


RISK ASSESSMENT

LOCATION/ACTIVITY/ISSUE BEING ASSESSED:	Sailing
SERVICE/TEAM:	Countryside Service / Dinton Activity Centre
NAME OF ASSESSOR(s):	Richard Ashwell
DATE OF ASSESSMENT:	27 November 2025
DATE FOR REVIEW:	February 2027
APPROVED BY:	Signature:  Date: 27/02/2026 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
Components at head height	<p>During sailing the students could be hit over the head by the boom traveling across the boat.</p> <p>Being sat head to wind can cause the boom and sail to flog rapidly in the centre line of the boat. This can be off putting to beginners when rigging up at the start of a session, or when recovering post capsiz.</p> <p>Booms also extended beyond the confines of the hull, potentially injuring other sailors and users.</p> <p>Staff and Participants could be harmed – head / face impact injury.</p>	<p>All participants under the age of 18 must wear a sailing helmet if Stage 1 and 2.</p> <p>If wind conditions are 15mph or over all Under 18's, irrelevant of what stage they are on, must wear a helmet.</p> <p>Optional for adults, but risks and benefits of PPE are explained, and helmets strongly advised for taster sessions and Level 1.</p>	

		<p>Land demonstrations of good tacking and gybing methods are explored on land before going onto the water.</p> <p>Students learn about the wind direction and the effect on the sail and boom position.</p> <p>Instructors should pick suitable sheltered locations during periods of higher winds.</p> <p>Instructors should aim to position themselves clear of booms when manoeuvring or towing student from a powerboat.</p> <p>Students warned about sailing in close proximity to other users. "boats aren't bumper cars" and "buffer zones" introduced to students along with IRPCS lessons.</p>	
Swan & geese	<p>Geese and swans may become irate at the presents of boat/children with their territory especially after the birth of goslings/cygnets. Risk to all water users.</p> <p>Staff and Participants could be harmed</p>	<p>Instructors will pick location of session carefully to minimise impact on environment.</p> <p>Where possible avoid entering the bird feeding area or going on the island.</p>	
General public & anglers	<p>General insults or abuse could be shouted during the activity which may offend and be inappropriate in front of students.</p> <p>Staff and Participants could be harmed</p>	<p>Students while out of building will be supervised and any negative impact from public/ anglers will be reported to duty senior instructor.</p> <p>Instructor will avoid sailing/ powerboating in front of anglers.</p> <p>Course marker buoys should not be dropped or dragged in front of anglers.</p>	

Bridge between boat park and slipway.	<p>Staff and participants alike could lose footing and cause the equipment to fall onto them. Also possible sprain or strain injuries from bad manual handling technique.</p> <p>Staff and Participants could be harmed</p>	<p>Staff to ensure participants are trained on correct procedures and ratios.</p> <p>Staff and participants to wear closed-toe footwear with good grip whilst manoeuvring boats.</p>	
Water quality (algal blooms)	<p>All water users are at risk of sickness caused 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 borrowing parasite on weed rafts, due to the collection of snails and bird faeces.</p> <p>Staff and Participants could be harmed</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 affects 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>	

		Everyone should be encouraged to wash hands and face before eating after being on to the lake.	
Capsize/ Entrapment/ inversion	<p>Risk of injury or drowning to participants and staff on sailing dinghies. In severe cases this could lead to drowning.</p> <p>Staff and Participants could be harmed</p>	<p>Students to be taught correct capsize recovery techniques according to RYA.</p> <p>Participants briefed on the risks of inversion and how to prevent it.</p> <p>Instructors to be trained on entrapment recovery as part of CPD.</p> <p>Close supervision of dinghies practicing inversion.</p> <p>Mast head floats used on Topaz Argo's and Xenons at all times.</p> <p>Mast head floats available for Topaz uno's</p> <p>Lines stowed away tidily during rigging.</p> <p>Inform the duty SI or office if an inversion occurs and continue to recover the people and boat.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the instructor to ensure they can recover an inverted dinghy prior to practising it with participants.</p> <p>All Qualified RYA Instructors and Safety boat drivers are required to carry a safety knife with a rounded tip to aid in the case of entanglement.</p> <p>Safety Boats are all equipped with throwlines, tow lines, first aid equipment</p>	

		and other basic tools and safety equipment in line with RYA requirements.	
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Equipment failure	<p>If a boat is in poor repair or not set up properly spars and rigging could come lose injuring the occupant of the boat. In some cases, it is also possible for the craft to sink i.e. bungs not in properly.</p> <p>Staff and Participants could be harmed</p>	<p>Equipment is checked and maintained regularly. There should be a brief visual inspection on PPE and dinghies before use.</p> <p>All participants to wear buoyancy aids, or at the discretion of the Senior Instructor a Life jacket to aid participants in floating in the water.</p> <p>Participants are given a demonstration on how to safely and correctly rig and de-rig the boats. Input from the instructor reduces every session as the student's confidence and knowledge increase.</p> <p>Instructors to ensure all boats are rigged correctly prior to setting sail.</p> <p>Senior instructor on site has a Safety Boat qualification to assist with breakages, tows, boats stuck on lee shores, capsizes, inversions and swamped boats.</p>	
Other water users	<p>Collision with other water users could cause injury or equipment damage to either craft. There is also a risk of entanglement in lines from anglers.</p> <p>Staff and Participants could be harmed</p>	<p>Staff to ensure participants are briefed on expected behaviour around other water users.</p> <p>Staff to be made aware of the risk of a mixed fleet of sailing boats. A larger boat colliding with smaller boat could result in the larger boat riding up on top</p>	

		<p>of the small boat. Possibly injuring the occupants of the smaller boat.</p> <p>IRPCS's applied and taught in the syllabus.</p> <p>Minimum distance from in-use fishing pegs to be observed by duty SI.</p> <p>Choose a sensible sailing area to conduct a session which will not interfere with other sessions or water users and provides the best learning environment for the level of sailors.</p>	
Ratios	<p>Operating outside of the ratios could make sessions difficult to control and lead to a number of risks to all water users.</p>	<p>12:1 for taster sessions</p> <p>9:1 RYA courses (max 6 boats)</p> <p>3:1 in crewed boats with instructor on board.</p> <p>Taster sessions with children under 8 years old are reduced to 10:1 across 2 crewed boats with DI and / DAI on board either boat.</p>	
Severe Weather	<p>Severe or extreme wind can cause unsafe conditions leading to capsizes, entrapments or other injuries.</p> <p>Electrical Storms can cause harm to individuals on the water and damage boats. Sailing boats are at a higher risk due to the mast.</p> <p>Staff and Participants could be harmed</p>	<p>Weather conditions will be monitored by the senior instructor.</p> <p>In higher winds sheltered areas of the lake may be used, and boats towed to the sailing area.</p> <p>If wind conditions are 15mph or over all Under 18's, irrelevant of what stage they are on, must wear a helmet.</p> <p>All participants to wear buoyancy aids, or at the discretion of the Senior</p>	

		<p>Instructor a Life jacket to aid participants in floating in the water.</p> <p>Dependant on the condition and skill level of the sailors some sessions may be cancelled at the duty Senior Instructors' discretion.</p> <p>Electrical storms are monitored using lightning trackers. The lake is evacuated if there are strikes in the area. If safe to do so sailing dinghies will be capsized once the participants are in the safety boat.</p>	
Group Dispersal	<p>Groups might become dispersed due to changing wind conditions, possibly causing multiple capsizes.</p> <p>Individuals might struggle sailing up wind at beginner levels and get stranded on lee shores.</p>	<p>Instructors to select sailing areas, boats and sail size based on weather conditions now and forecast for later, along with the group's ability level.</p> <p>Senior Instructors to prompt instructors of weather condition changes and to advise on instructors' decisions on boat choice, sailing area and sail size.</p> <p>Instructors to have a radio so they can call for assistance of the Senior Instructor or another safety boat helm.</p> <p>Instructors have a minimum of powerboat level two training.</p> <p>CPD sessions on safety boat work are offered to all instructors.</p> <p>The full safety boat course is highly recommended to instructors.</p> <p>Throwlines are in every power boat to help with lee shore rescues.</p>	

Operating without an immediate safety boat	<p>Operating without a safety boat in direct attendance can mean it's more difficult to obtain assistance if needed.</p> <p>Staff and Participants could be harmed</p>	<p>Any sailing boat on the lake without a manned powerboat should have a first aid kit and a mobile phone within an aqua bag. An example of this is a private tuition being run by a senior instructor on board the dinghy with the participant.</p> <p>A powerboat must still be rigged and available on the pontoon in case of an incident to expedite recovery.</p>	
Injury to participant	<p>Injury may occur to participant requiring immediate return to the pontoon.</p> <p>This may include head injury, cuts, sprains, hypothermia etc.</p>	<p>Instructor to inform duty SI that participant requires collection from the session.</p> <p>First aid treatment to be provided on the water where possible.</p> <p>If duty SI is unavailable, instructor must ensure their session is supervised using safety boat ratio of 12:1 before returning the participant to land.</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
Jan 2021	Jack Walling	Yes	Addition risk of mixed fleets added to collision risks.	Jack Walling	Jan 2022
Jan 2022	Jack Walling	Yes	Additional points added to avoid head injury risks based on instructor positioning and seeking shelter during high winds.	Jack Walling	Jan 2023
Oct 2022	Richard Ashwell	Yes	RYA required adjustments made – operating without an immediate safety boat, close proximity dangers and prevention added in.	Richard Ashwell	Oct 2023
Dec 2023	Mike Bennett	Yes	Mast head floats updated to Topaz Argo's and Xenon's as our crewed boats with higher entrapment risk from rigging.	Richard Ashwell	March 2025
Dec 2024	Mike Bennett	Yes	Removed COPs references	Mike Bennett	Dec 2025

November 2025	Richard Ashwell	Yes	Added reference to buoyancy aids being substituted for life jacket at senior instructors discretion.	Richard Ashwell	Feb 2026
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