Risk Assessment – Advanced Water – Whitewater Kayak & Canoe

Date of risk assessment completion	17/08/2025

Assessor's name	Russell Mason	Date of next review	30/10/2027

Description of risk assessment	Whitewater kayak / canoe

Location / environment details	Advanced water

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks, and who is responsible for this?	Risk level (L/M/H)	Are further controls necessary?
Adverse water conditions	Participants: ● Drowning ● Secondary drowning ● Hypothermia	Lead Coaches to ensure that Paddle Leaders have the skills to appropriate evaluate and dynamically assess water conditions in advanced water - if this expertise is not available within the membership, this may require the hire of (an) external Paddle Leader(s) with appropriate skills, knowledge, and qualifications Paddle Leaders to check for water levels / warnings of river conditions before the session commences. Paddle Leaders to be aware of waterway hazards and brief participants to avoid these, and where necessary block or direct participants away from hazards. Paddle Leaders to continually assess water conditions during the	L	No

		session. Paddle Leaders to stop session or move to a more suitable environment if river conditions are unsuitable for the skill level of the participants.		
Falling in	Participants: ● Drowning ● Secondary drowning ● Hypothermia ● Injuries from sharp objects in the water ● Head injury	Lead Coaches to ensure that all Paddle Leaders have AWWSR qualifications or equivalent skills as a minimum. Lead Coaches to ensure that all Paddle Leaders have appropriate first aid training. Paddle Leaders to ensure that each group carries a first aid kit. Paddle Leaders to ensure that all participants wear appropriate and properly fitted buoyancy aids at all times near or on the water. Lead Coaches to assess the capabilities of paddlers signed up to a paddle and advise suitability or prohibit paddling where necessary. Paddle Leaders to assess the capabilities of paddlers and adjust plans or prohibit paddling where necessary. Paddle Leaders to ensure that all participants are able to swim 25m clothed and wearing a buoyancy aid. Paddle Leaders to ensure that all participants are appropriately dressed for the weather conditions. Paddle Leaders to ensure in cold weather each group carries extra clothing layers. Paddle Leaders to ensure in cold weather and remote locations each group carries a group shelter. Paddle Leaders to ensure that all participants wear suitable footwear that will stay on and protect the feet. Paddle Leaders to ensure that participants wear appropriate and properly fitted helmets. Participants to understand that lone paddling is not a club activity and is conducted at the paddler's own risk.	L	No
Entrapment in own craft	Participants: ● Drowning	Lead Coaches to ensure that all Paddle Leaders have AWWSR qualifications or equivalent skills as a minimum. Paddle Leaders to check clothing of participants and minimise risks (e.g. no long and loose lace loops). Paddle Leaders to ensure that participants using spray decks	L	No

		have practised a roll or wet exit within the previous 12 months.		
Entrapment in vegetation	Participants: ● Drowning ● Stings / scratches	Paddle Leaders to brief participants on entrapment hazards of vegetation. Paddle Leaders to encourage participants to avoid overhanging or encroaching vegetation. All participants to be encouraged to carry suitable rescue equipment (throwline, karabiner, strap, river knife).	L	No
Collisions with other water users	Participants: ● Drowning ● Entrapment ● Physical injury	Paddle Leaders to maintain awareness of other water users (e.g. paddle craft, boats, anglers) and warn participants of presence. Paddle Leaders to take extra care at higher risk locations. Paddle Leaders to advise participants of safe places to pass or wait.	L	No
Microorganisms (infection)	Participants: ● Leptospirosis ● Viral / bacterial illness ● Blue green algae	Paddle Leaders to ensure that participants are briefed to wash hands before eating.	L	No
Wildlife	Participants: ● Bites ● Bruising	Paddle Leaders to monitor presence of wildlife, particularly during breeding season and advise participants to keep a safe distance. Participants to respect wildlife and keep a safe distance.	L	No
Slips, trips and falls	Participants and general public: ● Strains, sprains & breaks	Participants to take reasonable measures to ensure that all areas are kept tidy at all times to remove trip hazards. Participants to ensure careful movement on the bank, particularly in wet, muddy, or slippery locations, and when carrying equipment. Participants to ensure that boats and equipment are positioned tidily and off pathways when on the bank.	M	No
Manual handling	Participants: ● Musculoskeletal injury	Lead Coaches to ensure that all Paddle Leaders are aware of good manual handling techniques for boats and equipment, particularly swamped boats. Paddle Leaders to advise participants on good manual handling techniques for boats and equipment.	M	No

Adverse weather conditions	Participants: ● Hypothermia ● Hyperthermia ● Electrocution	Paddle Leaders to check weather forecasts before session, and cancel session if necessary. Paddle Leaders to continually assess weather conditions and alter plans or stop session if necessary.	L	No
Hypothermia	Participants: ● Hypothermia	Paddle Leaders to ensure that all participants are appropriately dressed for the weather conditions (e.g. cags, synthetic & not cotton layers, sufficient layers, wet suit or dry suit if very cold). Paddle Leaders to ensure in cold weather each group carries extra clothing layers. Paddle Leaders to ensure in cold weather each group carries a warm drink. Paddle Leaders to ensure in cold weather and remote locations each group carries a group shelter. Paddle organiser to brief participants to bring full change of clothing for longer trips. Paddle Leaders to monitor participants' condition throughout the session. Lead Coaches to ensure that all Paddle Leaders have first aid training.	M	No
Hyperthermia	Participants: ● Heatstroke ● Sunburn	Paddle Leaders to ensure that all participants are appropriately dressed for the weather conditions. Paddle Leaders to ensure that all participants have access to a drink on long paddles in hot weather. Paddle Leaders to brief participants on the importance of hats & sun cream in sunny weather. Paddle Leaders to monitor participants' condition throughout the session. Paddle Leaders to reduce exposure where necessary by picking shady routes & planning breaks in shade where necessary.	M	No
Exit plan	Participants: ● Failure to receive emergency aid	Paddle Leaders to ensure that they have the means to exit the river in an emergency, including: ● suitable mapping and GPS / localisation method to determine the paddlers location and exit route (e.g. a charged smartphone with map app and map already downloaded to the device);	L	No

		● method of communication to call for emergency aid (e.g. a charged smartphone). Club Safety Officer to ensure that all club first aid kits and all Paddle Leaders are provided with an emergency response card detailing advice for what to do in an emergency. Paddle Leaders to carry an emergency response card during the paddle.		
Leader injury	Leader: ● Failure to receive emergency aid Participants: ● Loss or injury of participant	Where possible, each group should include more than one Paddle Leader. Paddle Leaders to inform participants about the location of first aid kit and safety equipment. Club Safety Officer to ensure that all club first aid kits and all Paddle Leaders are provided with an emergency response card detailing advice for what to do in an emergency. Paddle Leaders to carry an emergency response card during the paddle and inform participants about its location .	L	No
Equipment failure	Participants: ● Pinch injuries ● Lacerations ● Entrapment	All participants to ensure that personal equipment is regularly checked and suitable for the environment.	L	No
Pre-existing medical conditions	Participants	All participants to complete medical information in WebCollect. Club Membership Secretary to ensure that Paddle Leaders are informed of relevant medical information. Paddle Leaders to give opportunity for discussion about medical conditions after paddle briefing. Participants to ensure that Paddle Leaders are aware of medical conditions and any medication required on the water.	L	No
Group dispersal	Participants: ● Loss of participant	Paddle Leaders to ensure that ratios of leaders to paddlers are maintained according to British Canoeing guidance. Paddle Leaders to brief participants on keeping line of sight between participants. Paddle Leaders to brief participants on river signals to be used. Paddle Leaders to maintain the CLAP principle. Participants to be aware of other participants within the group	L	No

		and follow instructions of the Paddle Leaders. Paddle Leaders to regularly confirm headcount of participants.		
Road crossing	Participants: ● Injuries from vehicles ● Slips or trips	Paddle Leaders should plan routes to avoid road crossings where possible. Lead Coaches to ensure that Paddle Leaders are trained on safe road crossing with groups. Paddle Leaders to ensure that participants are organised into groups for safe road crossing. Paddle Leaders to ensure that juniors and adults at risk are appropriately supervised during road crossing.	M	No

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