



# **Adaptive Rowing Strategy 2023-2028**

**A strategic plan to increase participation and  
inclusion of rowers with any type of impairment  
within rowing club settings**

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## Introduction

Every day in England, remarkable individuals are actively creating opportunities for adaptive rowing to take place. These passionate forces are uniting under the banner of the Club Adaptive Group (CAG), while others have found a welcoming community in the Rowability British Rowing Facebook group. As the demand for inclusive rowing experiences continues to grow among clubs and more people recognise the myriad benefits of rowing, it has become evident that a well-thought-out plan is crucial.

This strategy was developed because we want to improve collaboration and create efficiencies towards our goal of making rowing more accessible for people with impairments. We want to provide meaningful rowing experiences for beginners all the way up to Paralympic athletes, whether that's indoor, on the river or on the sea. British Rowing's strategic ambition is to make rowing everyone's sport, and this strategy is a key part of that effort. More specifically, this strategy aims;

***To promote rowing by making it more accessible and enjoyable for individuals with physical or learning impairments. Working closely with rowing clubs and partners, our goal is to create safe, inclusive, and integrated rowing experiences.***

One of our key measures of success is the growth in the number of rowing clubs that offer adaptive rowing activities. We aim to expand the availability of adaptive rowing opportunities across the country, ensuring that more individuals with impairments have access to the sport.

We will also track the number of adaptive rowers in clubs. This metric reflects the level of engagement and commitment from adaptive rowers in our programs and indicates the growth of the adaptive rowing community.

To measure if safe, enjoyable, and integrated rowing experiences are offered we plan to conduct an annual survey to gauge the satisfaction and feedback of adaptive rowers participating in club programmes. By measuring the Net Promoter Score (NPS), we assess the overall experience and determine the level of advocacy among the adaptive rowing community.

In addition to these three key measures, we will set up various working groups consisting of rowing coaches, club volunteers and industry experts to tackle different topics (indoor, coastal, neuro divergence and NHS referrals). The successful completion of projects undertaken by these working groups signifies our ability to deliver tangible outcomes and implement effective strategies for the rowing community. Through collaboration with rowing clubs and partners, we strive to create a thriving community that embraces inclusivity, safety, and enjoyment for all.

**Written by Adaptive Strategy Group Members:** Bruce Lynn, Chris Boys, Nick Steel (Love Rowing), Marieke Hagemans (British Rowing), Mark Dewdney, Rob Cree (British Rowing) and Sophie Harris.



## Glossary

The actions linked to this strategy aim to increase the number of rowers with an impairment in England. This means every type of impairment, physical or mental, and in any type of rowing. We know every individual experience will be different and every rowing plan will look different, tailored to the individual. However, for the purpose of clarity we are using a few terms in this document that we would like to clarify.

- **Adaptive Rowing:** informal catch-all for all rowers with an impairment. However, formally this is a British Rowing categorisation to enable athletes to compete in British Rowing Adaptive on water and/or indoor rowing competitions in England. If an athlete has an impairment that is not an eligible health condition for Para Rowing, provided that the athlete meets a minimal disability through a loss of points, they may be eligible for a British Rowing Adaptive Rowing classification.

Note - a classified Para-Rower can race in the corresponding Adaptive Rower Sport Class, but an Adaptive Rower cannot race in a British Rowing classified Para-Rower Sport class, including international competitions.

- **Para rowing:** for athletes who have an eligible health condition, where their impairment has resulted in a permanent and verifiable activity limitation. This must be supported by medical documentation signed and dated by a medical doctor. Athletes are classified by a British Rowing National classification panel.
- **Mixed ability:** a rowing boat made up of people with and without an impairment. In terms of racing this is a race category developed to promote inclusion in competitions. World Rowing has adopted the term 'Inclusion' for the PR3 Coastal Mixed Double Sculls (PR3 CMix2x), which will include one athlete with a confirmed Para Rowing classification, and a non-disabled athlete.
- **Rowability:** a former British Rowing participation programme to drive the number of clubs offering adaptive rowing. This term isn't used anymore but replaced with Adaptive Rowing.



## Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028

**Strategic Objective 1: Increase the number of clubs regularly offering safe and enjoyable adaptive rowing experiences from 35 to 70 by the end of 2024 and to 150 by 2028.**

I.1 Develop a compelling pitch to convince clubs to offer adaptive rowing.

I.2 Create a resource guide that provides useful information and signposts to education for different club members like committees, coaches, and umpires.

I.3 Provide advice for coaches from healthcare professionals who work with people with physical impairments to ensure safety and instil confidence in the coaches at the start of an engagement.

I.4 Fund equipment and other costs for newly established programmes in England. The “Just start with one” approach.

I.5 Encourage collaboration amongst clubs in a region to share best practice, mentoring and organise local races to get more adaptive programmes up and running, taking away concerns from clubs and competition organisers with a lack of experience offering adaptive rowing (via CAG).

I.6 Collaborate with the other governing bodies (Scottish Rowing, Welsh Rowing and Rowing Ireland) to pool knowledge and resources towards common declared goals.

I.7 Collaborate with National Disability Sports Organisations (NDSOs) and other bodies to promote best practice and education in providing safe and enjoyable sport for clubs.

I.8 Normalise adaptive activity via coach education, umpire training and other supporting resources and information for clubs.



**Strategic Objective 2: Increase the number of adaptive rowers from 85 to 150 by the end of 2024 and to 500 by 2028.**

2.1 Make rowing more visible and appealing to people with impairments by ensuring:

- Rowing programs are listed on search engines for disability sports
- Rowing programs are listed on websites of relevant charities
- Search Engine Optimisation is applied for improved online presence
- Articles and images showcasing rowing with an impairment are used adequately by British Rowing on the website and social media channels.

2.2 Use Paralympic athletes to raise awareness and celebrate adaptive rowing. Inspiring the next generation of Paralympic rowers by targeting one charity per quarter and for rowers to raise visibility using personal stories within their 'tribe' e.g. MS Society.

2.3 Recruit adaptive rowers actively by collaborating with BUCS and the Invictus Games programme in order to find talent as well as provide a participation pathway into our sport for people that are interested in club activities.

2.4 Recruit adaptive rowers actively by collaborating with National Disability Sports Organisations (NDSOs). Working in partnership with British Blind Sport (BBS) and UK Deaf Sport in 2023. Expand partnerships to NDSOs such as WheelPower, LimbPower, Silver Linings, and Cerebral Palsy from 2024 onwards.

2.5 Recruit adaptive rowers from underrepresented groups by working with the Activity Alliance (previously known as the English Federation of Disability Sport), Access Sport, Sporting Equals, Sense and other partners to highlight rowing opportunities and create bespoke club-charity programmes to increase the number of adaptive rowers from an ethnically diverse background.

2.6 Establish an efficient system to process and signpost all "Can I give rowing a go?" enquiries to local clubs or other programmes.

2.7 Actively encourage pathways for adaptive rowers through to coaching, officiating, volunteering, and administration in the sport alongside or after a period of indoor or on water rowing.



**Strategic Objective 3: Offer safe, enjoyable, and integrated experiences to everyone involved in adaptive rowing measured by NPS moving from Good (0-30) to Great (30-70) by 2028.**

3.1 Listen to rowers by gathering feedback about their experiences in an annual survey (including NPS question) and ad hoc via the CAG, British Rowing emails to adaptive rowers and the Rowability Facebook page to inform and shape future initiatives.

3.2 Raise awareness about adaptive rowing in British Rowing materials like coach and umpire education modules with practical advice on how to provide for rowers with an impairment including opportunities to represent Great Britain in Para-Rowing events, if applicable.

3.3 Promote mixed ability rowing by educating and sharing the benefits with clubs and rowers in collaboration with International Mixed Ability Sports (IMAS).

3.4 Create more racing opportunities for those who want to compete by looking at the current racing calendar, accessible rules, and entry points, by asking more competitions to include adaptive races as well as helping new regional networks to set up their own events.

**Strategic Objective 4: Develop specific plans for identified under-developed areas of adaptive rowing.**

4.1 Establish new working groups in 2023 (approx. six people each) to investigate the following strategic areas:

- Adaptive Indoor
- Adaptive Coastal
- Neuro-divergence
- NHS referral/rehabilitation group.

4.2 Develop specific plans for each working group to increase participation, provision, and competition for implementation from 2024 onwards.



## Ways of Working

Fortunately, there are already many clubs and individuals involved in offering great adaptive rowing experiences. The groups below are the key communication channels to find out more or become a part of if you are keen to help us deliver this strategy:

**Rowability Facebook Group:** the communication tool for all things adaptive rowing. All members on the Facebook group can post. Mark Dewdney shares strategy and other updates regularly. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Rowability/>

**Adaptive enquiries:** the email address [adaptiverowing@britishrowing.org](mailto:adaptiverowing@britishrowing.org) is used to process any enquiries about adaptive rowing and Mark Dewdney, Bruce Lynn, Sophie Harris, Chris Boys and Marieke Hagemans currently receive these questions. A process is to be developed to best deal with them in a timely and organised manner.

**Club Adaptive Group (CAG):** stakeholder group of all rowing clubs running adaptive rowing programmes in England. Chair: Mark Dewdney. This group will meet twice a year for a town hall type meeting. Ideally one of those meetings is face to face (with a social element) coinciding with a large adaptive rowing competition (e.g. Marlow Town/Maidenhead Regatta).

**Adaptive Strategy Group:** a combination of volunteers, Love Rowing and British Rowing staff who have developed this strategy. Currently consists of: Bruce Lynn, Chris Boys, Nick Steel (Love Rowing), Marieke Hagemans (British Rowing), Mark Dewdney, Rob Cree (British Rowing) and Sophie Harris.