



**BRITISH ROWING**

# **Junior Rower and Crew Eligibility Task & Finish Group**

**Pre-reading for Focus Group Discussions  
November 2025**

**TEAMWORK | OPEN TO ALL | COMMITMENT**

As a reminder, please revisit the purpose and scope of the Task And Finish Panel (drawn from the [Terms of Reference](#)):

### **Purpose and Scope**

British Rowing will convene a Task & Finish Group to examine eligibility rules for junior rowers and crews in domestic competitions. A number of representations have been made from across the rowing community which have raised concerns regarding the impact of:

- A rise in school scholarship and bursary offers driving the recruitment and movement of rowers in school years 11, 12 and 13.
- Inequalities in access to 'Tier 1' competition opportunities for juniors at smaller clubs and schools through the prioritisation of larger boat classes and / or rules prohibiting composite crews.

The purpose of the review is to facilitate a fair and transparent conclusion to the current junior rower eligibility debate and, if required, develop proportionate recommendations which balance the integrity of competition, sustainability of programmes, and the welfare and choice of individual athletes.

The Task & Finish Group will:

- a) Hear representations from across the rowing community.
- b) Consider stakeholder views and make recommendations to the sport on proposals designed to:
  - i. Protect integrity of competitions and grassroots sport,
  - ii. Ensure fair access to high level competition,
  - iii. Strengthen identity and sustainability of club and school rowing,
  - iv. Respect individual choice.

The Task & Finish Group recognises that many representations to British Rowing have expressed concerns and strong support for change. The review will therefore test the breadth of views (both for and against change) before developing any recommendations.

### **Early Observations and Reflections**

The Panel has reviewed over 260 submissions from the rowing community. It discussed observations in the round as well as through specific examples. Members of the Panel noted the breadth and depth of contributions and recognised that the topic carries strongly held views across the community. There is a recognition that while the rowing community is advocating for change there are also equally sincere perspectives favouring the current approach.

To structure its early reflections, the Panel considered four areas:

#### **What stood out positively**

- The volume and diversity of submissions, representing a wide cross-section of the rowing community.
- The openness, candour and constructive intent shown by contributors.

#### **What the Panel took from the submissions**

- Passion for junior rowing is high, and it is unlikely that any single outcome will fully satisfy all viewpoints.
- Much of the intensity stems from perceptions of impact on performance opportunities, educational routes and opportunities for major event success.
- Being named as part of a composite crew is viewed as meaningful and positive for a number of clubs.
- Athlete submissions largely focused on lived experience rather than wider system-level considerations.
- The impact on athletes who feel displaced or whose opportunities appear reduced was clearly expressed.
- Concerns increase where movement of athletes is perceived to be coordinated or engineered.
- The use of the terms 'scholarship' and 'bursary' is inconsistent.

### **What the Panel hoped to see**

- Many responses did not explicitly acknowledge alternative viewpoints or the reasoning behind them.
- A broader articulation of the purpose of junior rowing, beyond individual outcomes at U19 level, including enjoyment, belonging and the long-term health of junior programmes.
- Stronger recognition of the role clubs play as credible performance pathways.
- It is not always clear whether concerns reflect long-term patterns or year-to-year variability.
- Greater engagement from clubs in regions that were less represented in submissions.

### **Where the Panel will focus in order to bring further clarity**

- Developing recommendations that are realistic, enforceable, mindful of second and third-order effects, and grounded in clear evidence.
- To explore the likely response to any change (e.g. reference to legal questions in one submission)
- Further specificity is needed to understand precisely where issues sit - for example, whether composites and recruitment are being experienced as separate concerns or part of the same dynamic (aggregation of talent).
- Engagement with event stakeholders, in order to understand their perspectives and needs.

These early reflections will guide the Panel's next phase of work as it moves from listening to detailed analysis and the development of proportionate, evidence-informed options.

### **Focus Group Discussions**

The Panel has identified focus groups with whom it would like to explore themes in greater depth. A member of the T&F Panel will lead the discussion. Some example questions.

- a) Opening discussion - What are your first reflections on what's been shared?
- b) The appetite for change - What might 'good' look like? How might this be achieved?
- c) How might individual choice and access to high level competition be maintained while protecting the integrity and sustainability of grassroots rowing? What would proportionate criteria look like?