



RISK ASSESSMENT FOR CLUB PADDLESPORT ACTIVITIES

1. Introduction

This document contains risk assessment relating to the activities of Isis Canoe Club, based at the Oxford 22nd Sea Scouts, Meadow Lane, Oxford. This document highlights common risk factors relating to the activities the club undertakes. However, due to the dynamic and varied nature of paddlesport, coaches, leaders and paddlers need to continually carry out ‘dynamic’ risk assessment during trips and sessions to consider changing conditions and the risks associated with them.

2. Risk Assessment of Land Based Activities

What are the Hazards?	To whom?	How may the risk may be controlled adequately?	Further action required (by whom / when)?
Carrying and lifting loads causing musculoskeletal injuries	Paddlers, Coaches/ Leaders	Ensure muscles are warmed up before any lifting and carrying occurs. Use of sufficient people to lift and carry boats. Ensure good manual handling practice at all times. Coaches/leaders to give advice about good manual handling practice to students.	
Falling equipment in storage areas	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Use of racking systems to store boats and equipment. Ensure the racks are not overloaded with equipment. Coaches/leaders to give advice to students about good practice of removing boats.	Report any issues with racking systems to Kit Admiral immediately.

What are the Hazards?	To whom?	How may the risk may be controlled adequately?	Further action required (by whom / when)?
Risk of hitting head when removing boats from racks	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Vigilance. Use of sufficient people to lift and carry boats. Coaches/leaders to give advice to students about good practice of removing boats.	
Injury from warm-up exercises	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Not to be too vigorous with warm-up exercises. Keep stretches to a minimum.	
Slips, trips and falls	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders Other users	Areas to be kept tidy at all times. Suitable footwear must be worn at all times. Members to be briefed at the beginning of a session / trip about possible hazards. Care to be taken at access and egress points especially when wet.	
Objects on the ground which can cause injury <i>e.g.</i> broken glass	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Suitable footwear must be worn at all times. Carefully remove objects which may cause injuries.	
Moving vehicles	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders Other users	Inform members of parking areas on site and emphasise the importance of driving sensibly and slowly on site. All pedestrians to ensure they do not obstruct the movement of vehicles on site. All drivers to be extra vigilant of other site users and equipment.	
Road Transport to and from paddling locations	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders, other road users	Drivers to follow the highway code. Participants to be made aware of the risks associated with driving when tired.	

What are the Hazards?	To whom?	How may the risk may be controlled adequately?	Further action required (by whom / when)?
Insecure loads on roof-racks	Other road users	Train members in how to secure boats. Check roof racks and fittings before starting journey. Driver / passengers to maintain awareness of load throughout journey.	
Ticks and Lyme Disease	Paddlers, Coaches/ Leaders Other users	Make members aware of ticks and the hazards they pose. Make members aware of the symptoms of Lyme Disease. Encourage members to check for ticks after paddles, especially in the warmer months.	Posters to be displayed at club from public health campaigns (Chair & Kit Admiral / ongoing).

3. Risk Assessment for Water Based Activities

What are the Hazards?	To whom?	How may the risk may be controlled adequately?	Further action required (by whom / when)?
Carrying and lifting loads causing musculoskeletal injuries	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Ensure muscles are warmed up before any lifting and carrying occurs. Use of sufficient people to lift and carry boats. Ensure good manual handling practice at all times. Coaches/leaders to give advice about good manual handling practice to students. Boats to contain air bags or buoyancy blocks to aid rescues. Exercise care when emptying swamped boats.	

What are the Hazards?	To whom?	How may the risk may be controlled adequately?	Further action required (by whom / when)?
Bankside slips, trips and falls	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Suitable footwear must be worn at all times. Paddlers to be briefed at the beginning of a session / trip about possible hazards. Care to be taken at access and egress points especially when wet.	
Drowning	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Correctly fitted buoyancy aids to be worn by paddlers. Adequate supervision of novice paddlers during sessions; line of sight to be maintained. All participants to be trained in capsize drill and swimming for the type of water paddled. Paddlers to undergo some form or rescue training and formal courses if possible. Paddlers to wear helmets, appropriate to the conditions, to avoid being knocked unconscious.	Buoyancy aids to be tested at least annually (Kit Admiral on Maintenance Days). Helmets to be inspected by paddlers before use (Paddler / start of session). Novice paddler buoyancy aids to be checked (Coach / start of session).
Capsize with entrapment	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Paddlers to check equipment for snagging hazards before it is used on the water. Students briefed on what to do in the event of capsize. Coaches/leaders to be able to rescue an entrapped capsized paddler.	Equipment with snagging hazard not to be used (and identified as such) until hazard removed.

What are the Hazards?	To whom?	How may the risk may be controlled adequately?	Further action required (by whom / when)?
Immersion / Hypothermia	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Minimize immersion in the water. Check weather conditions and carry out dynamic assessment throughout trip. Suitable clothing for the prevailing weather should be worn. Participants should carry spare set of dry clothing. Participants should carry hot drinks. Group members to monitor others for signs of hypothermia.	Novice paddlers to be instructed on appropriate clothing to bring before training sessions (training organiser / ongoing).
Collision with other river users, e.g. rowing boats, motorised vessels	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Prior planning and inspection of paddling locations to identify busy sections of water. Paddlers briefed on 'waterway rights of way'. Coaches/leaders to supervise activities undertaken by their group. Group to closely observe other water users and to keep out of their way. Group to wear helmets where appropriate. Conduct majority of sessions off main river channels.	
Fishermen	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Group to stay well clear of fisherman and their lines. Coach/Leaders to exercise group control and brief students.	
Swans and other wildlife	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Group to stay clear of swans/wildlife and to stay away from nests. Coach to exercise group control and brief students.	

What are the Hazards?	To whom?	How may the risk may be controlled adequately?	Further action required (by whom / when)?
Heat exposure and sunburn	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	<p>All persons to be aware of the possibility of sunburn and heat exposure on warm / sunny days.</p> <p>Appropriate lightweight clothing should be worn to cover exposed areas of skin and peaked hats worn to protect face.</p> <p>Waterproof sunscreen should be applied (and re-applied as directed) to areas of skin not covered by clothing.</p> <p>Sunglasses can be worn to protect eyes from the effects of sun-glare from water.</p> <p>Paddlers should carry sufficient water.</p>	
Adverse weather conditions	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	<p>Check weather forecast before session.</p> <p>Coaches/leaders to ensure paddlers are suitably equipped to cope with session before getting on the water.</p> <p>Coaches/leaders to ensure paddlers have the appropriate ability to cope with weather conditions and if conditions are too severe compared with ability, to consider postponing session.</p> <p>Coaches/leaders to consider locating sessions to more sheltered venues.</p>	
Electrical storm	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	<p>Check weather forecast before session.</p> <p>If practical to do so, leave water and seek shelter away from fences, trees and tall objects. If out in the open and cannot seek shelter, do not hold paddle, crouch down and keep feet together.</p>	

What are the Hazards?	To whom?	How may the risk may be controlled adequately?	Further action required (by whom / when)?
Running out of daylight	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Paddlers should have a watch and be aware of sunset time for the day. Ensure there is adequate daylight remaining for the activities planned. If activities occur after sunset, ensure all group members carry adequate lighting to illuminate in front and behind. Group to stay in close proximity.	
Contact with waterborne pathogens; e.g. Leptospirosis, Blue Green Algae	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Risks of waterborne pathogens to be described to members. Symptoms of Weil's Disease to be described to members. Open wounds to be covered during sessions. Participants to wash / shower after sessions. Participants to wash/sanitise hands before eating or drinking. Paddlers to look out for Environment Agency warnings on water quality.	Posters to be displayed at club from British Canoeing campaigns (Chair & Kit Admiral / ongoing).
Entanglement in trees or debris	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Paddlers to be aware of potential entanglement hazards posed on river, e.g. vegetation, debris in water. Coach/leaders to ensure students are appropriately supervised at all times. Dynamic risk assessment of individual river/water features/conditions. Participants to be aware of other group members.	

What are the Hazards?	To whom?	How may the risk may be controlled adequately?	Further action required (by whom / when)?
Objects on the bottom of the river, <i>e.g.</i> Glass, needles, sharp stones	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Suitable footwear must be worn at all times.	
Objects thrown from bridges	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Participants to paddle underneath bridges as quickly as possible.	
Fatigue and stress	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	Coaches/leaders to ensure students are aware of planned activities and the level of exertion expected. Students to disclose any relevant medical issues to the coach/leader. Awareness of personal ability on the day. Planning in of breaks, other egress routes. Awareness of other group members.	
Weirs	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	All weirs must be treated with caution. Paddlers encouraged not to shoot weirs unless they have information suggesting the weir is safe to shoot. Coaches/leaders should be familiar with the British Canoeing Safety at Weirs document and 'Including the buzz of weirs in your leadership' resource. Also Top Safety Tips Infographics Paddle UK Paddlers to wear helmets and buoyancy aids if running a weir.	Weir safety to be coached to novice paddlers on courses (Course instructors / ongoing).

What are the Hazards?	To whom?	How may the risk may be controlled adequately?	Further action required (by whom / when)?
Moderate / Advanced Water	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	<p>Group participants to be of a suitable ability to cope with the conditions.</p> <p>Paddlers to wear helmets (if appropriate) and buoyancy aids on or near the water.</p> <p>Awareness of weather conditions and consequent changes to paddling conditions.</p> <p>Novice/inexperienced paddlers for the conditions must be led/instructed by a Coach, as defined by British Canoeing's 'Environmental Definitions and Deployment Guidance for Instructors, Coaches and Leaders' document.</p>	
Obstructions to river channel	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	<p>Remove obstruction if possible.</p> <p>If channel obstruction only partial, stop and assess if the obstruction may be safely passed.</p> <p>Consider bank portage around obstruction.</p>	
Injury sustained by seal launching	Paddlers, Coaches/Leaders	<p>Consider if seal launching is appropriate.</p> <p>Check bank is clear of obstructions.</p> <p>Water to be checked for underwater obstacles before launching.</p> <p>Experienced paddlers should be on the water before inexperienced ones.</p>	

Reviewed by: Hannah Murray - Chair

Last Review Date: February 2026

Next Review Date: February 2027

