| **Risk Assessment** |
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| **Risk Assessment for the activity of** | **Sheltered Water Trips** | **Date** | **26/08/2024** |
| **Unit/Faculty/Directorate** | **Southampton University Canoe Club** | **Assessor** | **Madeleine McGuigan (President)****Alexander Wilson (Vice President)****Ruby-Lee Allen (Safety Secretary)** |
| **Line Manager/Supervisor** |  | **Signed off** |  |
| **Reviewed by SQEP** | ***Connor McFarlane*** | **Comments** | **WWSR, 2 day first aid** |

This risk assessment covers the club’s trips that take place on sheltered water (not including the River Itchen, which has its own risk assessment). Activities that occur include coaching, practising of skills such as bracing, rolling, paddling technique and swimming. They may take place anywhere in the UK on canals, ungraded sections of slow moving rivers where it is possible to paddle against the flow, as well as open water (e.g. lakes and lochs), small enclosed bays or harbours, defined beaches, or slow moving estuaries with tidal flows not more than 0.5kts, in conditions that are appropriate for the group, but not more than 200m off-shore, or while in open water, in wind strengths exceeding beaufort force 3. Wind speed is based on conditions experienced in the operating area. Specific dates and locations of these trips will be communicated to members. Appropriate committee members and suitably qualified and experienced persons (SQEPs), i.e. leaders, will be asked to read this risk assessment and the acting safety secretary will remind them not to act outside of its remit. Any incidents or near-miss incidents that occur during these trips will be reported and reviewed in line with this risk assessment.

Under normal circumstances, each group will have one SQEP leader per a maximum of six novices. Provided that the SQEP leader has undertaken the Paddlesport Leader Qualification, or an equivalent or higher leadership/coaching qualification, they may take a group of up to eight novices. A group may also be made up of one SQEP leader, one SQEP support, and up to six novices. Leaders are expected to be at or exceed the ability of the BC white water leader qualification. Where mixed craft are being used, the group leader should additionally have demonstrated competence in rescuing the other craft in use.

A novice is someone who has not had training in flatwater rescue, may not always be able to control where they position their kayak, or perceive hazards. They may swim (capsize and exit their kayak) frequently and require close supervision.

An SQEP is someone who has relevant rescue and paddling experience who will likely hold the White Water Safety and Rescue (WWSR) and/or Foundation Safety and Rescue Training (FSRT)/Paddlesport Safety and Rescue Course 2 (PSRC 2) qualification.

A support is anyone who can effectively self-rescue on flatwater and can also assist in flatwater rescues.

We may contract out the leadership of paddling groups to external companies, in which case their risk assessment and insurance will take precedence for the group. However, we will exercise due diligence by asking to see their risk assessment to confirm that appropriate risk control measures are in place.

Members’ medical histories are recorded at the beginning of the year or when membership is paid, before the first river trip, with any changes recorded.

**Guidance/standards/reference documents:**

This risk assessment was written using guidance from:

1. SUSU (Southampton University Students’ Union)
2. https://paddleuk.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/shared-files/british-canoeing-central-documents/Environmental-Definitions-4Jan23.pdf

**Checks Schedule**

A safety kit inventory takes place every year where the condition and expiry dates of all safety kit items are recorded, with updates made throughout the year. First aid kits are also checked regularly throughout the year. It is the responsibility of the safety secretary to ensure these checks are carried out. Safety kits and shelters (at least two of each) are taken on each trip and are maintained after the trip by the safety secretary. For every trip, each paddling group will be given a safety kit and a group shelter which will be carried in the kayaks of SQEPs. If safety kit items are used, if able to, members are to inform the safety secretary in a timely manner so kits can be checked and items can be replaced.

A record of club kit is also maintained throughout the year and contains, but is not limited to, kayaks, paddles, buoyancy aids, helmets, dry cags, spray decks, rescue equipment, and wetsuits. All kit will be checked at least once a year and any updates will be added to the relevant inventories. Any potential for obstructions in kayaks (such as damaged foot pegs or foot rests), and defects, to be regularly inspected by the kit secretary to prevent entrapment. It is the responsibility of the kit secretary to ensure these checks are carried out. Damage should be reported by anyone who discovers it. The kit should then be repaired or replaced before it is used again.

All members must have attended the safety talk that occurs at the beginning of each year, or a catch-up safety briefing, whereby attention is drawn to trip safety procedures. Attendance is compulsory to be able to attend trips. Members must also be present for the safety briefing that is given by an SQEP before entering the water on a trip. In addition, all new members of the club must complete a 50m swim test and spray deck test in their first pool session. Only members who have successfully completed the swim test and spray deck test are allowed to participate in club sessions and trips. A river session must also be attended for members to participate in club trips.

Before entering the water, an SQEP will check that members’ kit is worn and fitted correctly and is suitable for its purpose.

**Competence Requirements:**

All committee members have a responsibility to ensure the events that take place are safe and enjoyable. All committee members present also have a responsibility to look out for everyone on these trips and all club members are responsible for adhering to this risk assessment.

The welfare secretary should have attended the relevant training by SUSU, and alongside the welfare sub-committee, will manage any welfare concerns raised, for example bullying and harassment. The welfare secretary and sub-committee are made known to all members at the annual safety talk and the welcome talk.

All committee members and coaches have the responsibility of completing all scheduled checks competently. Those running and helping to run the trips have had suitable kayaking experience to assess the quality of the kit. The WWSR qualification is possessed by certain members and a record of this is kept by the club. SQEPs will check that members’ kit is worn and fitted correctly before they enter the water.

Leaders and supports are responsible for adhering to this risk assessment within their paddling groups. In order for a member to lead or support, they must be approved by both the committee and at least two existing high-level leaders.

| ***PART A***  |
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| **(1) Risk identification** | **(2) Risk assessment** | **(3) Risk management** |
| **Hazard** | **Potential Consequences** | **Who might be harmed****(user; those nearby; those in the vicinity; members of the public)** | **Inherent** |  | **Residual** | **Further controls (use the risk hierarchy)** |
| **Likelihood** | **Impact** | **Score** | **Control measures (use the risk hierarchy)** | **Likelihood** | **Impact** | **Score** |
| Transmission/ contraction of Covid 19. | Members contracting COVID-19 and falling ill. | Everyone | **3** | **2** | **6** | **All members should be aware of the current COVID-19 guidelines laid out by the government and we expect them to abide by these.****If a member is displaying symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19, they will be asked not to attend.** | **2** | **2** | **4** |  |
| Overexertion whilst paddling. | Overheating, hyperthermia, exhaustion, and dehydration. | The paddler | **3** | **4** | **12** | **Experienced kayakers are trained to look for signs of these illnesses in other paddlers.****Club members are encouraged to take water with them in their boats and communicate if they are beginning to feel too hot, tired, or dehydrated.****On longer waters, efforts to be made to ensure a vehicle is located at an appropriate location (other than the get on/off locations) for evacuation, if needed. Members can then take shelter and cool down.****Club members are advised on what the weather and water conditions are like before leaving for the trip, and to pack accordingly.****Sheltered water leaders are advised to carry additional fluids for anyone suffering from dehydration.****Snacks, which are carried by leaders, backers, and other members, will be offered throughout the day.** | **2** | **3** | **6** | First aiders will be present in paddling groups to help mitigate and prevent the onset of these illnesses.The welfare secretary to have attended SUSU training to be better equipped to help those affected.An action plan can be put in place to check the wellbeing of the paddler/anyone affected.999 to be called in an emergency. |
| Prolonged exposure to cold environments. | Hypothermia | The paddler | **3** | **4** | **12** | **Experienced kayakers are trained to look for signs of hypothermia in other paddlers.****Warm up exercises can be conducted or cold paddlers can be placed in survival bags/shelters to prevent/manage hypothermia.****Club members are advised on what the weather and water conditions are like before the trip, and are encouraged to bring thermals.****Members are encouraged to communicate if they are beginning to feel cold and experienced members will check on them throughout the session.****Personal protective equipment, such as wetsuits, cags, and buoyancy aids, must be worn as these provide protection against getting cold.****On longer waters, efforts to be made to ensure a vehicle is located at an appropriate location (other than the get on/off locations) for evacuation, if needed. Members can then take shelter and change into dry kit to warm up.****Snacks, which are carried by leaders, backers, and other members, will be offered throughout the day.** | **2** | **3** | **6** | First aiders will be present in paddling groups to help mitigate and prevent the onset of hypothermia.The welfare secretary to have attended SUSU training to be better equipped to help those affected.An action plan can be put in place to check the wellbeing of the paddler/anyone affected.999 to be called in an emergency. |
| Unconscious paddler. | Drowning if not rescued in time. | The paddler, observers. | **2** | **5** | **5** | **No boats will be left upside down in the water when nobody is in them to avoid confusion between an empty boat that is upside down, and an unconscious paddler.****Paddlers to be aware of their surroundings and ensure adequate spacing to avoid collisions.****Members to rescue (or alert a SQEP to rescue) a flipped boat with no movement.** **If the paddler is unconscious when the boat is flipped upright, the rescuer will bring the boat and the paddler to the bank/a safe area where the casualty will be removed from the boat. Rescuers will be careful not to submerge the casualty’s face into water. Rescuers will then perform first aid.** | **1** | **5** | **5** | 999 to be called in an emergency/if serious injury has been sustained.Hospital visit advised in serious cases.The welfare secretary to have attended SUSU training to be better equipped to help those affected.An action plan can be put in place to check the wellbeing of the paddler/anyone affected. |
| Capsizing | Head injuries as a result of hitting rocks or other debris underwater.Bumps, cuts, grazes, and other injuries from rocks or debris.Injury from exiting a boat. | The paddler. | **3** | **3** | **9** | **Before entering the water, paddlers are briefed of these dangers.****Paddlers must be competent swimmers and capable of understanding instructions.****Personal protective equipment, such as buoyancy aids, must be worn when paddling.****Safety cover within groups to be vigilant to offer quick assistance to swimmers.****Paddlers are encouraged to rest post-swim to ensure they are okay, and reassurance to be given by members where needed.****Smaller group sizes allow for increased safety cover and swifter rescues.****Paddlers are advised to tuck forward when capsizing to help mitigate injury.****Paddlers are taught in advance of the trip how to exit their boat after capsizing to avoid injury.****The club recognises that British Canoeing guidance does not stipulate that helmets must be worn for flatwater activities. Instead, it is a judgement call for the leader to make. They will consider whether a significant risk of head injury exists, and then determine whether the group wears helmets. If the leader has deemed that helmets are mandatory, a SQEP will check that helmets and buoyancy aids are worn correctly before entering the water.** | **2** | **2** | **4** | There will be at least one first aid trained person in the paddling group who is trained in recognising the symptoms of a head injury/concussion.The welfare secretary to have attended SUSU training to be better equipped to help those affected.An action plan can be put in place to check the wellbeing of the paddler/anyone affected.999 to be called in an emergency.Hospital visit advised in cases of severe head injury/concussion. |
| Capsizing | Psychological harm | All paddlers, but particularly novice paddlers. | **3** | **2** | **6** | **Paddlers are encouraged to rest post-swim to ensure they are okay, and reassurance to be given by members where needed.****Safety cover within groups to be vigilant to offer quick assistance to swimmers.****Smaller group sizes allow for increased safety cover and swifter rescues which can reduce the likelihood of psychological harm from a bad swim.** | **3** | **2** | **6** | First aiders will be present in paddling groups to treat any injuries sustained.The welfare secretary to have attended SUSU training to be better equipped to help those affected.An action plan can be put in place to check the wellbeing of the paddler/anyone affected. |
| Preventing a capsize. | Shoulder injury, e.g. dislocation. | The paddler | **3** | **3** | **9** | **The correct technique to prevent capsizing (e.g. high and low braces) and injuries are taught during pool sessions.****All members to alert a paddler if they identify a bad brace technique so it can be rectified.****Previous history of relevant injuries (i.e. previous dislocations) to be established by leaders/committee before the trip.** | **1** | **3** | **3** | At least one first aider trained to manage this injury will be present in each paddling group. Triangular bandages are in first aid kits.999 to be called in an emergency. |
| Carrying boats to or away from the water. | Cuts on feet from sharp objects on the ground.Slipping on rocks/slippery ground surfaces. | The paddler | **3** | **2** | **6** | **Advise paddlers to wear appropriate, closed toe footwear in and out of the boat. Paddlers without suitable footwear will not be permitted to paddle.****Paddlers are warned that rocks may be slippery and to be aware of their surroundings, e.g. slippery floors, and to take care when walking.** | **2** | **2** | **4** | First aid kits and first aiders will be present to treat injuries. |
| Carrying boats | Injury from carrying the boat e.g. strain, bruising.Obstructed vision on the side the boat is being carried, which can result in hitting people in the surrounding area with the boat. | The person carrying the boat, those in the surrounding area. | **3** | **2** | **6** | **Paddlers are advised to use safe manual handling techniques and carry boats on their shoulders when carrying boats on their own, or by using the straps at the ends of the boats when carrying them in pairs.****People carrying boats to be aware of their surroundings.****People to be aware of others carrying boats around them.** | **2** | **2** | **4** |  |
| Using throwlines. | Rope burn if handled incorrectly.Shoulder injury.Entrapment or death by drowning if rope is used incorrectly. | The swimmer and/or rescuer. | **3** | **2** | **6** | **Members must attend the annual safety talk which will cover how to accept and throw a throwline.****The condition of the club throwlines are checked during the safety kit inventory to ensure there are no snags or knots. Individuals with their own throwlines are responsible for checking these.****Only people who have been trained in the use of a piece of rescue equipment should use it.****River knife to be carried by rope users and to be used to cut the rope to prevent entanglement.****The area around where the throwline is being used should be kept clear from other people to avoid injury.****Rescuers must always put their own safety (and the rest of the group) first. An appropriate rescue space must be chosen, and the immediate area downstream should be assessed.****Rescuers should consider getting assistance with holding a line under tension.****Rescuers and swimmers should be ready to release the rope if the tension becomes too great or if the swimmer is being held underwater.****Time permitting, rescuers should ensure there are no metal items (e.g. carabiners) on the end of the rope that could hit the swimmer.** | **1** | **2** | **2** | 999 to be called in an emergency.Where any entrapment is a more likely possibility, safety will be set up to cover this. |
| River knives | Cutting oneself on the river knife. | Anyone handling the river knife. | **3** | **2** | **6** | **River knives to be carried and used by responsible and competent members.****River knives to be used only when needed and for their intended purpose.****Safety cap and/or locking mechanism (if available) to be employed when not in use/knife to be folded in its cover when not in use to prevent the user cutting themself.** | **2** | **2** | **4** | First aiders will be present in paddling groups to treat any injuries sustained. |
| Capsizing and not being able to roll back up.Not being able to get out of the boat underwater.Getting stuck under water and being unable to get out. | Entrapment resulting in drowning. | The paddler | **2** | **5** | **10** | **All members must perform a spray-deck test before paddling to confirm they can exit their boat safely.****Before entering the water, members are briefed on potential hazards, such as the causes of entrapment and what to do if this occurs.****Members are to shout if they see someone who is upside down in a boat and is in need of a rescue.****Before entering the water, the boat should be checked that it is the appropriate size for the paddler.****Members are taught to bang loudly on the underside of their boats to indicate that they need a ‘Hand of God’ or T Rescue.****Members are taught how to rescue safely. Only experienced members trained to provide a rescue are encouraged to do so.****The safety of the rescuer and the group is to be ensured before conducting rescues.** | **1** | **5** | **5** | SQEP to look for overturned boats and make nearby paddlers aware to prepare for an efficient rescue.No boats are to be left unattended upside down in the water to avoid confusion.Where any entrapment is a more likely possibility, safety will be set up to cover this.Novices to be staggered when paddling a feature to provide sufficient safety cover to rescue the paddler and their equipment in a timely manner, without placing the rest of the group at risk.First aiders will be present in paddling groups to treat any injuries sustained.The welfare secretary to have attended SUSU training to be better equipped to help those affected.An action plan can be put in place to check the wellbeing of the paddler/anyone affected.999 to be called in an emergency. |
| Getting foot caught in rocks whilst standing in the water. | Entrapment resulting in drowning. | The swimmer | **2** | **5** | **10** | **All members must attend the annual safety briefing which informs members how and when to adopt the defensive and aggressive swimming positions. These techniques prevent feet getting trapped in rocks underwater.****Members are instructed not to stand up in flowing water and instead are to swim into eddies before standing.****Leaders and backers to shout at swimmers to adopt the defensive or aggressive swimming position (situation dependent) if they see them swimming with their feet dangling down.** | **1** | **5** | **5** | In the event of a foot entrapment, paddlers that are capable of performing a rescue will attempt to do so, with considerations taken in regards to the safety of oneself and the group.First aiders will be present in river groups to treat any injuries sustained.The welfare secretary to have attended SUSU training to be better equipped to help those affected.An action plan can be put in place to check the wellbeing of the paddler/anyone affected. |
| Floating Kit | Injury from being struck by floating kit, especially if carried by a current. | Anyone in the vicinity of floating kit. | **3** | **2** | **6** | **If able to hold floating kit, hold it downstream and away from the face and oneself.****It is often better to let go of kit so the swimmer can focus on swimming. The kit can be retrieved by SQEPs.****A warning is to be communicated to nearby people if kit is released and within their vicinity.****Buoyancy aids must be worn as they provide an element of impact protection.****Only SQEPs who are competent in retrieving kit should do so.****Note: sheltered water is unlikely to have strong currents that are found in rivers and white water.** | **2** | **2** | **4** |  |
| Collisions with other water users. | Associated injuries i.e. bruises.Damage to equipment. | The paddlers | **3** | **1** | **3** | **Good group control to be exercised by SQEPs to spread groups out so there is plenty of space for groups to paddle separately.****Members to be aware that motorised crafts may be travelling on the water, and to be mindful when paddling around corners.****Buoyancy aids must be worn as they provide an element of collision protection.****All paddlers will have been taught and reminded of basic control strokes which will allow for quick direction changes to avoid collisions.****Club members will be informed that paddlers have downstream priority and to be aware of other paddlers when exiting eddies.** | **2** | **1** | **2** | First aiders will be present in paddling groups to treat any injuries sustained. |
| Drifting into an unsafe area. | Collisions with rock or trees resulting in impact injury. | The paddler | **3** | **2** | **6** | **SQEPs will inform group members of the advised routes to paddle to avoid dangers.****Good group control to be exercised by SQEPs to prevent members drifting into hazards.****Buoyancy aids must be worn as they provide an element of collision protection.****Rescuers to ensure the safety of the group and self before attempting to conduct a rescue of anyone who has drifted too close to hazards.** | **2** | **2** | **4** |  |
| Ingesting or exposure to bacteria/viruses in sea and other waters. | Contraction of Weil’s disease, Hepatitis A, or other waterborne diseases. | The paddler. | **3** | **4** | **12** | **Everyone should wash hands thoroughly after being on the water or handling kit.****Club members to use plasters and/or electrical tape (located in club first aid kits) to cover any cuts.****Some waterborne illnesses, what to do and the reporting process if a member has contracted one, will be covered at the annual safety talk.****Illnesses contracted from paddling to be reported to the safety secretary, who keeps a record of such illnesses.****If required, collaborate with other water users and the Environmental Protection Agency to reduce the risk of infectious spread.** | **2** | **4** | **8** | Members to seek medical advice from 111 or their GP if they show symptoms of a waterborne illness, and to disclose that they have been paddling. |
| Trees | Entrapment in protruding tree branches. | The paddler. | **3** | **3** | **9** | **Trees to be pointed out as a hazard in the safety talk, pre-paddling safety briefing, and before approaching them, so members know to try and avoid them, and what to do if they become trapped in one.****If necessary, leaders/backers may exit their boats and scout the area before sending the group down.****SQEPs/group leaders to exercise good group control by avoiding taking groups into areas with overhanging trees, and will guide paddlers away if they get too close.****If a fallen tree is blocking the water, it may be decided by the leader that that section is too dangerous to paddle. It may be decided to portage the section instead.****Where trees are overhanging or in the water, paddlers will be instructed to remain clear. The leader must assess the risk of entrapment and the ability of the group to avoid the risk, and portage to avoid the risk where necessary.****Kayaking groups/pages will be****checked prior to the session,****as often other paddlers in the****community will alert people****of a newly fallen tree.** | **1** | **3** | **3** | Where any entrapment/recirculation is a more likely possibility, safety will be set up to cover this. |
| Rocks | A swimmer may hit or become pinned by a rock. | The swimmer. | **2** | **2** | **4** | **What to do if a swimmer encounters and is pinned by a rock is covered in the safety talk and in the group leader’s safety briefing.****Group leaders will exercise good group control by avoiding routes with dangerous rocks, if required, and if possible.****Rocks to be pointed out by group leaders before approaching them so members can decide whether to avoid them and take an alternative route.****Paddlers are encouraged to rest post-swim to ensure they are okay, and reassurance to be given by members where needed.****Safety cover within groups to be vigilant to offer quick assistance to swimmers.****Smaller group sizes allow for increased safety cover and swifter rescues.** | **1** | **2** | **2** | First aiders will be present in paddling groups to treat any injuries sustained.The welfare secretary to have attended SUSU training to be better equipped to help those affected.An action plan can be put in place to check the wellbeing of the paddler/anyone affected. |
| Poisonous plant life on bank or water side. | Paddlers may come in contact with poisonous plants, such as hogweed, on the bank/water side. | The paddler. | **2** | **2** | **4** | **Members to report any sighting of poisonous plant life to the group leader, who will inform paddlers to remain clear of it and use other parts of the bank or water side.****Monitor for adverse reactions to the poisonous plant, e.g. rashes.** | **1** | **2** | **2** | First aiders will be present in paddling groups to treat any injuries sustained.Consult a GP if adverse reactions become worse or do not disappear. |

| ***PART B – Action Plan*** |
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| **Risk Assessment Action Plan** |
| **Part no.** | **Action to be taken, incl. Cost** | **By whom** | **Target date** | **Review date** | **Outcome at review date** |
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| Responsible manager’s signature:  | Responsible manager’s signature: |
| Print name: Ruby-Lee Allen | Date: 16/08/2024 | Print name: Madeleine McGuigan | Date: 20/08/2024 |

**Assessment Guidance**

| 1. Eliminate
 | Remove the hazard wherever possible which negates the need for further controls | If this is not possible then explain why |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Substitute
 | Replace the hazard with one less hazardous | If not possible then explain why |
| 1. Physical controls
 | Examples: enclosure, fume cupboard, glove box | Likely to still require admin controls as well |
| 1. Admin controls
 | Examples: training, supervision, signage |  |
| 1. Personal protection
 | Examples: respirators, safety specs, gloves | Last resort as it only protects the individual |

| **LIKELIHOOD** | 5 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 4 | 4 | 8 | 12 | 16 | 20 |
| 3 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 12 | 15 |
| 2 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 10 |
| 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| **IMPACT** |

| Impact | Health & Safety |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | Trivial - insignificant | Very minor injuries e.g. slight bruising |
| 2 | Minor | Injuries or illness e.g. small cut or abrasion which require basic first aid treatment even in self-administered.  |
| 3 | Moderate | Injuries or illness e.g. strain or sprain requiring first aid or medical support.  |
| 4 | Major  | Injuries or illness e.g. broken bone requiring medical support >24 hours and time off work >4 weeks. |
| 5 | Severe – extremely significant | Fatality or multiple serious injuries or illness requiring hospital admission or significant time off work.  |



| Likelihood |
| --- |
| 1 | Rare e.g. 1 in 100,000 chance or higher |
| 2 | Unlikely e.g. 1 in 10,000 chance or higher |
| 3 | Possible e.g. 1 in 1,000 chance or higher |
| 4 | Likely e.g. 1 in 100 chance or higher |
| 5 | Very Likely e.g. 1 in 10 chance or higher |