



## Risk Assessment: Paddlesport Activities

	Name/Signature	Designation	Date
Assessment Carried Out By <sup>1</sup> :	Ken Nicol <i>Ken Nicol</i>	Secretary / L5 Coach	18 January 2025
Reviewed By:	Emily Kearl <i>Emily Kearl</i>	Safety Officer	19 January 2025

The review date for this assessment is **31 December 2027**.

### Introduction

This is a **Generic Risk Assessment** for Club paddling events on lochs, rivers, sea and surf. The risk assessment excludes swimming pools. **As defined by Paddle Scotland<sup>2</sup>, the risk assessment covers the following events:**

- Level 1 - Taster Sessions (eg come & try sessions)
- Level 2 - Club Event/ Activities (eg training sessions and trips)
- Level 3 - Inter-Club Event/ Activities (eg joint trips and training sessions)

The Risk Assessment is divided into the following sections:

- [General](#)
- [Sea Based Activities](#)
- [Loch Based Activities](#)
- [River Based Activities](#)
- [Surf Based Activities](#)

### Risk Assessment

The key risks are:

- Personal Injury
- Drowning
- Infection
- Equipment or Property Damage

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<sup>1</sup> In preparing the risk assessment, the Club Board, Coaches and Leaders were consulted

<sup>2</sup> Paddle Scotland Event and Club Activity Definitions ([https://irp.cdn-website.com/b9315d6a/files/uploaded/Event\\_and\\_Club\\_Activity\\_Definitions\\_1.5-5433823f.pdf](https://irp.cdn-website.com/b9315d6a/files/uploaded/Event_and_Club_Activity_Definitions_1.5-5433823f.pdf))



## Risk Assessment: Paddlesport Activities

### General

Hazards	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
<b>Lifting &amp; Carrying</b>	All Canoe Club participants <sup>3</sup>	Personal Injury (eg pulled muscle) Equipment Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Carry with a minimum of two persons or use a trolley. For heavy kayaks consider using 3 or 4 individuals to carry</li> <li>■ Where possible equipment to be removed from kayak /canoe.</li> <li>■ For one person lift (eg SUPs and river kayaks) individual informed on safety lifting techniques</li> <li>■ Encourage individual to complete relevant elearning course.</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation</b> Kayaks/ Canoes carried on vehicle roof and trailers	All Canoe Club participants Members of the Public	Personal Injury Equipment Damage Property Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Design carrying capacity of trailers, roof racks and vehicles is not to be exceeded.</li> <li>■ Ensure securing straps and ropes are in good condition and not damaged.</li> <li>■ Individuals given instruction on securing kayaks and canoes</li> <li>■ Drivers to check that all kayaks and canoe are secure before driving.</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Canoe Club Participants: This covers current club members and members of the public at a taster session.



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Hazards	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
<b>Uneven Ground</b>  Creating slip and trip hazards	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury (eg broken limb) <b>Equipment Damage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Where possible use established footpaths</li> <li>■ Individuals to be informed of any obvious hazard</li> <li>■ Appropriate footwear to be worn</li> <li>■ Appropriate carrying method for kayaks including the potential use of trollies.</li> <li>■ If possible, avoid steep ground.</li> <li>■ If the ground is steep, consider using additional aids (eg ropes) for people and equipment</li> </ul>
<b>Vegetation</b>  Overhanging trees, trees in rivers Vegetation at access and egress points Creating slip and trip hazards	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury Drowning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Where possible keep to established footpaths when accessing and egressing.</li> <li>■ Appropriate footwear to be worn</li> <li>■ Individuals to be informed of any obvious hazards</li> <li>■ Whilst paddling, avoid routes where trees or other vegetation could cause entrapment. Where this is not possible, leaders to inspect route and brief group according</li> <li>■ Brief paddler on action to take in the event of a capsize</li> <li>■ Leaders to carry suitable rescue equipment</li> </ul>



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Hazards	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
<b>Water</b>  Temperature	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury (eg hypothermia) Drowning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Swimming will only be permitted when under direct supervision.</li> <li>■ A personal flotation device is to be worn</li> <li>■ Appropriate clothing to be worn for the water considering the time of year and water temperature)</li> <li>■ Training / instruction provided to beginners / novices on capsizing.</li> <li>■ Leaders / coaches trained in rescue techniques</li> <li>■ On rivers, group leaders to check water levels are suitable for the group's ability</li> <li>■ Appropriate safety equipment carried by group / group leader (including first aid kit, and means to summon help)</li> </ul>
<b>Water Quality (contamination).</b>  Sewage, hydrocarbons,	All Canoe Club participants	Infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Where possible avoid paddling in areas with evidence of pollution.</li> <li>■ Avoid capsize exercises in areas of polluted water</li> <li>■ Prevention measures against water borne infection are:-               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cover all cuts and abrasions with waterproof plasters</li> <li>○ Always wear footwear to avoid cutting the feet</li> <li>○ Avoid capsize or rolling practice in suspected water.</li> <li>○ Where possible shower soon after the activity</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



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Hazards	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ As a minimum always wash your hands after paddling and before eating or drinking.</li> <li>■ If within 3–19 days after paddlesport a participant feels ill with a temperature, influenza-like illness and/or joint and muscle pain and possibly jaundice, they should see their doctor immediately and inform the doctor that they have been taking part in water sports and where they have been paddling and mention that Weils Disease / Leptospirosis is suspected.</li> </ul>
<b>Vehicles</b>  Vehicle Collisions, impact injury to pedestrians.	All Canoe Club participants  Members of the Public	Personal Injury <b>Equipment Damage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Where possible use established footpaths</li> <li>■ Park in recognised car parks / laybys</li> <li>■ Where possible avoid crossing roads. If roads need to be crossed extra care should be taken <b>especially when carrying kayaks / canoes</b></li> </ul>
<b>Water Users (Commercial &amp; Pleasure craft)</b>	All Canoe Club participants	<b>Personal Injury</b> <b>Drowning</b> <b>Equipment Damage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Where possible avoid paddling in recognised shipping channels <b>or keep clear of boat/ship routes</b></li> <li>■ Minimise time crossing shipping channels.</li> <li>■ Brief participants on surfing etiquette</li> </ul>



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Hazards	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
Collisions, interference with other water users	Other water Users		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Helmets to be worn when surfing</li> <li>■ Group leaders are encouraged and others to carry VHF radio in areas where ships yachts and and other shipping maybe encountered or in harbour areas in order to communicate</li> <li>■ Appropriate safety equipment carried by group / group leader (including first aid kit, and means to summon help)</li> </ul>
<b>Fishing Activities (Commercial and Pleasure)</b>  Entanglement and entrapment	All Canoe Club Participants	Personal Injury  Drowning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Avoid paddling near people fishing</li> <li>■ Avoid capsizes / rescue practice near buoys, fishing nets/lines</li> <li>■ Where possible on rivers, contact individuals fishing to agree route to pass.</li> </ul>
<b>Vermin</b>  Rats, Mice	All Canoe Club Participants Members of the Public	Infection (eg Weils disease))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ General prevention measures against infection are:-               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cover all cuts and abrasions with waterproof plasters</li> <li>○ Always wear footwear to avoid cutting the feet</li> <li>○ Avoid capsizes or rolling practice in suspected poor water quality.</li> <li>○ Where possible shower soon after the activity</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



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Hazards	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
	Other harbour users		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ As a minimum always wash your hands after paddling and before eating or drinking.</li> <li>■ If within 3–19 days after paddlesport a participant feels ill with a temperature, influenza-like illness and/or joint and muscle pain and possibly jaundice, they should see their doctor immediately and inform the doctor that they have been taking part in water sports and where they have been paddling and mention that Weils Disease / Leptospirosis is suspected.</li> </ul>
<b>Weather</b>  Wind, Sun, Temperature	All Canoe Club Participants	Personal Injury (eg hypothermia; Sunburn / Heat / Stroke) Drowning	The designated leader /coach/ event organisers of the event will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Have a valid first aid certificate.</li> <li>■ Check that the weather forecast is suitable for the event and participants taking note of potential wind chill</li> <li>■ Ensure that suitable clothing is worn</li> <li>■ Encourage the use of suncream, wearing of hats and sunglasses</li> <li>■ Monitor participant for signs and symptoms during the event especially after a capsize.</li> <li>■ Ensure that spare clothing is available</li> <li>■ Ensure that participants have a suitable drink and food.</li> </ul>



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Hazards	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Carry appropriate safety equipment including survival bag</li> <li>■ As part of the trip planning process, group leader to consider impact of weather on potential escape routes</li> </ul>
<b>Equipment Damage / Failure</b>	All Canoe Club Participants	Personal Injury Equipment Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Club equipment to be visually inspected prior to use</li> <li>■ Regular maintenance of equipment</li> <li>■ Buoyancy aids tested regularly (normally at start Summer)</li> <li>■ Equipment cleaned and stored safely</li> <li>■ Appropriate safety equipment is carried by group / group leader appropriate for the activity (including appropriate repair kit and first aid kit)</li> <li>■ Individuals with own equipment encouraged to inspect and maintain. Group leaders carry out visual inspection of personal equipment to ensure is suitable for the activity.</li> </ul>
<b>Shallow Water</b>  Potential for impact injuries to head	All Canoe Club Participants	Personal Injury (eg Head Injury) <b>Equipment Damage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The designated leader /coach/ event organisers of the event will ensure appropriate safety equipment is worn.</li> <li>■ Helmets to be worn whilst surfing and kayaking on rivers. The wearing of helmets during other paddlesport activities will be decided by the coach / leader considering the risks associated with the activity. The wearing of</li> </ul>





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Hazards	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
			<p>helmets during rescue practice is recommended. Helmets should meet the relevant standards for the sport, this is currently EN1385.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ For river kayaking, new participants are briefed on safe swimming techniques</li> </ul>
<p><b>Wildlife</b> <b>(Flora and Fauna)</b></p> <p>Danger from attack/injury</p> <p>Disturbance</p> <p>Invasive species<sup>4</sup></p>	All Canoe Club Participants	Personal Injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Respect local wildlife habitats.</li> <li>■ Adhere to the Paddle Scotland Sea Paddling Guide to Good Practice with the overarching principle to minimise any disturbance that you might cause to the animals / habitats</li> <li>■ Follow Paddle Sport guidelines in invasive species – check, clean, dry</li> <li>■ Pass wildlife slowly and quietly allowing plenty of space.</li> <li>■ Avoid rescue practices where there are blooms of jellyfish</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> For further information see <https://irp.cdn-website.com/b9315d6a/files/uploaded/SCA%20Non%20Native%20Species%20and%20Biosecurity%20Vs2.pdf>



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### Sea

Hazards	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
<b>Tides</b>	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury (eg broken limb) Drowning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Group leader to undertake trip planning and to consider environmental conditions (tides and tidal stream) as part of the planning process.</li> <li>■ Tide information checked prior to any paddling activities</li> <li>■ Confirmation carried out during preactivity briefing, that all members understand and happy with expected tidal conditions</li> <li>■ Encourage all participants to check tidal information prior to registering for an activity</li> <li>■ Encourage all members to develop an understanding of their own capabilities in various tidal conditions</li> <li>■ As part of the trip planning process, group leader to consider impact of tides on potential escape routes</li> <li>■ Appropriate safety equipment for the sea carried by the group leader.</li> </ul>
<b>Swell / Sea State</b>	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury Drowning Equipment Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Where possible, swell information checked prior to paddling activities and to consider impact (or potential changes) of tide state and wind direction on swell /sea state. Also consider potential changes</li> </ul>



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Hazards	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirmation carried out during preactivity briefing, that all members understand and happy with expected swell conditions</li> <li>Paddling route to take account of swell</li> <li>Experienced paddlers aware of swell conditions in cave during rock hopping</li> <li>Less experienced paddlers briefed on swell conditions in cave during rock hopping</li> <li>As part of the trip planning process, group leader to consider impact of swell on potential escape routes</li> <li>Appropriate safety equipment for the sea carried by the group leader.</li> </ul>
<b>Slippery Surfaces</b> (eg seaweed, rock)	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury (eg broken limb) Equipment Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where possible avoid launching and landing in slippy areas</li> <li>Appropriate footwear to be worn</li> <li>Participants warned of conditions and to take care</li> <li>Kayaks carried carefully. In very slippy areas, more than 2 used to carry kayaks</li> </ul>



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Hazards	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
<b>Surf</b>	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury (eg broken limb) Equipment Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ If possible, avoid launching and landing where there is surf (especially if above 1m)</li> <li>■ Individuals briefed on appropriate landing strategies (eg landing 1 person at a time)</li> <li>■ Signals / radio comms used to land the group</li> <li>■ The use of helmets to be considered especially for inexperience paddlers</li> <li>■ As part of the trip planning process, group leader to consider impact of surf on potential escape routes</li> <li>■ Appropriate safety equipment for the sea carried by the group leader.</li> </ul>
<b>Falling Rocks</b>	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury (eg broken limb) Equipment Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Visual checks of the areas for potential mechanisms to cause rock falls (eg nesting birds, heavy rainfall)</li> <li>■ Consideration for the use of helmets especially if the risk is considered high</li> </ul>



## Risk Assessment: Paddlesport Activities

### Lochs

Hazards	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
<b>Blue Green Algae</b>	All Canoe Club participants	Infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where possible, avoid paddling in areas of blue green algae. Normally observed in the summer months.</li> <li>No capsizing or swimming in areas with blue-green algae</li> <li>As a minimum always wash your hands after paddling and before eating or drinking.</li> <li>Organisers to check the app "Bloomin Algae" for reports of blue green algae</li> <li>Observe any warning signs on blue green algae</li> </ul> <p>Note: In Caithness, Loch Watten often has reports of blue green algae in the Summer. These are reported on the Highland Council website</p>
<b>Water Exit Points</b>  Strong currents; Weirs, dams	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury (eg broken limb)  Drowning  Equipment Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of the venue risk assessment, group leaders / coaches to check for water exits points (eg rivers, weirs, discharge pipes) which cause a hazard.</li> <li>Observe any local warning signs</li> <li>Where this is a strong current, group leaders should keep paddlers a suitable distance from these taking into account the ability of the group</li> </ul>



## Risk Assessment: Paddlesport Activities

### Rivers

Hazards <sup>5</sup>	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
<b>River Levels</b>	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury Drowning Equipment Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ River level to be assessed before getting on the river to ensure it is suitable for the group ability.</li> <li>■ Group leader to understand the impact of the river level on other hazards (trees, rapids man-made features etc)</li> <li>■ Group leaders to check weather forecasts which could give rise to a change in water levels</li> <li>■ Group leader to check guidebooks (or other sources of information) for information on the river especially if unfamiliar</li> <li>■ Appropriate white water rescue equipment carried</li> </ul>
<b>Weirs and other man made hazards</b>  Bridges, fishing piers,	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury (eg broken limb) Drowning Equipment Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Group leader to check guidebooks (or other sources of information) for potential man-made hazards and impact on water levels or to have knowledge of river</li> <li>■ Experienced person to inspect weir for route / hazards taking note of potential damage to structure causing additional hazards</li> <li>■ Appropriate white water rescue equipment carried</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> [https://britishcanoeingawarding.org.uk/wp-content/files/White\\_water\\_Hazards\\_and\\_Features.pdf](https://britishcanoeingawarding.org.uk/wp-content/files/White_water_Hazards_and_Features.pdf)



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Hazards <sup>5</sup>	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
sluice gates, other artificial structures (			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Leader to have knowledge of how to rescue trapped individuals from a weirs and pinned situations</li> </ul>
<b>Fences / Trees and other potential strainers</b>	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury (eg broken limb) Drowning Equipment Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Group members to be made aware of potential (semi) submerged hazards especially at higher water levels</li> <li>■ Group members briefed on safety protocols (signals swimming in rapids, what to do if pinned, use of throwline)</li> <li>■ Rescue equipment carried for the hazards (eg throwlines)</li> </ul>
<b>Rock / Rapids / Drops</b>	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury (eg broken limb) Drowning Equipment Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Group members briefed on safety protocols (signals swimming in rapids, what to do if pinned, use of throwline)</li> <li>■ For inexperienced paddlers on the grade of water, route discussed, and markers identified</li> <li>■ Rapids inspected as appropriate for the group ability.</li> <li>■ Rescue equipment carried for the hazards (eg throwlines)</li> </ul>



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Hazards <sup>5</sup>	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
<b>Throwline / Ropes</b>	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury Drowning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Individuals trained in the use throwlines</li><li>■ Rescue knife carried and available for use.</li></ul>





## Risk Assessment: Paddlesport Activities

### Surf

Hazards	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
<b>Water Users</b> <b>(Surfers, Swimmers, Kayakers)</b>  Collisions, interference with other water users	All Canoe Club participants  Other water Users	Personal Injury Drowning Equipment Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Brief participants on surfing etiquette</li> <li>■ Helmets to be worn when surfing</li> <li>■ Appropriate safety equipment carried by group / group leader (including first aid kit and means to summon help.</li> <li>■ Identify surfing area</li> </ul>
<b>Swell / Surf</b>	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury Drowning Equipment Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Where possible, swell /surf information checked prior to paddling activities</li> <li>■ Confirmation carried out during preactivity briefing, that all members understand and happy with expected swell / surf conditions</li> <li>■ Brief participants on surfing etiquette and safe brace / support positions</li> <li>■ Depending on conditions consider a safety kayak / paddler for the activity and or spotter.</li> </ul>



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Hazards	People who are at risk	Risk	Control Measure(s)
<b>Tide Rips</b>	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury Drowning Equipment Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Group to identify potential tide rips</li><li>■ Group briefed on how to swim safety out of a rip</li></ul>
<b>Beach Topography</b>	All Canoe Club participants	Personal Injury Drowning Equipment Damage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Group to assess beach topography to consider how surf conditions may change with tide level</li></ul>



## Risk Assessment: Paddlesport Activities

### Venue / Site Specific Risk Assessments

Coaches / leaders / event organisers of events will undertake a risk assessment of the venue prior to the start and advise participants of any significant hazard. Particular attention will be paid to potential hazards as a result in change of weather, tides and river levels.

### Dynamic Assessment

The Health and Safety Executive consider that the competent person in charge is more important than a written risk assessment because it is they who are in the best position to assess the risks at that time. As such they are able to act 'dynamically', to assess the risk and immediately implement a 'controlling' action. Also, they have the ability to constantly review the risk assessment as the conditions alter.

Coaches / leaders / event organisers will carry out dynamic risk assessments throughout the duration of the event / trip. The diagram below should be used as an aide memoir to the process.

