



CLUB SAFETY POLICY

Keyholders refer to Paddle UK's 'Trip Organisers'.

1. Our commitment

Isis Canoe Club is committed to providing safe, enjoyable paddlesports for our members and guests.

We follow Paddle UK environmental definitions and good practice for instructors, coaches and leaders.

To support our Health and Safety policy statement we are committed to the following duties:

- To undertake regular, recorded risk assessment of the club premises and all activities undertaken by the club.
- Create a safe environment by putting health and safety measures in place as identified by the assessment.
- Ensure that all members are given the appropriate level of training and engage in activities/competition commensurate with the individual's ability depending on age, maturity and development.
- Ensure that all members are aware of, understand and follow the club's Health and Safety Policy.
- To appoint a competent club member to assist with health and safety responsibilities in the role of Safety Officer.
- Ensure that normal operating procedures and emergency operating procedures are in place and known by all members.
- To provide access to adequate first aid equipment.
- To report any injuries or accidents sustained during any club activity or whilst on the club premises and keep a record of all such incidents.
- Ensure that the implementation of the policy is reviewed annually and monitored for its effectiveness.

Health and Safety Duties of Individuals

As a club member, you have a duty to:

- Take reasonable care for your own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by what you do or not do.
- Inform the Trip Organiser and/or others in the group of any medical conditions or any other issues that may impact you whilst participating in the activity for the purposes of your safety.
- Cooperate with the club on health and safety issues, respect club rules and policies.
- Correctly use all equipment provided by the club.
- Not interfere with, or misuse, anything provided for your health, safety or welfare.

This policy applies to:

- Club activities on our local waters – e.g. River Thames, River Cherwell (Oxford), Oxford Canal.
- Touring trips on rivers and open water (e.g. Wye, Severn, canals and lakes up to grade 1 with some 1(2) features).
- White water kayaking (mainly grade 2–3, with a small number of members occasionally paddling grade 3(4) as peers).
- Occasional sea / estuary trips, often run with external providers.
- Our annual public weekend with non-members, families, camping, paddles, BBQ and ceilidh.
- Other ad-hoc organised club activity i.e. surfing trip.

2. Who does what?

Committee:

- Approves and reviews this Safety Policy.
- Appoints a Safety Officer and Welfare Officer.
- Keeps our safety documents (risk assessments, procedures) up-to-date.
- Ensures we have appropriate insurance and are properly affiliated.

Safety Officer:

- Receives and records incidents and near-misses and recommends improvements.

- Supports trip leaders and coaches with planning and risk assessment.

Trip leaders and coaches:

- Plan and run activities within their qualifications, experience and the conditions.
- Brief participants clearly on the plan, risks and signals.
- Ensure suitable safety and first aid equipment is available within the group.
- Have appropriate Paddle UK membership, first aid, and safeguarding training.

Members and guests:

- Take reasonable care of their own safety and that of others.
- Follow instructions from leaders and coaches.
- Use appropriate personal equipment (buoyancy aid, helmet where needed, suitable clothing).
- Tell the leader privately about any relevant medical or other issues.

3. Types of activity and how we manage them

Local flatwater (club "home" water)

- Thames, Cherwell and Oxford Canal are usually sheltered or slow-moving water.
- Club sessions are coached/led by qualified leaders and/or coaches working within their remit.
- Typical guideline ratios for coaching/leading are up to 1:6 solo craft, adjusted down if conditions or experience require.
- Collaborative Club Activities which have been reviewed by a Keyholder and have at least three members involved, all are responsible for safety.

Beginners' kayak/canoe courses (5 week evenings / full day weekend courses - June/July)

- Run on sheltered / very sheltered water by an overall course lead with a suitable Coach Award.
- Additional instructors / assistants work under the lead coach.
- Attendance and emergency contact details are recorded.

White water kayaking – grade 2–3

- Our main white water activity is on grade 2–3 rivers and white water centres, e.g. Symonds Yat CIWW.
- Formal club trips are led by suitably qualified White Water Leaders; coaching is by White Water Kayak Coaches (moderate water) or equivalents. Competent white water paddlers may paddle without a White Water leader or coach.
- Trips are planned conservatively; portaging is always an option.

Advanced white water – grade 3(4) peer paddling

- A small number of members occasionally paddle grade 3(4).
- Unless explicitly stated as a club-led event, these are peer trips: each paddler is responsible for their own decisions and competence at that grade.
- Any peer trips mentioned on club channels must be advertised clearly as such.

Touring trips (Wye, Severn, lakes, canals)

- Mainly rivers and open water up to grade 1 with occasional 1(2) features, and moderate open water conditions.
- Led by qualified Touring / Kayak / Canoe / Sea Leaders as appropriate.
- River levels, weirs, wind and escape points are checked and briefed before launch.

Sea and estuary trips

- Normally run with an external provider whose operating procedures and insurance apply.

- If we run our own sea trips, they must be within the remit of an appropriate Sea Kayak Leader and conditions chosen conservatively.

4. Under-18s and families

We are mainly an adult club, but:

- Occasionally members' children join appropriate family-friendly trips.
- When under-18s attend club activities, they do so with their parent/guardian, who remains responsible for their supervision on and off the water. Club leaders and volunteers are not acting in loco parentis.
- The club maintains a named Welfare Officer with appropriate safeguarding training and criminal record checks. Leaders and key organisers complete Paddle UK-approved introductory safeguarding training every three years and follow our code of conduct and reporting procedures.
- Ratios and venue choice are adjusted where under-18s are present.

Any safeguarding concerns about a coach, leader, member or guest must be reported to the Welfare Officer, Chair or Vice Chair.

You can also report directly via Paddle UK:

<https://paddleuk.org.uk/report-a-safeguarding-concern/>

5. Equipment and behaviour

- A buoyancy aid is compulsory for all on-water sessions.
- Helmets are worn on white water and wherever head impact is a realistic risk.
- Clothing must be suitable for immersion and season.
- Boats and kit must be in safe condition; defects should be reported.
- Use of illegal drugs or excessive alcohol consumption must not occur before or during paddling.

6. Incidents and near-misses

- Any incident or near-miss on a club activity should be reported to the Safety Officer or Welfare Officer as soon as practicable.
- We use incident information to learn and improve our practice, not to blame individuals.

7. Annual public weekend (paddling, camping, BBQ, ceilidh)

- On-water activities during this weekend are limited to sheltered water suitable for novices and children, led by qualified leader, coach or Safety Officer present.
- All paddlers wear appropriate buoyancy aid.
- Children remain under parental supervision at all times.
- Access to the water after dark is controlled.

Reviewed by: Hannah Murray - Chair

Last Review Date: February 2026

Next Review Date: February 2027