


RISK ASSESSMENT

LOCATION/ACTIVITY/ISSUE BEING ASSESSED:	Paddlesports (Canoe, Kayak and Stand Up Paddleboarding)		
SERVICE/TEAM:	Countryside Service / Dinton Activity Centre		
NAME OF ASSESSOR(s):	Mike Bennett		
DATE OF ASSESSMENT:	December 2025		
DATE FOR REVIEW:	Dec 2026		
APPROVED BY:	Signature:	Date: 03/03/2026	
			
	Name: Gemma Wilford		

SUMMARY (* delete as appropriate)	
Risk level without additional controls:	HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW
Additional control measures required:	YES / NO
Risk level with additional controls:	HIGH / MEDIUM / LOW

What are the significant hazards?	What could go wrong? Who could be harmed and how?	What is being done to control the risks?	Amendment notes
Generic Risks of Paddlesports			
<p>Entrapment in craft or Equipment</p> <p>Entrapment in obstructions including lines, trees, pontoons and other structures.</p>	<p>Entrapment under the water could result in drowning.</p> <p>Entrapment with head partly or fully above the water may cause Distress and injury</p> <p>Participants, Staff, Spectators close to the water side may be harmed</p>	<p>Staff ratios, training and qualifications.</p> <p>Staff should carry appropriate safety equipment.</p> <p>Close supervision during capsized practice, which must not occur in very shallow water.</p> <p>All staff and participants to wear a correctly fitted buoyancy aid or lifejacket as appropriate.</p>	

		<p>All craft checked regularly to ensure there are no avoidable entrapment hazards or loose or defective fittings. Participants clothing and equipment checked for entanglement hazards (laces etc).</p> <p>Staff to ensure the craft is an appropriate fit for the participant.</p>	
Falling off pontoons	<p>Head injury, other injuries from hitting other craft structures or the lake bed Drowning</p> <p>Weil's Disease or other waterborne diseases</p> <p>Participants and Staff may be harmed</p>	<p>Instructor to brief the group of general and specific significant ground hazards and slippery surfaces.</p> <p>Anyone on pontoons must be wearing a correctly fitted Buoyancy Aid.</p> <p>All participants and staff to wear footwear suitable for the activity and surfaces.</p> <p>Pontoon surfaces regularly cleared of bird droppings and algae.</p>	
Falling out or off own craft,	<p>Head injury, other injuries from hitting other craft structures or the lake bed</p> <p>Drowning</p> <p>Participants and Staff may be harmed</p>	<p>Instructors qualified to perform rescues.</p> <p>Helmets must be worn on activities with an increased risk of head injury, e.g rescue practise.</p> <p>Risk of falling from boat should be managed by group briefings, signals and ongoing control.</p>	
Hit by other participants craft and paddles	<p>Head or face injury, other injuries from hitting other craft, structures or the lake bed, resulting in concussion and a Drowning</p> <p>Participants and Staff may be harmed</p>	<p>Additional care with paddles should be exercised when participants are working in close proximity to other participants and around swimmers.</p>	

		Helmets to be worn in all paddle craft during taster and school/youth group sessions, where the likelihood of head injury is higher due to the playing of games and closer proximity of participants. Helmets are at the discretion of the instructor for other a sessions where the risk is reduced unless specified elsewhere e.g. rescue practise.	
Other Watercraft (Paddlecraft, Sailing craft, Pedalos and Powerboats) Other users of the country park such as dog walkers and anglers.	Impact, entrapment and injury Participants and Staff may be harmed	Staff to ensure participants are briefed on expected behaviour around other water users. Minimum distance from in-use fishing pegs to be observed. Staff to manage the group to avoid congested areas and other activities.	
Wildlife and other animals	Bites, stings, trampling and attacks Participants, Staff, Spectators and public may be harmed	Staff to ensure participants are briefed on expected behaviour around wildlife, particularly during nesting season. First Aid kit is carried by each instructor.	
Lifting and Carrying craft and other heavy equipment Equipment falling from racks	Strain Injuries, Back Injuries, Crush Injuries Participants, Staff, Spectators and public may be harmed	Staff to ensure participants are trained on correct manual handling procedures and ratios. Staff to closely manage equipment being lifted off and onto racks. Staff to seek assistance when moving larger craft or multiple smaller craft.	
Overload and abnormal movement	Strains, Sprain, and Dislocation Participants and Staff may be harmed	Staff to ensure that the activity matches the ability of the participants.	

		Instructor to ensure good technique is taught to prevent strain injuries. Staff to ensure the equipment matches the stature of the participant.	
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<p>Rescuing and recovering Casualties and Craft</p>	<p>Entrapment, back injuries and crush injuries</p> <p>Participants, Staff, Spectators and public may be harmed</p>	<p>Craft should be fitted with appropriate buoyancy bags/blocks.</p> <p>Where Bulkheads are fitted the hatch must be checked before each use.</p> <p>Rescues to be carried out by staff and participants who are trained and/or qualified in paddlesport rescue techniques.</p> <p>“Deep water” rescues should be avoided where this does not compromise safety to reduce the risk of staff injury.</p> <p>Staff should carry appropriate safety equipment to facilitate tows.</p> <p>All tows must be “clean” and quick release.</p> <p>When teaching rescue skills careful consideration must be given to the size and ability of the participants, weather conditions and emotional security of participants.</p> <p>Instructors to carry radios so that they can call for the safety boat/help as required.</p>	
<p>Sharp items and edges.</p>	<p>Cuts and Abrasions. Damage to equipment and clothing</p> <p>Participants, Staff, Spectators and public may be harmed</p>	<p>Staff to brief participants on hazard when approaching areas likely to cause injury.</p> <p>Any defects found with equipment and structures should be reported and rectified promptly. Damaged equipment must be quarantined.</p>	

		Instructor to ensure that all participants are wearing appropriate footwear for the activity.	
Lone Instructor working on water.	Instructor illness, injury or incapacitation resulting in the group being unsupervised Participants and Staff may be harmed	Lone working is uncommon and should only be undertaken by Senior and authorised experienced members of the staff team. Staff to have a working Mobile phone with them at all times in a watertight pack / container. Instructors to carry UHF radios to call for help if needed. Point of contact on land to also have a UHF radio on. A check-in must be arranged with a member of Senior staff to ensure the session has been completed safely. Senior should be in a position to raise alarm if this does not occur. Instructor to brief participants and group leaders of location of Mobile phone, first aid kit and how to summon emergency assistance.	
Environment – Strong Winds (force 2+)	Capsize, scattering and exposure Participants, Staff and Spectators may be harmed	Instructor training and qualification appropriate for the conditions. Check weather forecast prior to session if in any doubt. If windy conditions predicted, instructors to arrive 1hour prior to session to check lake for potential sheltered areas. If sheltered areas of the lake, suitable for session to take place exist (e.g Smugglers bay in most wind conditions), PB2 qualified staff to tow boats to that	

		<p>area. Participants to be towed if appropriate or walked round by instructors.</p> <p>Staff to manage activity to maximise natural shelter and seek guidance from senior instructors.</p> <p>When operating or crossing open stretches tight group control is required to prevent the group becoming to spread out.</p> <p>Crossing must not take the group outside of the instructor's remit. Alternative route required if it would.</p> <p>Staff to ensure they are always close enough to affect a rescue quickly.</p> <p>Care to be taken when launching in offshore winds.</p> <p>Staff to monitor conditions and be prepared to take the group to safety if they deteriorate.</p> <p>Participants briefed to keep in contact with their craft in the event of capsize. Staff to be mindful of the effects of wind chill.</p>	
Environment – Cold Weather	<p>Hypothermia, strain injuries, cold water shock</p> <p>Participants, Staff and Spectators may be harmed</p>	<p>In cold conditions staff should brief the group to manage expectations and avoid activities that are likely to result in participants getting wet and cold.</p> <p>Participants to wear wetsuits in cold conditions.</p>	

		<p>Staff to monitor participants for signs of Hypothermia.</p> <p>Participants who are showing the effects of cold should be removed back to the centre to change and warm up.</p> <p>Provision of warm showers and drinks available.</p>	
Environment – Hot Weather and bright sunshine	<p>Sunburn, Hyperthermia (Heat), dehydration, UV eye damage</p> <p>Participants, Staff and Spectators may be harmed</p>	<p>Staff advised to wear polarised sunglasses in sunny conditions.</p> <p>Staff to brief participants to wear sunscreen and hats.</p> <p>Staff to monitor participants for signs of Dehydration and heat exhaustion throughout the activity.</p> <p>Wetsuits are not advised to be worn on hot days.</p>	
Water quality (algal blooms)	<p>All water users are at risk of sickness cause by certain algal blooms.</p> <p>Ph. Can cause skin irritations</p> <p>Enterococci and E. coli can cause nausea, sickness and wound infections.</p> <p>Swimmers Itch – caused by a burrowing parasite on weed rafts, due to the collection of snails and bird faeces.</p> <p>Staff Participants</p>	<p>Water quality to be measured regularly.</p> <p>Open wounds to be covered up when on the water.</p> <p>Barrier creams advised to participants on arrival if the Ph. level is outside of safe swimming range. It generally effects those who suffer already from dermatological issues.</p> <p>At discretion of instructor, wetsuits are to be worn by children all year round to reduce symptoms of swimmers itch, should it be rife.</p> <p>Participants are advised to buff their skin with a rough towel after showering to knock any lingering parasites off.</p>	

		<p>Adults over the age of 18 will be given details of swimmers itch and given the option to wear a wetsuit.</p> <p>During period of algal blooms all participant and staff should be advised to consult a doctor if symptoms arise after contact with the water.</p> <p>Everyone is advised to shower off after being in the lake and use hand washing facilities.</p> <p>Everyone should be encouraged to wash hand and face before eating after being on to the lake.</p>	
Environmental – Electrical Storms	<p>Everyone is at risk from the weather.</p> <p>Electrical storms pose threat to all watercrafts. High wind speeds can cause watercraft to become uncontrollable and capsize.</p>	<p>Weather forecasts are monitored by senior staff. Staff are made aware of adverse weather evacuation procedures.</p>	
SUNSET AND NIGHT PADDLES (and Poor Visibility)			
Separation from the group	<p>Drowning, Entrapment and distress</p> <p>Participants and Staff may be harmed</p>	<p>Instructor to carry a working bright torch.</p> <p>Everyone to stay as one group.</p> <p>Instructor to exercise heightened observation, tighter group control and regular “head counting”.</p> <p>Group briefing to include a role call method and non-visual signals.</p> <p>All Staff and participants to wear glow sticks or waterproof lights.</p> <p>Appropriate use of torches to prevent dazzling others.</p> <p>Instructor to have a whistle.</p>	

		Participants provided with and encouraged to place glowsticks on their person or craft	
Collision with other water users and unseen objects	Injury and capsizes Participants and Staff may be harmed	Participants provided with and encouraged to place glowsticks on their person and/or craft	
KAYAKS - CLOSED COCKPIT			
Entrapment in kayak	Entrapment under the water will result in drowning. Entrapment with head partly or fully above the water may cause Distress and injury Participants, Staff may be harmed	Participants briefed on how to correctly exit the kayak. Where Spray decks are being used a clear briefing on their correct use must be given and close supervision in the event of a capsizes. Nothing to be carried on participants laps or between legs (including other people)	
Capsizes and head hitting other craft, structures or lake bed	Head injury, drowning Participants, Staff may be harmed	Helmets should be worn for practicing rolling and rescues, taster sessions and by all beginners at senior instructor's discretion.	
Towing	Injury Staff may be harmed.	Instructor to carry a purpose made tow belt. Instructor to give guidance to participants in tow Instructors tow ability checked at yearly induction.	
KAYAKS – SIT-ON-TOPS SOLO AND TANDEM			
Capsizes and head hitting other craft, structures or lake bed	Head injury, drowning Participants, Staff may be harmed	Helmets should be worn for taster sessions and by all beginners.	

<p>Fatigue of paddler.</p> <p>Split up from group.</p>	<p>Participants who struggle to paddle might get split up from the group.</p> <p>High winds causing exertion</p>	<p>Instructor to have line of site of the entire group.</p> <p>Tow belts can be used to aid a struggling kayaker. This should be reinforced with coaching to get the person padding more proficiently.</p> <p>Tow belts must be quick release and clean line.</p> <p>Safety boat on site if needed</p>	
<p>More boats for the instructor to look after and rescue if using single kayaks.</p>	<p>Drowning, distress</p>	<p>Smaller 8:1 ratio when paddling solo kayaks.</p> <p>Current ratios are max 12 people spread across 8 craft, to one instructor.</p>	
STAND UP PADDLEBOARDS			
<p>Separated from board by wind</p>	<p>Drowning, hypothermia and distress</p> <p>Participants, Staff may be harmed</p>	<p>Leashes to be worn when appropriate. E.g. travelling from one location to another. Leashes not worn when appropriate e.g. playing games</p> <p>When leashes are not worn instructors should pay close attention to wind direction and strength and choose sensible locations for these activities to prevent separation of participants from boards.</p> <p>Buoyancy aids must be worn, except in certain circumstances (e.g., SUP yoga) this is at the SI discretion.</p> <p>Participants briefed on a "Kneel" command.</p>	
<p>Entanglement in leash</p>	<p>Distress and Injury</p> <p>Participants, Staff may be harmed</p>	<p>Instructor to ensure that leashes are correctly fitted to board and student.</p>	

Entanglement of leash in other objects		Leash is in good working order. Participants briefed on how to put on and take off leashes. When to take off leashes	
Falling from board onto own board, other craft, pontoons or shallows.	Head injury, other injuries, drowning Participants, Staff may be harmed	Participants briefed on “1-Board-length” rule, Kneel in shallows, and near hazards.	
Paddleboarding without a PFD <i>Paddle UK updated their advice recently (2024 edition of their website) to “Paddle UK’s guidance is that a buoyancy aid (or PFD) must be worn wherever you are paddling. No matter which type of PFD you use, make sure it has the ISO 12402-5 or ISO 12402-6 certification.”</i> <i>https://gopaddling.info/blog/tips-and-advice/should-i-wear-a-buoyancy-aid-when-stand-up-paddle-boarding/</i>	Less buoyancy when in the water so increased risk of drowning if immersion occurs. Participants, Staff may be harmed	All beginners and young people must wear buoyancy aids on instructed or lead SUP activities Night Paddles and in strong winds everyone wears buoyancy aids. All lake access pass users must wear a buoyancy aid. For events, the decision to wear or not wear a buoyancy aid is at the organisers discretion provided an alternative safety system has been implemented.	
GIANT STAND-UP-PADDELBOARDS			
Falling onto other participants	Head injury and other injury Participants, Staff may be harmed	Participants briefed on behavioural expectations and given a clear “Kneel” command. Instructor to ensure that the board is fully inflated to make it more stable.	
Flipped board	Entrapment under the board and drowning, Head injury Participants, Staff may be harmed	Avoid intentionally flipping the board with groups. Instructor to headcount. Use the Painter line or instructors tow line to right the board to avoid injury. Painter line must be the length of the board to facilitate towing and self-rescue	
OPEN CANOES (AKA CANADIAN CANOES)			

<p>Entrapment under a capsized canoe</p> <p>Entrapment of body parts under seats or thwarts</p>	<p>Entrapment under the water will result in drowning.</p> <p>Entrapment with head partly or fully above the water may cause Distress and injury</p> <p>Participants, Staff may be harmed</p>	<p>Participants briefed on what to do if they find themselves under the capsized canoe.</p> <p>Participants briefed not to lie in the canoes.</p> <p>Instructor to brief participants on how to sit or kneel in the canoes and check for bulky footwear that may become entrapped under seats.</p> <p>Instructor to head count immediately in the event of capsize and check under capsized boat immediately if in doubt.</p>	
<p>Falling over in canoe</p>	<p>Head injury, other injuries</p> <p>Participants, Staff may be harmed</p>	<p>When undertaking activities which have a significantly increased risk of falling from a standing position, i.e., games, challenges or poling. Helmets must be worn.</p>	
<p>Rescue</p>	<p>Injury from lifting the additional weight.</p> <p>Participants, Staff may be harmed</p>	<p>All Canoes fitted with Buoyancy blocks.</p> <p>Means of towing carried by all instructors.</p>	
RAFTED CANOES			
<p>Swamping of canoes due to activities and poor weather</p>	<p>Injury, hypothermia and distress.</p> <p>Manual handling injuries from handling swamped boats</p> <p>Participants, Staff may be harmed</p>	<p>If paddling rafted canoes in rough conditions the instructor should ensure they carry buckets as bailers.</p> <p>Raft to be easy to disassemble to facilitate rescue</p> <p>All safety boat drivers trained on how to rescue a swamped canoe raft</p>	
<p>Entrapment in collapsed raft</p> <p>Crush injuries between rafted canoes</p>	<p>Rafted canoes closing up "Clam-Shelled" causing entrapment, drowning, injury and distress</p> <p>Entrapment as raft breaks apart</p>	<p>There are 2 trained methods for rafting canoes at Dinton.</p>	

	Participants, Staff may be harmed	<p>2 Raft purpose made spars secured with bridals and ratchet straps for planned rafts</p> <p>“Pencil Tow” (aka Box raft) using a quick release knot for impromptu rafts.</p> <p>These methods remove the risk of “clam-shelling”</p> <p>Brief the group to keep fingers clear of spars and pinch points.</p> <p>Ensure that the raft is tightly built to avoid movement. Tension is checked before use and periodically throughout use.</p>	
Sailing Canoe Rafts (endless river rigs and improvised rigs)	<p>Entanglement in sails and equipment and canoe running away following people falling out</p> <p>Participants, Staff may be harmed</p>	<p>All sailing rigs to be quick release and to drop when not held.</p> <p>Participants to stay seated when sailing.</p> <p>All lines to adhere to the Clean Line Principle.</p>	
Man-Over-Board/Swimmer	<p>Rafted canoes are fast but less manoeuvrable than individual canoes. It may take longer to manoeuvre a rafted canoe back to a participant who has fallen out leading to an increased risk of Hypothermia and distress.</p> <p>Participants, Staff may be harmed</p>	<p>Instructor to brief the group with a clear “Swimmer” procedure and a clear “Stop!” command.</p> <p>If the instructor is on a rafted canoe they must carry a throw line to facilitate a quicker rescue.</p> <p>A painter line can also be trailed behind the canoe. To allow for a swimmer self-rescue.</p> <p>Alternatively, instructor can be solo in a separate craft.</p>	

REVIEWS AND REVISIONS

Review date	Name of Assessor	Is assessment still valid?	If not, list adjustments with details of who will action and by when	Approved by Manager	Date of next review
Feb 2020	Nicola Dennis	Yes	Might want to take out SUP fit and closed cockpit kayak references next year as we are phasing those out.	Tanya Lee	Feb 2021
Feb 2022	Jack Walling	Yes	Added the need for someone on land to have a radio as well. Added COPs reference to high wind map	Jack Walling	Feb 2023
Dec 2023	Mike Bennett	Yes	Changed canoes fitted with painters for towing purposes to instructor to carry towline as part of paddle safety pack. Updated references to COPs	Richard Ashwell	March 2025
Dec 2024	Mike Bennett	Yes	Removed references to COPs as unnecessary	Mike Bennett	Dec 2025
Aug 2025	Richard Ashwell	Yes	Updated buoyancy aid requirements, helmet requirements.	Richard Ashwell	August 2025