

SAFE PADDLING POLICY

REVISION	DATE	COMMENTS AND NAME
V1	5 th November 2024	New safe paddling document produced for Eyot committee to review and discuss for release. Produced using guidance from Paddle UK and British Dragon Boat Association by J.Blake
V2.0	7 th January 2025	Added section on signing in and out for all paddlers of the site, reviewed all sections and submitted for final approval by Eyot Committee
V2.1	15 th Jan 2025	Updates to sections, gym section added, typos corrected, Hyper links to Safeguarding, risk assessment, Day membership, Fire risk assessment, GDPR and Code of conduct requested
V2.2	19 th March 2025	Added Disabled paddling, Leaders criteria, removed assessment sheet and done as separate form with link, update on yellow boards
V3	4 th June 2025	Minor edits, link updated

Release date – June 2025

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Review date – June 2026

Review completed by –

Approved by –

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2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Eyot Water Sports Centre's Safe Paddling Document provides general guidance to all those involved in paddle sport activities being undertaken on site and as part of organised off-site activities. The activities are undertaken in multiple crafts designed for group water-based activities.

It is the responsibility of everyone to identify, define and monitor their own safe practices, guidance, and procedures specific to their environment and activity.

This document should be reviewed yearly by a recognised safety officer, in line with guidance provided by awarding bodies of the time – such as Paddle UK and British Dragon Boating.

2.2 DUTY OF CARE

All Centre members and participants involved in activities organised on behalf of the Eyot are responsible for creating a safe culture and environment. Safety must be a culture which runs through all Centre activities and a normal part of everyday thinking and practice. This shall include:

- Taking responsibility for your own safety on and off the water
- Ensuring that actions taken on and off the water do not put others at risk
- Protecting others from any foreseeable risks on and off the water

All participants should be members of the Eyot. This includes temporary membership and members of the public who must complete the participant activity form ([here](#)) before using on-site facilities.

All participants shall comply with the Eyot Centre Code of Conduct ([here](#)). Coaches and Officials shall meet their additional expected behaviours ([here](#)).

All users of the Eyot must meet their 'duty of care' regardless of the type of business, be it public, private or voluntary. This means that we owe a duty to our 'neighbours' not to cause them injury by our negligent acts and omissions.

A dynamic approach to decision making is recommended which considers the environment, individual abilities and the activity being undertaken. The recording of decisions is encouraged and seen as good practice. Activities organised by Centre members should have a recorded risk assessment in place using Centre documentation.

Failure to comply with Centre policies may result in suspension of membership and will be reported to the Eyot Centre Committee.

2.3 INSTRUCTOR, COACH, LEADER/CAPTAIN OF THE BOAT (BDA)

- Instructor – Provides Introductory sessions
- Coach – Concentrates on individual skills and knowledge development
- Leader (Captain of the boat for BDA) – Leads a group of paddlers in appropriate locations and environments, ensuring safety of the individuals within the group.

2.4 ROLES OF INSTRUCTOR, COACH, LEADER

Instructor/Coach will have:

- In date first aid qualification, approved by their sections committee
- In date DBS check specific to the Eyot centre
- In date CPD event on Safeguarding
- Site induction to include Fire Safety and First Aid locations
- Knowledge of GDPR and incident reporting
- Copies of qualifications shared with the Eyot
- Yearly on water safety capsize session

Leaders will have:

- In date First Aid training
- Approval of Leadership role by a recognised coach
- In date DBS check specific to the Eyot centre
- Safeguarding training

2.5 ENVIRONMENTAL DEFINITIONS FOR CENTRE BASED SESSIONS

The centre recognises two categories of water for site-based activities, this is in line with guidance from Paddle UK and the BDA.

Very Sheltered Water

Slow moving river with easy bankside access and egress in areas that if problems could occur, or if there is a sudden change in conditions all participants can exit the water. The definition implies weather conditions that are not in themselves likely to cause problems.

At any point, the paddler should not be more than 50 metres from the bank. Enclosed swimming pools are also defined as very sheltered water environments, but a separate risk assessment should be provided.

Note: The definition implies normal conditions, and care is advised when water and air temperatures are low.

Coaching/Leader Ratio

- 1:8 solo craft
- 1:12 Crew Craft (Canoes or Bell Boat)
- 2:21 Dragon boat (Captain of boat/Coach + helm)

Sheltered Water

Ungraded sections of slow-moving river where the group could paddle upstream against the flow (not involving the shooting of, or playing on weirs). Up to Grade 1 with faster moving water with a few obstacles (Henley Bridge/Pontoons/moored craft) where paddlers can paddle upstream.

The wind strength does not exceed 15kph or a DRA reduces the risk by staying upstream of the road bridge and away from obstacles)

Note: The definition implies normal weather conditions and care is advised when water and air temperatures are low.

Coaching/Leading ratio:

- 1:8 solo craft
- 1:12 Crew Craft (Canoes or Bell Boat)

- 2:16 Dragon Boat (Helm experience should be considered and river must not be on red boards)

Considerations – Experience of Instructor/Coach/Leader, Data extracted from WWW, Experience of group members and the ever-changing environment.

3 EQUIPMENT

3.1 CENTRE CRAFT

- Bell Boats – Note weight of paddlers and a max of 8 large adults (80kg+) and a steerer should be a maximum.
- 22 Person Dragon Boat
- 12 Person Dragon Boat
- Plastic Kayaks
- Racing Kayaks
- Stand Up Paddle Boards (SUP)
- Canoes
- O1/OC1/OC2
- Outrigger Canoes V3/6/12
- KataKanu*

*Long term guest crafts provided by 3rd party

3.2 CENTRE BUOYANCY AIDS (PFDS)

PFDS should be tested yearly and replaced approx. every 10 years and should comply with ISO 12402-05 or ISO 12402-6. Testing should involve:

- Check for rips in the main body
- Feel of inner foam to ensure no foam is broken/damaged
- Check zips and buckles are in full working order
- Ensure clips/buckles are in working order
- Check webbing is not frayed or damaged
- Check Centre PFDS are in fact Centre purchased

If any faults are found the PFD should be removed from use and Centre Manager/safety Officer informed.

3.3 CENTRE OWNED HELMETS

- Centre helmets must be assessed yearly and should be replaced every 10 years.
- Visual tests should include – Signs of cracking, brittleness, damage to shell, buckles and straps
- Visual inspections should take place before use.
- Helmets must conform to CE EN 1385.
- Helmet should fit snugly without being uncomfortably tight and should sit just above your eyebrows.
- If a helmet takes significant impact, it should be replaced.
- Helmets must be stored dry to prolong its use.
- Helmets are in fact Centre Owned

3.4 CENTRE PADDLES AND SWEEPS

The Centre owns the following and should be visually inspected for damage before use and yearly

- Kayak paddles
- Canoe Paddle
- Dragon/Bell Boat boat paddles (plastic)
- Dragon boat paddles (wooden)
- Dragon Boat sweep oars
- Bell Boat sweep oars
- Punting poles

3.5 CENTRE SPRAY DECKS

The centre owns various spray decks that can only be used by participants who have been approved to use them by a qualified coach. Their use should be approved following a safe capsize demonstration where the student can remove themselves from the craft with the deck attached.

3.6 GENERAL SAFETY EQUIPMENT

The centre owns the following safety equipment

- 20-meter throwlines
- Emergency shelters
- Thermal blankets
- Radios
- Waterproof radio/phone covers
- Life buoy rings

Safety equipment is vital when working on or near water. Users should practice throwline deployment and lines should be visually tested yearly and replaced when required.

Lines must be fully dried before packing in their bags in a 'hap hazard' method.

3.7 CENTRE TRAILERS

The centre owns the following trailers and will carry out 2 yearly servicing by a qualified mechanic.

- Dragon Boat Trailer Red (2 craft takes trailer over 750mgw)
- Dragon boat trailer Alu
- Bell Boat trailer
- Kayak trailer in shed
- Kayak trailer in car park

4 RISK ASSESSMENTS

4.1 TYPES OF RISK ASSESSMENTS USED

The Eyot Centre generic risk assessment can be found [here](#). The risk assessment for paddling between Shiplake and Hambleden locks can be found [here](#). A template can be found [here](#) and **must** be used for any activities outside of Shiplake lock to Hambledon Lock.

Example 1 – A group wish to paddle Pangbourne to Hurley in Canoes. A risk assessment must be completed with at least one weeks' notice. It should include hazards linked to long distance paddling, boat transportation,

weather, locks, paddler ability, equipment and communications. This would then be sent to the committee or Safety Officer for approval. The Safety Officer should be contacted if support/advice is required with its completion.

Example 2 – a group wish to paddle to the backwaters via Wargrave and back to the clubhouse. Participants should familiarise themselves with the Centres risk assessment and then enjoy a safe and fun trip.

DRA – A Dynamic Risk Assessment should be carried out by all members of the Eyot and it is advised that this is verbalised with other participants

Example – Rivers are low and conditions are great for a paddle. On arrival at the Centre black clouds appear and thunder can be heard. A decision is made to wait, check Met Office online and then decide if the session should be cancelled.

4.2 FIRE SAFETY PROCEDURES

The Eyot centre holds a fire risk assessment which can be found [here](#). All members should be familiar with the sound of the Automatic Fire Alarm and evacuation procedures/location.

4.3 SAFEGUARDING POLICY

The Eyot Centre Safe Guarding Policy can be found [here](#).

The Eyot Centre Social Media policy can be found [here](#).

Further information can be found at

- Paddle UK Policy [here](#).
- BDA Policy [here](#).
- DofE Policy [here](#).

4.4 RECORDING AND REPORTING ACCIDENTS

All accidents and near misses must be recorded and adhered to and must be logged. Logging books are located on the wall by the Westside door entrance.

Completed paperwork must be placed in the black letter box and the Centre Manager informed. The Centre manager should keep these for 3 years in-line with GDPR policies.

Further information can be found [here](#).

4.5 RECORDING AND REPORTING NEAR MISSES

A near miss is defined by the [HSE](#) as any event that doesn't lead to harm but does have the potential to cause illness or injury. The term “dangerous occurrences” is also included in “near miss,” as specified in RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013).

It is important that all members of the Eyot understand how to record such events, and the Centre then look at precautions. Notifying membership/coaches to prevent near misses becoming an accident.

Example- A boat is tied to a lamppost, someone nearly trips over the mooring line. This could have the potential for someone to come to harm – by reporting this, members can be made aware of the securing rings along the frontage and signage added to lampposts and an email sent remind all not to secure lines across the walkways.

5 PADDLING GUIDANCE

5.1 PADDLING IN DAYLIGHT

Defined as the natural light of day from the start of a session until the end. Members should paddle in groups of 2+ and inform a responsible person of their planned route and approx. return time. When using Centre craft a minimum of a leader should be present.

Paddlers must sign in and out on the white board that is provided by the rear entrance.

5.2 PADDLING AT NIGHT

If your sessions starts or finishes during the hours of darkness, then this is classed as a nighttime paddle and the following applies.

Paddling at night is a customary practice at the Eyot, it is important to consider the increased risks. Additional considerations at night include.

- Navigation lights. These are essential and all paddlers must have an all-round white light
- You should make yourself aware of navigation rules for the River Thames at night
- Lights should be attached to the paddler and suitable to the water environment
- At night any navigation rules regarding location MUST always be followed – this means paddling on the right side of the river
- In conditions where there is an increase in risk a more stable boat can be selected to minimise the risk of capsize
- Paddling is strongly advised to take place in groups and groups should consist of a minimum of 3 and all those taking part must be 'signed off' or have a coach present
- Journeys must be well planned with get out points identified before setting off
- Mobile phones, in a suitable case, must be taken
- Groups must stay within visual contact at all times
- PFDs must be worn

5.3 PADDLING GUIDANCE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Eyot Centre run sessions for paddlers with Disabilities. This includes Regattas and weekly training sessions from the Eyot.

All helms must be qualified and complete yearly safety drills.

[Detailed information can be found here and must be read by all helms and organisers taking part](#)

5.4 LONE PADDLING

Paddling on your own significantly increases the risks when compared to paddling in a group. The collective capability of the group acts to provide a safety net if things go wrong.

If you have a pre-existing medical condition such as epilepsy, heart problems, diabetes, asthma etc or a weak swimmer, you are strongly advised to paddle as part of a group. Club craft can only be used as part of an organised session or with Centre Managers permission.

If taking part in activities with Eyot equipment you must paddle in a group of 2+ but it is recognised that some paddlers will choose to go out alone in their private craft (see section 5.5).

If you choose to paddle alone you should have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to do so. Whenever you paddle alone you are advised to undertake a dynamic risk assessment, consider the environmental factors, and take appropriate precautions.

Being prepared and thinking ahead can eliminate risk. The Eyot are not responsible for paddlers in private craft launching from the Eyot. The Centre do require the following:

- Always carry a means of calling for help on your person
- Wear a buoyancy aid
- Have reliable self-rescue skills
- Check your boat and equipment thoroughly before you set out
- Sign in and out on the whiteboard
- Tell someone where you are going and when you will be back. Call them when you get back
- Have knowledge or familiarity with the route
- Know the expected weather conditions (listened to and understood the effects of the most recent weather forecast)
- Do not paddle from the Centre when rivers are Red
- Gain approval from a recognised coach to paddle from the centre solo

5.5 PRIVATE CRAFT LAUNCHED FROM THE EYOT CENTRE

Full members of the Eyot Centre may use their own craft and do so at their own risk. The following must be applied by all those launching from the site

- PFDs must be worn
- Craft must be in good working order and licenced
- Use of interior centre facilities agreed with centre manager
- No club craft can be used
- Paddlers may not launch from the Centre on red boards unless in recognised craft suited to the conditions approved by their section.
- Logging in and out is required

Example – Racing K1s, O1s, SUPs and Dragon boats must not be used on red boards unless an agreed risk assessment is completed. These craft are not designed for fast flowing water. Plastic White Water K1s, Canoes, Outriggers may be used by competent paddlers who have been approved.

Failure to follow these rules may result in permissions to use the Centre removed.

5.6 LOGGING ON AND OFF THE WATER

Any paddlers who use the centre must book onto the water using the supplied white board that is located by the back door.

- Log in on the board and complete details required
- Clear white board on return
- If pens or board are missing let other members know your timings and let them know of your approx. return

If a member notes a name on the board past the noted time

- Check if crafts are in shed or cars are still in car park
- Call the number provided
- Call a member of your sections committee
- Clear board if details were left up in error
- Discuss with committee member if you should paddle the route noted by the missing paddler

5.7 LAND BASED TRAINING

The Eyot has a strength and conditioning Gym for members of the Centre to use. The Centre wants everyone to enjoy the fitness facilities offered with the understanding that each user has responsibility for their own health.

Members must receive an induction by a committee member (or approved delegate) to access the gym and this includes:

- Centre opening and closing procedures
- Use of Ergos
- Loan members must be 18+ years of age
- Use of changing facilities (in-line with Safeguarding policy)
- Reporting of faulty equipment
- Fire safety procedures

- Advise on lone working
- Sign posting to the Health Commitment Declaration signage

6 MEDICAL

6.1 FIRST AID EQUIPMENT AND DEFIB

The Centre has two first aid kits that reach the requirements set by the HSE for First Aid at Work. If any items are used an email must be sent to the Centre Manager so that items can be replenished. The Accident report book must also be completed.

The Centre also has a defib and this is secured to the side of the building in a locked case. The defib is registered on the National Heart Foundation site called The Circuit and is tested and recorded in accordance with their guidance - The Centre Manager is its registered guardian.

To use this in an emergency dial 999 and the call handler will give you the code and any advice required.

Testing should include

- Check battery level
- Check pads and ancillary equipment
- Check date on battery
- Record on The Circuits web site by Centre Manager

6.2 WATER BORNE DISEASES AND INFECTIONS

All rivers, however clean they might appear, will contain a level of natural contamination from things such as rotting vegetation, insects and animal activity.

In addition to this there may be other types of contamination including algal blooms (blue green algae), sewerage or chemical contamination.

Illnesses are normally caused by bacterial infection, viruses or toxins in the water.

Wiel's Disease or Leptospirosis - All water users should be aware of this potentially fatal infection. This is a bacterial infection normally believed to be spread by rat urine, though it can also be transmitted by cat, cows, fox

and rabbit urine. Transmission is usually through an open wound or abrasion but can also be caused by ingestion of contaminated water.

Symptoms are lethargy, diarrhoea, headaches, vomiting and muscle pain; sometimes referred to as flu-like symptoms, if untreated can be fatal.

Prevention

Prevention measures against water borne infection are common sense:

- Cover all cuts and abrasions with waterproof plasters
- Always wear footwear to avoid cutting the feet
- Avoid capsizing or rolling practice in suspected waters
- Where possible shower soon after the activity
- As a minimum always wash your hands after paddling and before eating or drinking
- Change into clean, dry clothes before leaving the centre

The NHS have published information on [Leptospirosis](#).

Sport England provide information on [sports hygiene](#).

If you feel ill after paddling, you should tell your doctor and coach as soon as possible and let them know where and when you have been on the water.

6.3 PRE-EXISTING MEDICAL CONDITIONS

If a paddler has a pre-existing medical condition, it does not need to be a barrier to participation. The Eyot is extremely diverse so people can choose the type of paddling that's right for them.

Any decision to participate needs to be made on an individual basis. It is important that preexisting medical conditions are known, not just for the individual's safety, but for those who may need to assist or affect a rescue.

Events, coached sessions or supervised sessions should ensure that participants have completed a medical declaration form and that the condition is known by the relevant coaches, officials or paddlers.

Session or Event organisers have a duty of care to ALL participants. It is not only the Eyot that needs to act. In an assumed risk sport, it is essential that

the participant presents and prepares themselves in a way that is safe for themselves and others.

Examples

Epilepsy - If people have epilepsy and are considering going paddling, please follow this [link](#).

Diabetes - Diabetes is a serious life-long health condition that occurs when the amount of glucose (sugar) in the blood is too high because the body can't use it properly. Diabetes is when glucose can't enter the body's cells to be used as fuel. There are two main types of diabetes:

Type 1 and Type 2:

- Type 1 is where the body attacks and destroys insulin producing cells. About 10% of people with diabetes have type 1.
- Type 2 is where the body does not produce enough insulin to process the glucose leading to its build up.

Physical activity and weight management are important in reducing the risk of type 2 diabetes. Both can be controlled by the administration of insulin and further details can be found [here](#).

Ensure that participants have completed a medical declaration form and that the condition is known by the relevant coaches, officials or paddlers

Asthma - Asthma is common, one in eight people in the UK. It affects a significant percentage of elite athletes. Managed correctly asthma need not be a barrier to participation in sport. Paddlers with asthma must declare the condition and should carry an inhaler whilst on the water.

The diagnosis of asthma is usually made by a GP, and treated with a variety of prescription inhalers – often a blue “reliever” and/or a brown “preventer”.

Coaches and paddlers should recognise the symptoms of an asthma attack. Know how to support a person who is suffering from an asthma attack. This is summarised as

- Difficulty in breathing, with trouble exhaling
- Wheezing as the casualty breathes out
- Difficulty speaking and whispering
- Distress and anxiety

- Coughing
- Features of hypoxia, such as a grey-blue tinge to the lips, earlobes and nail beds (cyanosis).

Treatment Your aims during an asthma attack are to ease the breathing and if necessary, get medical help. Help the paddler to a safe place. If they have a blue reliever inhaler, then encourage them to use this.

- You need to keep the casualty calm and reassure them
- Keep them upright
- Do not leave them alone
- Encourage the casualty to breathe slowly and deeply
- Encourage the casualty to sit in a position that they find most comfortable
- Do not lie the casualty down

A mild asthma attack should ease within a few minutes but if it doesn't encourage the casualty to use their inhaler again. Advice is issued by Asthma UK [here](#).

7 GDPR AND REPORTING OF INCIDENTS

Eyot GDPR Policy can be found [here](#).

Guidance from Gov.Uk can be found [here](#).

8 PADDLER ASSESSMENTS

8.1 BELL BOAT ASSESSMENT FOR RED/YELLOW BOARDS

All Bell Boat helms will be assessed by a qualified Paddle UK instructor and helms must be members of Paddle UK. To paddle on Yellow and Red boards the Eyot Centre produced an 'in house' assessment. This can be printed off and an emailed record should be kept by the Safety Officer.

[Please use this link if you are a qualified Bell Boat helm](#)

8.2 SMALL CRAFT ASSESSMENT

All members wishing to use small craft, outside of organised coached sessions, should ask a centre coach to assess them on the below. A record

of the assessment should be passed, via email, to the Safety Officer via email.

[Please use this link if you wish to be assessed for small craft paddling](#)

8.3 LEADERS ASSESSMENT

The EYOT is affiliated to several awarding bodies such as DofE, Paddle UK (PUK), Great Britain Outrigger (GBO) and the British Dragon Boat Association (BDA).

No matter the awarding body the Centre's priority is the safety of all those who use the Centre.

Not all paddlers want to coach or instruct and the Eyot would like to encourage all forms of paddling in a safe and controlled manner. For standardisation a Leader is also classed as a Boat captain (BDA), Steerer (Outrigging), Bell boat helm (PUK).

[Please use this link if you wish to become a centre leader/trip organiser](#)

8.4 EVENT-SPECIFIC RISK ASSESSMENTS

As noted in section 4.1, any session that takes place outside the boundaries of Shiplake lock to Hambledon lock require a specific risk assessment. This must be completed on the below form with at least 2 weeks' notice and sent to the safety officer for approval via section committee.

This will then be kept on SharePoint for future sessions and should be reviewed at least every 2 years or before use.

[Link to master copy of risk assessment](#)

9 PADDLING ON RED AND YELLOW BOARDS

The Eyot wish to allow access to our members throughout the year and work to the guidance set by the Environment Agency, BDA and Paddle UK.

Yellow boards are for powered craft only and the Eyot are aware that many of the centre craft travel at much higher speeds, and under greater control, than motor craft. Please see the Centre risk assessment for further details.

As a centre we are also aware that some craft are designed for, and some paddlers are experienced enough, to paddle in fast flowing water. The following guidance for members in club or private boats must be followed:

- No O1s, Dragon Boats or SUPs to paddle on Red boards unless suitable insurance documents and risk assessments can be produced to the Centre Committee
- EA guidance does not take weather and water temperatures into account and paddlers must manage, and justify their decisions based on experience and suitable equipment
- No racing kayaks to paddle on Red boards
- Bell boats can paddle on red boards with an approved helm (see section 8.1)
- Paddlers in Plastic White Water Kayaks, Canoes and Outrigger canoes may paddle in line with the contents of this document but should refer to websites for river data and complete a DRA.
- Members must receive written confirmation from a club coach that they reach an agreed standard to paddle/steer suitable craft on yellow boards.
- A DRA must always be completed
- The Centre risk assessment does not include access/use of weirs