

<b>Border Kayak and Canoe Club Inland Waters Risk Assessment</b>	Rev 1.
Safety Officer	Kirstie Macmillan
Date:	18/1/2026
Review Date:	
Amendments:	

**Definitions:** (see Risk Assessment background document)

<b>Risk (probability of a hazard happening)</b>	<b>Impact / Harm level</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Very High (very likely)</b>	<b>Very High</b>	Death, emergency hospitalisation, life changing injury
<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>	Serious injury, hypothermia, emergency services required
<b>Medium (50/50)</b>	<b>Medium</b>	Uncomfortable but fully recoverable injury. Loss of boat, paddles, gear with potential safety implications.
<b>Low</b>	<b>Low</b>	Loss or minor damage to gear. Bruising, inconvenient minor injury.
<b>Very Low (very unlikely)</b>	<b>Very Low</b>	Trip gets shortened, delayed, postponed, cancelled before launching.

Hazard	Affected	Risk before CMs	Impact Range	Control Measures	Risk after CMs	Additional Control Measures / notes
Water: drowning	Leaders, participants spectators	L	VH	<p>All leaders and participants to wear correctly fitting PFDs.</p> <p>Leaders &amp; coaches working within remit for the relevant activity with First Aid qualifications.</p> <p>Portage and avoid drowning hazards, eg strainers, weir, dam inlets.</p> <p>Suitable choice of working area taking into account the ability and experience of the group, weather forecast and equipment available.</p>	VL	Spectators, including parents of junior members, should be encouraged to stay safe around the waters edge. Spectators must not enter the water at any time. If acting as bank-side safety a buoyancy aid and helmet must be worn.
Water: Cold water shock, cold injuries, hypothermia	Leaders, participants spectators	L	M - VH	<p>Appropriate clothing to be worn and assessed prior to launch.</p> <p>Leaders to carry group safety kit including group shelter and first aid kit.</p> <p>Participants encouraged to dress appropriately for the conditions and water temperature and carry spare clothing.</p> <p>Emergency egress or cancel the activity.</p>		Prevention is better than cure. Paddlers must learn to recognise the early stages of hypothermia and respond to changes in the body temperature.

Hazard	Affected	Risk before CMs	Impact Range	Control Measures	Risk after CMs	Additional Control Measures / notes
Weather: Wind, heat, cold, lightning	Leaders, participants	M	VL - M	<p>Leaders to check the weather forecast before the trip and before launching considering the effect of the forecast on the intended activity and location.</p> <p>Cancel, emergency egress or change activity location.</p> <p>Advise group on appropriate clothing and equipment for the intended activity and conditions.</p> <p>Advise group on hydration, sun protection and the effects of temperature.</p> <p>Carry hypothermia kit, spare clothes and group shelter.</p>	VL	

Hazard	Affected	Risk before CMs	Impact Range	Control Measures	Risk after CMs	Additional Control Measures / notes
Entrapment and entanglement	Leaders, participants	L - M	L - VH	<p>Leaders to brief the group on hazards and how to avoid and escape them, prior to launching.</p> <p>Leaders to brief the group on signals and communication prior to launching.</p> <p>Leaders and participants to conduct continuous dynamic risk assessment for trees, rocks and other obstacles which could cause capsize or entrapment.</p> <p>If towlines are carried an accessible knife must also be carried.</p> <p>Leader and participants to cross-check each others spraydeck grab-tabs at launching.</p> <p>Minimise attached loose items which could get caught on obstacles.</p>	VL	
Collision between paddlers	Leaders, participants other river users	M	L - M	<p>Leaders to brief the group on river signals and communication prior to launching.</p> <p>Brief the group on river etiquette.</p> <p>Leaders to maintain awareness of the group and advise of space.</p>	L	

Hazard	Affected	Risk before CMs	Impact Range	Control Measures	Risk after CMs	Additional Control Measures / notes
Lost or broken boats or equipment		L	L - M	<p>Leaders to brief the group on the plan in the event of a capsized.</p> <p>Leaders to prioritise: Self, Group, Victim, kit.</p> <p>Leaders and group members to carry a set of spare paddles and a 'fix' kit.</p> <p>Report damaged club kit to the equipment officer as soon as possible.</p>	VL	Police to be informed of lost boats at earliest convenience by phoning 101. All paddlers are encouraged to have their name and number clearly visible in their boat.
Slips, trips, falls	Leaders, participants	M	L - H	<p>Participants advised to wear sturdy footwear with good grip suitable for use inside the boat.</p> <p>Participants safeguarded on steep slopes by the leader.</p> <p>Group to consider working together to cross difficult terrain with boats and equipment. See also Manual Handling.</p>	L	Uneven and low friction surfaces are common in the environments we operate.
Head injuries	Leaders, participants	VL	M - VH	<p>The use of helmets is best practice but personal but personal choice. The leader however has the right to insist upon helmet use.</p> <p>Helmets must be used during rescue practice.</p>	VL	

Hazard	Affected	Risk before CMs	Impact Range	Control Measures	Risk after CMs	Additional Control Measures / notes
Injuries	Leaders participants	L	L - VH	<p>Poor practice to be proactively challenged and corrected.</p> <p>The leader should allow participants to declare pre-existing injuries before launch and alter the planned activity accordingly. Any personal information must be kept secure in line with club GDPR.</p> <p>Leaders to carry a first aid kit and hold a valid first aid certificate.</p> <p>Change the activity or egress if injuries occur.</p> <p>Leaders and participants to carry a means of calling for help in an emergency.</p> <p>Emergency egress or cancel the activity.</p>	VL	For Mountain rescue call the Police on 999 and request Mountain Rescue, explaining your situation.
Manual handling	Leaders, participants spectators	M	L - H	<p>Poor practice to be proactively challenged and corrected.</p> <p>All paddlers should be comfortable asking for assistance when carrying boats, launching, egressing and loading vehicles. Encourage this to be the norm.</p>	VL	

Hazard	Affected	Risk before CMs	Impact Range	Control Measures	Risk after CMs	Additional Control Measures / notes
Acute illness (sudden onset) and Chronic illness (long term)	Leaders participants	VL	M - H	<p>Leaders are First Aid trained and able to recognise and treat illnesses in a 'far from help' context.</p> <p>Leaders to carry a first aid kit and a group shelter.</p> <p>Leader should allow participants to declare pre-existing illness before launching and alter the planned activity accordingly.</p> <p>Leaders and participants to carry a means of calling for help in an emergency.</p> <p>Emergency egress / cancel the activity.</p>	VL	For Mountain Rescue, call the Police on 999 and request mountain rescue, explaining your situation.
Pollution and sewerage	Leaders participants	L	L - H	<p>All open water should be assumed to be contaminated and must not be used as drinking water.</p> <p>Participants are encouraged to wash their hands / sanitise before eating.</p> <p>Avoid rescue and rolling activities if the water quality is considered unsafe especially during or after heavy rainfall and where there is agricultural run-off.</p>	VL	Paddlers who become unwell after a trip should seek medical advice from their GP or NHS 111. Water-borne diseases are possible in the UK including Weils Disease (Leptospirosis), Giardia, Campylobacter and Cryptosporidiosis.

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Benighted and unexpected delays	Leaders participants	L	L - M	<p>Check sunset / last light times during trip planning.</p> <p>Consider timings, distances, difficulty of the trip and risk of benightment during trip planning.</p> <p>Head-torches should be carried especially in winter months.</p> <p>Carry a mobile phone or other means of calling for assistance.</p>	VL	
Group separation / lost	Leaders participants	L	L - H	<p>Leaders to brief group on river signals and communication before launching.</p> <p>Regular head counts and line of sight maintained with the group.</p> <p>If groups are split, for safety, tactical or group size, rendezvous places and times should be agreed between the leaders and phone numbers shared.</p> <p>Leaders should have a map available and be able to navigate and relocate the group.</p>	VL	
Environmental protection	Leaders participants public	L	L	<p>Participants advised not to seal launch from soft river banks to avoid soil erosion.</p> <p>Leaders to set a good example.</p> <p>Minimise disturbance of wildlife.</p> <p>Leaders to set a good example and encourage removal of all litter and 'leave no trace' when toileting.</p>	VL	

Hazard	Affected	Risk before CMs	Impact Range	Control Measures	Risk after CMs	Additional Control Measures / notes
Safeguarding and wellbeing	Leaders participants public	L	M - VH	<p>All leaders to hold valid safeguarding training and operate in line with club policies and procedures.</p> <p>Changing at the river should be discreet and respectful.</p> <p>Leaders should generate an open, friendly and approachable atmosphere with careful observation of human factors.</p> <p>Application of club policies should be followed, shared and encouraged on all trips.</p>	VL	Potential legal and reputational damage through safeguarding failures.
Access, conflict with other users and landowners	Leaders participants public	L	L	<p>Leaders and participants to ensure that vehicles are parked courteously and do not block access to property or rights of way.</p> <p>Access and portages must be done discreetly without causing disturbance or damage to property.</p> <p>Disputes must be approached in a calm manner.</p> <p>Paddlers can signal to anglers by shouting or whistling to indicate approach and agree direction,</p>	VL	Disputes can be reported to Paddle UK or Paddle Scotland.