



Operating Procedure: Paddlesport Activities

Revision History

This is Issue 1 Operating Procedure of the Pentland Canoe Club for Paddlesport activities.

The formal review date for this document is 31 December 2028

Issue	Date	Summary of Revision
Draft	November 2025	Draft for Comment (Pentland Canoe Club)
Issue 1	19 December 2025	Initial Issue



Declaration

The Pentland Canoe Club hereby adopts and accepts this Operating Procedure as the current document for the Club. **The document can only be revised following agreement of the Club Board.**

This is Issue 1 of the Operating Procedure: Paddlesport Activities [OP03] of the Pentland Canoe.

Signed: *Gary Youngson* Date: 19 December 2025

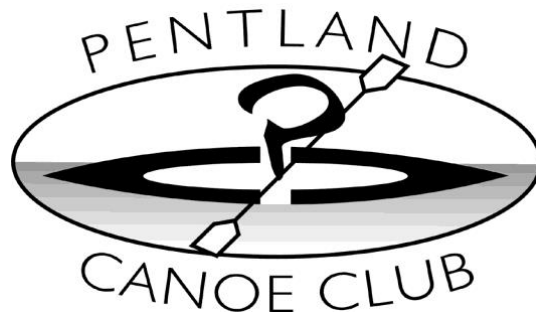
Name: Gary Youngson Position: Chair

**Original Signed and Filed with
the Club Secretary**



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Scope

This operating procedure details the general operating protocols for the Pentland Canoe Club paddlesport activities and covers personal and group safety, equipment management, club activities, and emergency procedures.

General Club Information

- Club Key Disciplines: Sea kayaking, white water, open canoeing; surf kayaking,
- Club Activities: Paddling trips; training sessions, come & try sessions; weekend trips; Awards & Qualifications beach cleans.
- Club website: www.pentlandcanoeclub.org.uk
- Contact Email: mail@pentlandcanoeclub.org.uk
- Key Club Officials: These can be found at www.pentlandcanoeclub.org.uk
- Key Club documents: These can be found at www.pentlandcanoeclub.org.uk

Personal and Group Safety

Introduction

Pentland Canoe Club is dedicated to promoting active participation across all levels of membership. However, the health, wellbeing, and safety of every individual remains our highest priority.

To ensure this culture is reflected in all aspects of club activity, the following operational requirements and safety standards must be observed by all members.

Assumed Risk in Sport and Personal Responsibility

The Club requires that all its members acknowledge and recognise that: "Canoeing and kayaking are assumed risk water contact sports that may carry attendant risks. Participants should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own action and



involvement." The existence of operating procedures and risk assessment does not detract from the personal responsibility of all involved in paddling activities.

Risk Assessments

Safety is a shared responsibility. All paddlers within Pentland Canoe Club are expected to actively contribute to the management of risk, ensuring a safe environment for themselves and others.

The Club's Risk Management process is structured into three key components:

- **Generic Risk Assessment:** Covers all standard paddling activities undertaken by the Club.
- **Site-Specific Risk Assessments:** Developed for designated venues such as Scrabster and the swimming pool.
- **Dynamic Risk Assessments:** These are to be undertaken by coaches, leaders, or instructors before and during each session or trip, adapting to changing conditions and group needs. Dynamic Risk Assessment is not normally documented.

The Club Safety Officer is responsible for coordinating the development of all Generic and Site - Specific Risk Assessments related to club activities and facilities. The Safety Officer ensures risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated as required.

Coaches, Trip Leaders and Event Organisers are responsible for ensuring they have read and understood the Generic and Site -Specific Risk Assessments for their activity. They will also undertake Dynamic Risk Assessments.

All members are expected to carry out their own informal and dynamic risk assessments throughout their activities. This includes identifying potential hazards, evaluating associated risks, and taking appropriate steps to mitigate them as conditions evolve.

All Risk Assessments are available to all members and can be accessed via the Club website. Alternatively, copies may be requested directly from the Club Secretary or Safety Officer.

All Club Officials, Coaches, Leaders, and Event Organisers should familiarise themselves with the relevant risk assessments applicable for their activities. This ensures they understand the identified hazards, control measures in place, and their responsibilities in maintaining a safe environment for all participants.



Personal Equipment

All participants must wear clothing suitable for the season, and for the prevailing water and air temperatures. The Club provides guidance on appropriate clothing for those new to paddlesport. A limited supply of equipment, including cags, wetsuits, buoyancy aids, helmets, and spraydecks, is available for loan to individuals upon request.

Coaches and leaders may advise on clothing requirements prior to sessions and may restrict participation if clothing is deemed unsuitable for the conditions.

Personal Floatation Device (PFD) (Buoyancy Aid or Life Jacket)

All participants must wear a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) at all club water-based events, with the exception swimming pool sessions. There maybe specific controlled coaching situations where an instructor /coach asks individuals to remove a (PFD).

While buoyancy aids are preferred for most activities, the Club recognises that a life jacket may be more appropriate for individuals with specific impairments or medical conditions. All PFDs used during club activities must meet the relevant safety standards for paddlesport, currently ISO 12402-5¹.

Helmets

Helmets should meet the relevant standards for the sport, this is currently EN1385² and MUST be worn whilst surfing and kayaking on white water.

The wearing of helmets during other paddle sport activities will be decided by the coach / leader considering the risks associated with the activity.

The wearing of helmets during rescue practice is recommended.

Personal Fitness

All participants of on the water activities are expected to be able to swim. Any individual who is unable to swim must be individually risk assessed prior to taking part in any water-based activity where there is a risk of entering the water. This assessment should consider the nature of the activity, environmental conditions, and appropriate safety measures.

¹ At time of writing

² At time of writing
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Medical Information and Emergency Contacts

All members are required to complete an annual In Case of Emergency / Medical details form as part of their membership renewal. This information will be made available to club coaches, if required and individuals have given approval for the information to be shared.

All paddlers on a club activity should have 2 Emergency Contact Cards.

- One card is retained by the paddler,
- The other should be given to the trip leader or coach for the duration of the activity. At the end of the activity, this card is returned to the paddler.

Should an emergency occur during the activity the trip leader or coach is then in possession of the minimum information which would be required by the emergency services.

Environmental Considerations

All Club members must

- Follow Paddle UK's "Respect, Protect, Enjoy" principles.
- Adhere to Scottish Outdoor Access Code, and local conservation guidance.
- take home rubbish or dispose of it in an appropriate bin.

Club Activities

General

The activity specific operating procedures will vary depending on the activity and the group ability and experience. The coach and /or trip leader is responsible for ensuring a safe operating environment for their group.

Qualifications Required

Coaches/Instructors/leaders must hold relevant qualifications for the environment (e.g. sheltered water, sea, white water). The Club may endorse experienced members to lead or assist at



activities following Board approval.

Ratios

As a minimum, Coaching sessions and trips MUST follow Paddle UK guidance.

Competency Requirements

All participants attending on the water activities are expected to be able to swim. Any individual who is unable to swim must be individually risk assessed prior to taking part in any water-based activity where there is a risk of entering the water. This assessment should consider the nature of the activity, environmental conditions, and appropriate safety measures.

An individual's competency must appropriate for the activity. Coach and trip leaders will assess individual's competency based upon prior knowledge of the individual; questioning and observation / demonstrate of their basic skills

During an activity, the coach / leaders are encouraged to identify assistants. The assistants should be Aspirant coaches / leaders or experienced / confident paddlers for the relevant environment.

Coaches / Trip leaders are responsible for maintaining their skills and knowledge for the environment.

Medical conditions and/or disabilities

Members are responsible for disclosure of medical conditions and/or disabilities. It is also the individual's responsibility to make the Coach/Group Leader aware of medical conditions/disabilities prior to the activity.

Incident Reporting

If an incident has occurred which results in: -

- An injury to a person
- Medical assistance being provided, or an ambulance called
- Damage being caused to property, equipment, vehicles etc

these must be reported to the Club's Safety Officer and Paddle UK (<https://www.paddlescotland.org.uk/report-a-paddling-incident>).

It is the responsibility of the Lead Coach, Session Leader or Event organiser to report any incidents or accidents .



The Safety Officer will view all reported near misses / incidents / accidents and provide feedback to the Board.

Outdoor Activities

Dynamic Risk Assessments

All Coaches / Trip Leaders are responsible for assessing both environmental conditions and group capability to ensure activities are conducted safely.

- **Before the Activity:** Coaches / Trip Leaders must assess key environmental factors (such as weather, tides, and water levels) alongside the group's ability to operate safely in the planned environment. Based on this assessment, they:
 - May modify or cancel the activity if conditions are unsuitable.
 - Must implement appropriate control measures to reduce identified risks.
- **During the Activity:** Coaches / Trip Leaders must continually to monitor environmental conditions and group ability throughout the session. If conditions change or risks increase, they:
 - May modify or terminate the activity as needed.
 - Will apply additional mitigations to maintain safety

Briefings

The session coach / trip leader will brief the group at the beginning of the activity. This will normally include the activity plan/ route, hazards, group roles, emergency procedures, environmental considerations.

Equipment Carried

Coaches / Group Leaders must ensure that carry safety equipment appropriate to the nature of the activity and the environment is carried with the group. As a minimum, for outdoor activities, this should include:

- A suitable first aid kit
- Emergency equipment (e.g. group shelter)



- A reliable means of communication to summon assistance (relevant to the environment)
- A repair kit appropriate to the craft in use
- A towing system suitable for the paddling environment
- Knife

Other equipment should be carried relevant to the paddling environment (e.g. Throwline for the river, spilt paddles for the sea)

Coaches /Leaders are also responsible for identifying and carrying any additional equipment necessary to manage foreseeable risks during the activity.

Whilst the Club has some equipment available for use, it is the Coach or Leader's responsibility to check that all items are in good working order prior to the session or trip.

Late Back Procedures

The Lead Coach / Trip Leader / Event Organiser will decide the most appropriate "late back" procedure for their activity.

For sea based activities, the Lead Coach, trip Leader or Event organiser will decide when the HM Coastguard should be notified of the activity. When undertaking rescue practice on the sea, the HM Coastguard should be notified.

For Club evening training sessions based from Scrabster Beach, an individual will remain at the location until all groups have returned and are off the water.

Emergency Procedure

Coaches / trip leaders must carry with reliable means of communication to contact emergency services if needed. They should consider the environment they are operating on and the reception coverage.

Environmental Factors

Coaches / Trip Leaders /Event Organisers will consider environmental factors during the organisation of the trip, in the days running up to the trip, and immediately before the trip. They will also be conducting a dynamic assessment of environmental factors while on the



water. Relevant environmental factors can include:

- Weather forecasts taking account of
 - Temperature (both air and water)
 - Wind (speed and direction)
- Access arrangements and follow the Outdoor Access Code
- Wildlife. Particularly to minimise disturbance during the breeding season of animals such as seals; birds, salmon
- Tides and tidal direction
- Rips
- Pollution such as algae blooms, sewage and hydrocarbons.

All Club members participating in a Club activity will look to minimise their impact on the environment.

Scrabster Activities

For Club activities based at Scrabster, a standalone Operating Procedure [OP01] is in place. When reviewing or revising this procedure, consultation with the Scrabster Harbour Trust is required.

Thurso Swimming Pool

All Club members will respect the decision of the Thurso Leisure staff during pool sessions.

General Conduct and Supervision

- Only individuals coaching or participating in an organised activity may enter the water during a pool session.
- Supervision must be always maintained; a designated coach must be present while members are using the pool.
- Swimming is only permitted under direct supervision.



- A Board member should ideally be present at pool sessions and will have the final authority on matters of discipline.
- Club members must leave the pool promptly at the end of session.

Safety and Equipment Use

- Seal launching into the pool is not permitted.
- A maximum of **10 kayaks** may be in the pool at any one time.
- Fire exits and access/egress routes must always remain clear.
- Running on the poolside is prohibited.
- Diving or jumping from the pool edge or from kayaks is not allowed unless specifically instructed.
- Paddles must not be used in competitive games unless helmets are worn.
 - For kayak polo with paddles, all participants must wear buoyancy aids and helmets with face visors.
- Activities must be planned and conducted to avoid any damage to the pool.

Boat Handling and Cleanliness

- When moving boats in or out of the pool, care must be taken near emergency exits to avoid accidental activation of fire alarms.
 - It may be appropriate to have someone positioned near the alarm during boat movement.
- Individuals bringing personal kayaks into the pool must ensure they are clean and free from dirt, leaves, and debris.
- All club pool kayaks should have padded bows and sterns where practicable.
- Outdoor footwear is not permitted on the poolside unless overshoes are worn.
- Cleanliness of all equipment used in the pool must be always maintained.



Equipment Management Storage, Maintenance and Checks

Club Equipment

Pentland Canoe Club maintains a range of kayaks, canoes, and associated paddlesport equipment to support its activities and promote safe participation. Members are expected to take care of all Club equipment.

When using Club equipment the Coach/Leader must ensure that:

- Equipment is checked before departing and on return, to ensure it remains in working order
- If repairs are noted, these must be reported to the individual responsible for equipment or to a key official within the Club.
- Club equipment is correctly sized/fitted and used appropriately

Club members may access this equipment for use during approved Club activities, subject to the following guidelines:

Kayaks and Canoes

Kayaks and canoes are assigned as necessary for sessions or events. Club members should not assume they have permanent rights to use any specific kayak or canoe.

Other Club Equipment (e.g. buoyancy aids, paddles, spray decks)

This may be issued to individual members for personal use. With prior agreement from the Club, such equipment may be retained for a defined period. A security deposit will be required in these cases.

All equipment must be used responsibly and returned in good condition. Members are expected to report any damage or maintenance needs promptly.

At the end of a paddling activity, canoe and kayaks are to be returned to the appropriate store. The equipment should be cleaned with mud and sand removed.



Where damage occurs due to misuse, neglect, or failure to follow Club guidance, the member may be asked to pay for the cost of repair or replacement

Equipment Checks

The Club Board are responsible for ensuring equipment is regularly checked and fit for purpose. The equipment officer role is to support the committee in achieving this.

Coach/Trip Leader issuing Club equipment must ensure it is suitable for use, fitted correctly for the individual, and appropriate for the activity being undertaken.

Individuals using equipment have a responsibility to also ensure that it is suitable for use by them and with no signs of faults

Any equipment identified as needing repaired should be notified to their coach / trip leader who will notify the Club Equipment Officer or Board.

Buoyancy Aid Testing

The Club's Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) must be tested annually to ensure they remain safe and fit for purpose.

Responsibility for arranging these tests lies with the Equipment Officer or designated Board member. A record of all tests conducted, including dates and outcomes, will be maintained as part of the Club's equipment safety documentation.

Members Own Equipment

Club members may use their own paddlesport equipment during Club activities. However, they are responsible for ensuring that all personal equipment is in good condition and fit for purpose.

Coaches and Trip Leaders have the authority to inspect the suitability of any equipment for a given activity. If they determine that a piece of equipment is not appropriate, their decision must be respected.

This is to ensure the safety of all participants and the smooth running of Club sessions. Members may be asked to use Club-provided equipment if their own does not meet the required standards.



Storage Locations

Equipment is stored at multiple locations selected for their convenience to Club operations and events.

Access and Security

Access to storage containers is restricted to designated Board members, coaches, and trip leaders. Any individual opening a container is responsible for ensuring it is securely locked once access is complete.

These are Chair; Secretary; Equipment Officer and Other designated club officers/coaches as appropriate.



Transportation

When transporting Club equipment, it is important to do so safely. Incorrect transportation can be hazardous and may result in injury or damage to equipment and property.

Roof Rack Transportation

When transporting club kayaks and canoes using car roof racks, the following requirements apply:

- Vehicles must be fitted with secure and appropriate roof rack systems suitable for carrying kayaks.
- Kayaks must be fastened using reliable straps or tie-downs to prevent movement during transit.
- Padding should be used where necessary to protect both the kayak and the vehicle.
- Drivers are responsible for checking the security of the load before departure and at regular intervals during the journey.
- Any overhang must comply with legal requirements and must not obstruct visibility or vehicle lighting.
- Drivers must ensure their vehicle insurance covers the transportation of boats and that they are confident in safely loading and unloading.
- Any damage to club equipment during transport must be reported to the Club Committee as soon as possible.

Trailers and Towing

When towing club trailers, the following procedures must be followed:

- The Club Board is responsible for arranging and recording regular safety inspections of all trailers to ensure roadworthiness and compliance with legal standards.
- Drivers using private vehicles to tow club trailers must confirm that their driving licence and insurance policy cover towing activities.
- Drivers must follow all loading and towing guidelines, ensuring the trailer is securely



loaded before each journey and remains secure throughout transit.

- Drivers must operate vehicles in a safe and responsible manner, observing speed limits and showing courtesy to other road users.
- The equipment loaded onto club trailers must not exceed the trailer's design capacity or manufacturer specifications.
- Transport arrangements must include contingency plans to address emergencies or unexpected delays.

Communications

The Club uses a variety of platforms to communicate with members. Each platform serves a specific purpose to support clear, effective, and organised communication:

- **Email:** Used for general club announcements and updates.
- **Club Facebook Group:** Used for general updates and informal engagement among members. Also for sharing photographs of Club activities.
- **SPOND:** The primary platform for managing club events and activities, including pool sessions and evening paddles.
- **Messenger:** Occasionally used to coordinate specific trips and activities.

Guidelines

To maintain clarity and focus on club communications, members are asked to use social media responsibly. Members should adhere to the following guidelines.

- Avoid using messaging platforms for non-club-related discussions or general chats.
- Refrain from using instant messaging systems during antisocial hours (between 10:00 PM and 7:00 AM), unless urgent.
- Always communicating with courtesy and respect.
- Avoid posts that could be offensive, discriminatory, or damaging to the reputation of others or the Club.



- Ensure that any images or content shared are appropriate and uphold the values of safety, inclusivity, and community.
- Respecting privacy by not posting personal information or images of others without their consent.

New Members

Individuals interested in trying paddlesport are encouraged to attend either:

- Winter Pool Sessions, or
- Summer Evening Sessions

For those with prior paddling experience, coaches / trip leaders will assess their background through relevant questions (e.g., qualifications, previous paddling locations, and conditions). This helps determine the most suitable way for them to participate in club activities.

Non-members are typically permitted to attend up to **two sessions** before being asked to formally join the Club through membership. After this they should join the Club to ensure they are insured for Club activities.

Visitors

Suitably experienced paddlers to the area are welcome to join activities. For those who are non-members of a national Governing Body, they are required to purchase a day membership. For insurance cover, their details³ are required to be added to the Club's Paddle Scotland database for member in advance of the activity.

³ **Details Required:** Full Name; Date of Birth; Address including Post Code; Email Address



Use of PYFC Premises

The Club has the use of the Pentland Firth Yacht Club (PFYC). These premises should only be used for activities agreed with the PFYC (normally training sessions and official club meetings or training events). Details on the requirements for the use of these facilities can be found in the “*Operating Procedure: PFYC Clubhouse Use [OP02]*.”