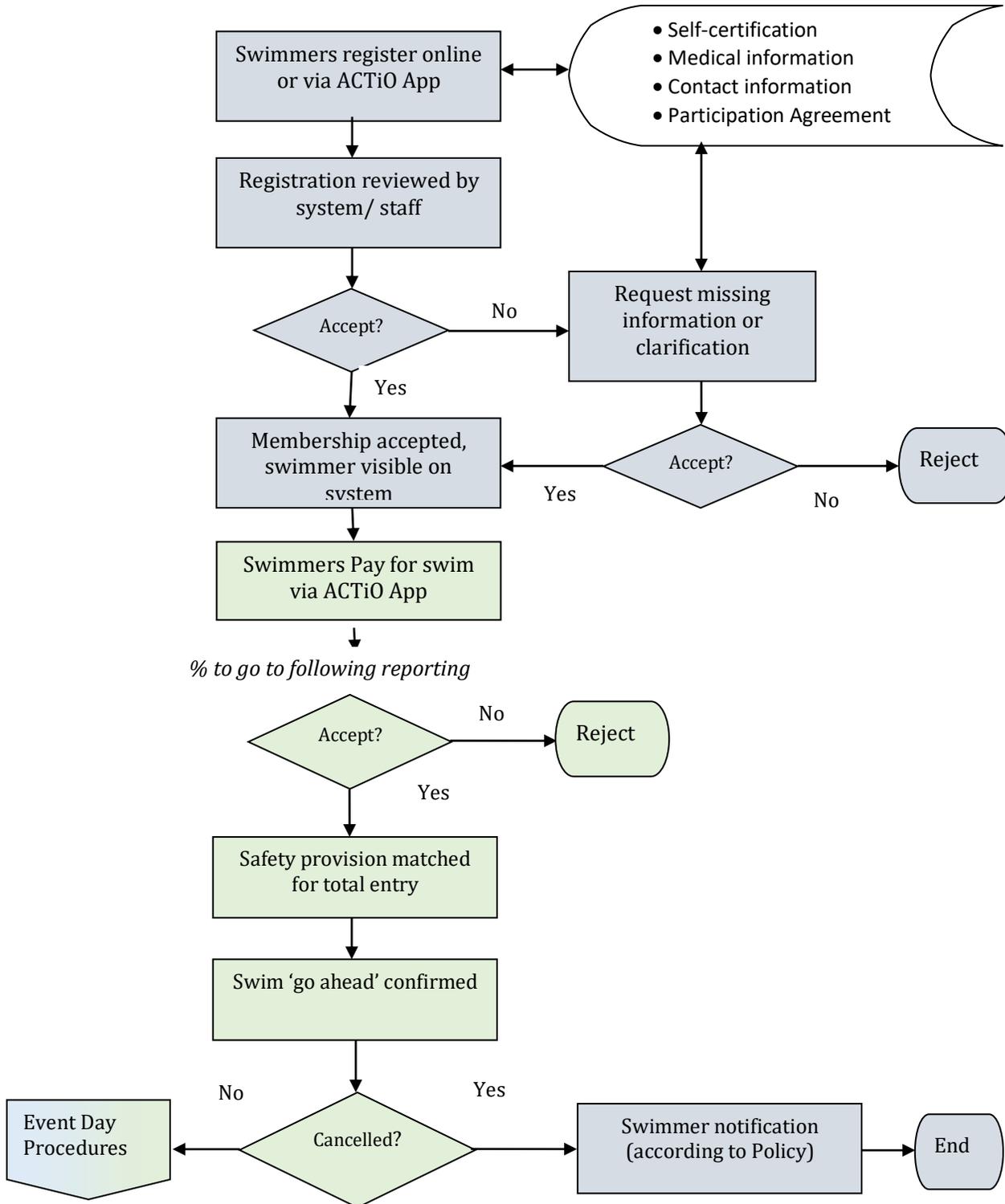
Chelmarsh Sailing Club and NOWCA will own the following responsibilities:

- Swimmer pre-booking, registration, medical information collection and self-certification process to current event standards.
- Marketing via social media and websites as an Open Water Swimming venue with key triathlon and OWS websites promoting this information
- Direct Marketing via email and/or poster to local triathlon and Swimming clubs
- Liaison with local swimmers, British Triathlon, Triathlon England & British Swimming to raise the profile of the venue
- Presence at all events to provide support and technical advice to swimmers.
- Swimmer notifications, including successful registration and cancellation information.
- Administration of Parental Consent documentation where required.

Chelmarsh Swim will own the following responsibilities:

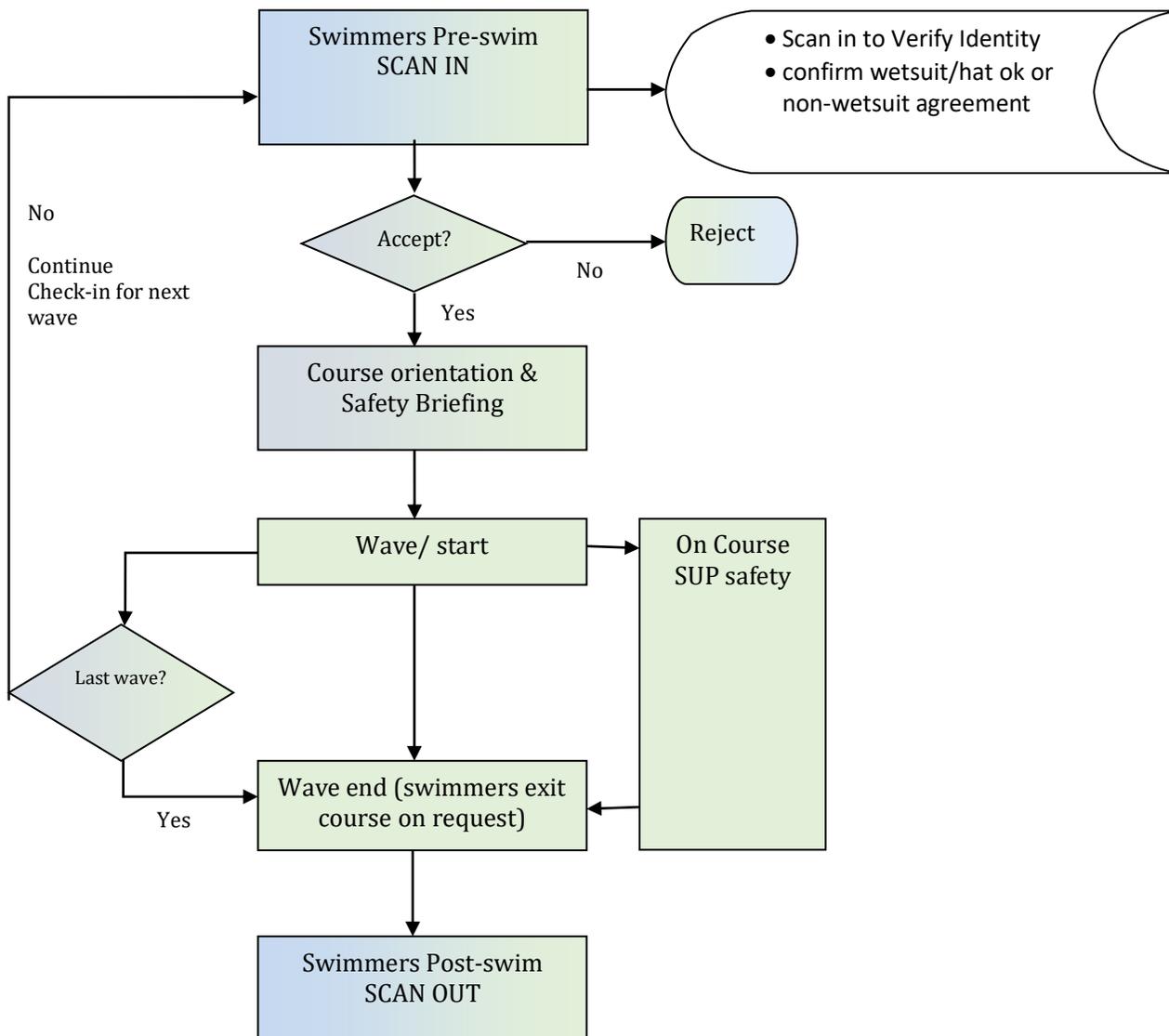
- Swimmer Scan-in and Scan-out including other use of the NOWCA System.
- Course orientation and pre-event/swim Safety briefing.
- Co-promotion.
- NOWCA will promote the Chelmarsh logo on NOWCA website and Open Water Swimming documentation and will work with Chelmarsh to co-promote relevant information.

Registration Procedure for Events, Weekend & Weekday evening swims



** To be accepted, swimmers must have acceptable and complete information including disclaimer agreements, medical information and self-certification for swimming competence done on NOWCA membership registration; be within the deadline for registration and payment and total numbers must not have been exceeded.*

Swim / Event Day Procedure



Swimmers may be rejected by **Chelmarsh Swim Manager** on reasonable Health & Safety concerns.

Note: All swimmers will be required to wear a colour coded, branded swim hat for safety which will not be included within the entry price and will identify the swimmers in the water.

Relevant Health & Safety Policies, Procedures & Documentation

Procedure / Documentation	Description
Chelmarsh Open Water Swimming Policies, Procedures & Guidelines	Specific SOP and Risk Registers for OWS available on website
Risk Assessments:	Full and formal assessment of risk both On-water and Landside, published and reviewed at regular intervals, collaborating actively on any mitigating risk-reducing actions.
Standard Operations Procedure	General method statement including details of staff qualifications, placement of staff, swimmer ratios, age groups.
On Water Emergency Procedure On Water Instruction First Aid/First Aid Administration Procedure	Clearly defined Emergency Action Plan published and reviewed at regular intervals. This Action Plan is shared for all activities at Chelmarsh Sailing Club and is available here: http://chelmarshsailing.org.uk/2020%20Emergency%20Procedures.pdf
Open Water Swimming Rules NOWCA swim (400m) Aquathlon Event Rules	OPEN WATER PARTICIPANT SWIMMING AGREEMENT (to abide by swimming safety) included as integral part of registration procedure
Cancellation Procedure	The conditions and defined process(s) for cancelling open water Swimming for safety reasons.NOWCA
General Swimmer Advice	A set of general 'good practice' and Swimmer Code of Conduct guidelines for safe Open Water Swimming given to all swimmers on website and on social media and online
Other Swimmer Documentation	PARENTAL CONSENT (for children under the age of 16) required via online registration of children's membership

Other Relevant Safety Considerations

During both events and normal swims Wetsuits will not be mandatory if prior skins (non-wetsuit) experience is proven. In the unlikely event that the water temperature exceeds that which British Triathlon Guidelines deem unsafe for wetsuit use (25C), wetsuits will NOT be allowed. Wetsuits MUST be worn if the water temperature is less than 12C and for all non adult swimmers.

Neoprene swim caps and feet covers will be allowed, along with training aids such as flippers and paddles.

Bright coloured swim hats are mandatory. The Chelmarsh Team will lend hats wherever possible but also ensure that swim hats are available to purchase (*hire/ loan not available during pandemic). Colour coded hat arrangements may be made for events.

Whilst all events are based on self-certification (per normal event rules), Chelmarsh will strongly recommend pre-event Open Water familiarisation courses offered by on site qualified Coaches or NOWCA to increase swimmer safety.

Any swimmer unable to produce suitable identification whilst collecting their membership or a temporary membership wristband will not be allowed to swim.

General advice to swimmers

Please ensure you have fully disclosed in your safety profile application, any swim-sensitive medical conditions; history of seizures, heart problems, high blood pressure, pregnancy and respiratory problems including asthma.

Whilst Swim England recognise these medical conditions as a potential risk in a swimming environment according, we can minimise risk by supporting you in following the below guidelines. You will also be provided with a coloured wristband that will alert our staff to stay vigilant to your presence in the water in case you should require assistance.

If you have a history of any of the above, please check with your doctor first before swimming with us. This will be checked on your registration and collection of wristband.

Do not swim if you feel unwell, have a temperature and/ or a persistent or paroxysmal cough ***PLEASE SEE OUR COVID PROCEDURE***

Cover all cuts and abrasions with sticking plaster. You should not consider swimming if you have deep cuts or 'road rash' (grazing from falling off a bike at speed or similar event).

Make sure you have well-fitting goggles and a bright swim hat to aid visibility in the water.

Ensure your swim kit/ wetsuit is fit for purpose and the right size. Whilst a great buoyancy aid, an ill-fitting wetsuit can cause undue stress and panic if it is too tight and restricts air or too big and weighed down with water.

Make sure you are well fuelled and hydrated before your swim but allow a couple of hours before you enter the water if you've had a bigger meal.

Do not dive. Water depth is an unknown and will fluctuate even in bodies of water swimmers are familiar with. There may be objects under the water that cannot be seen from the surface that may cause spinal injury if dived on to.

Entry should be steady and measure. Rushed entry to the water can cause Sudden Cardiac Death (SCD). This is recognised as a leading cause of swimming-related fatalities by the World Health Organisation.

Acclimatise to the water temperature before starting a swim. Rushed entry can bring on the onset of cold-water-shock through the actions of driving warm blood to power limb movement, sending cold blood from those extremities to the vital organs.

Do not stay in the water longer than your body is used to. Stay especially vigilant in water under 15 degrees the temperature which we recommend all swimmers wear a wetsuit if they are not cold-water acclimatised.

Your core body temperature is 37 degrees. It takes only a drop of two degrees for hypothermia to set in. As your body continues to lose heat when you leave water colder than your body temperature it is important to ensure you wrap up warm to prevent it dropping below safe levels.

Make sure you have warm clothes for after your swim, even on a warm day as the continued drop in body temperature and wind-chill will have an effect.

Try to ingest a minimum amount of water whilst swimming and stay hydrated with fresh water before and after your swim to ensure you are replacing any fluids lost through exercise.

Do not swim too close to the bank to reduce risk of bacteria and infection.

When the water is above 20 degrees, avoid weedy patches of water to reduce the risk of cercarial dermatitis aka 'duck mites' (from snail larvae).

PLEASE SEE SWIMMERS ITCH INFO

If you cut/ break the skin during your swim or on exiting the water, wash immediately with fresh water and clean with an antibacterial wipe before applying a sterile dressing such as a plaster. Alert staff for first-aid access and so they can record in the accident log-book. Monitor and seek medical attention if any bleeding, discolouration, redness, sensitivity or pain persists.

Wash hands in fresh warm water for at least 20 seconds before eating after you have swum and use antibacterial handwash where possible.

Take a full shower at the earliest opportunity Do not exceed your personal capabilities on the day of your swim; 'if in doubt, don't go out'!

If you feel unwell after a swim, seek medical attention immediately informing them that you have taken part in open water swimming. Follow up by alerting the venue at your earliest opportunity.