

Putney Bridge Canoe Club - Risk Assessment 2023 (Revision #3, 10 July 2025)

The following generic assessments are for the Club's Thames and Pool sessions. Each whitewater and sea/kayaking away trip will be the subject of a dedicated risk assessment to be undertaken by the relevant Trip Leader. The generic assessments are supplemented with dynamic risk assessments carried out by each Trip Leader.

Though done formally by Trip Leaders, all individuals who are joining a trip should ask themselves if the trip is suitable for them i.e. is their personal skill level, fitness and experience appropriate for the proposed trip and forecast weather conditions?

The purpose of risk assessment is not to eliminate all risk but to think about the hazards of a particular activity and decide what is acceptable. The Health & Safety Executive says that a (workplace) risk assessment is 'nothing more than a careful examination of what could cause harm to people so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm...'

1. Identify potential hazards.
2. Decide who might be harmed, and how.
3. Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done.
4. Remember the findings.
5. Revise the assessment if circumstances change.

Probability
The probability of risks occurring (Prob.) is assessed as high (H), medium (M) or low (L).
A high probability indicates that the risk occurs often on club activities. Medium probabilities relate to events that have occurred on club activities or may do so at some time, whilst low probability risks have never occurred (and are unlikely to do so).

Severity
The severity of each risk (Sev.) is assessed as high (H), medium (M) or low (L).
High severity indicates risk of severe injury or death. Medium severity is one that might require a visit to A&E or, less urgently, to a GP.
Low severity relates to events that can be dealt with on-site and do not require intervention by a medical professional.

It is important that all club members are familiar with the risk assessments and this document is therefore available on the club's website.

This document will be reviewed and updated as follows:

- every 12 months;
- after an incident/near miss;
- following identification of a significant hazard not mentioned and/or previously considered;
- after any material revision of the PLA's Tideway Code.

The nominated Safety Officer and Pool Officer will be responsible for the reviews and updates, which shall then be endorsed by the Trustees.

River Thames Local Waters (normally between Barn Elms and Barnes Bridge and Barn Elms and Battersea Bridge, depending on tide) (generic) NB all attendees should have appropriate knowledge of the club's Code of Conduct and Thames paddling guidelines and of the PLA's Tideway Code									
What are the hazards?	Risk	Who might be harmed?	What are you doing to control the risks?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done	Probability	Severity
Moving crafts and other equipment from the storage containers located at Barn Elms to water (down the Barn Elms Boatshouse slipway and to the adjacent foreshore, depending on tide) and returning them to the storage container.	Injury from poor manual handling.	Attendees selecting the craft they intend to use and moving it from storage container to launch location and back. Other attendees in case of dropping of a heavy object (eg. kayak, paddle, etc).	Training club members in correct manual handling techniques - two people to carry a maximum of two sea kayaks at any one time. Ensuring that kayaks are safely stored and secured on the racks inside the storage container.	Overseeing that manual handling operations are executed correctly and safely. Suggest viewing British Canoeing Awarding Body e-learning https://britishcanoeingawarding.org.uk/product/manual-handling/	Trip Leaders	Supervision is an ongoing requirement whenever a Thames session takes place.	NA	L	M
Selection of unsuitable equipment.	Incident/injury from choice of unsuitable equipment.	All attendees, especially novices and inexperienced paddlers	Trip Leader with the support of experienced paddlers provide guidance as to equipment selection and its correct use and condition, especially in the case of novices and inexperienced paddlers to make sure that it is suitable to the skills/body type of the individual paddler. All attendees to wear BA and spraydeck (as and/or required, depending on craft used) on any Thames session.	Buddy arrangement, particularly for novices/inexperienced paddlers.	Trip Leaders	Supervision is an ongoing requirement whenever a Thames session takes place.	NA	L	M
Shared use of area in proximity of Barn Elms Boatshouse, South Bank Sailing Club and crossing Thames Path	Injury from collision with Barn Elms Boatshouse users (rowers), South Bank Sailing Club users (sailors) and Thames Path users.	Attendees whilst preparing and moving boats in proximity of Barn Elms Boatshouse, South Bank Sailing Club and whilst crossing Thames Path to	Liaise with Barn Elms Boatshouse users and South Bank Sailing Club users when operating simultaneously. Make sure that Thames Path is clear before crossing whilst carrying boats.	NA	NA	NA	NA	L	M
Barn Elms Boatshouse slipway	Trips and slips occasioning injury	Attendees descending and ascending slipway whilst carrying boats to the water.	Forewarn attendees if the slipway is slippery, wet and/or muddy and advise them to take extra care. Descend and ascend slipway carefully making use of the ladders. Wear appropriate footwear at all times.	Choose the least steep descent/ascent pathway especially when the slipway is wet and muddy. Consider carrying only one boat at a time, depending on slipway conditions.	Trip Leaders and attendees	Ongoing requirement whenever a Thames paddle session takes place.	NA	L	M
Launch site at Barn Elms Boatshouse slipway	Injury from collision with Barn Elms Boatshouse users (rowers) and South Bank Sailing Club users (sailors) at launch site in proximity of the Barn Elms Boatshouse slipway	Attendees at launch site in proximity of Barn Elms Boatshouse slipway	Forewarn attendees that the slipway/beach might be busy with other river users (rowers, sailors) and that extra care needs to be taken when launching/returning to avoid collisions with other crafts launching/returning (rowing boats, sailing boats and coach launches) and/or passing by in proximity of the slipway	Paddlers who have launched and are waiting for the rest of the group to launch should make sure that they are not in the path of other river users in the area around the slipway and alert anyone who might be causing an obstruction.	Trip Leaders and attendees	Ongoing requirement whenever a Thames paddle session takes place.	NA	M	M
Risks from taking part in paddling activity	Incidents/Injuries arising from paddling activity	Attendees paddling on the river	Prior to moving boats to the launch site, the Trip Leader will give a pre-paddle briefing, describing environmental conditions and paddling protocol, including planned paddling route, highlighting hazards, what should be done to mitigate risk, the safety/rescue protocol in case of an incident. The Trip Leader will also ask participants to disclose any pre-existing injuries/conditions that might affect their well-being/safety during the paddle.	Paddlers will follow Trip Leaders' instructions at all times and alert fellow paddlers when they notice that they might be putting themselves in harm's way.	Trip Leaders and attendees	Ongoing requirement whenever a Thames paddle session takes place.	NA	M	M
Capsize and pinning on the Thames	Drowning	Attendees paddling on the river	Prior to access to Thames sessions: Mandatory pool capsize and rescue drill training for beginners. Check swimming ability. Pool assessment check for experienced newcomers to the club - includes deep-water rescue training and drills. Thames sessions: Adequate Leader cover on the river. Knowledge and awareness of surroundings and river regulations (Tideway Code, Colliage, Ebb Tide Flag Warning system, etc.). Effective group control and leadership, with 1:6 or 1:8 ratio. Experienced paddlers may be asked to act as 'tail-end Charlie' for the group. Trip Leaders to remind attendees of the paddling protocol, including potential dangers during the pre-paddle group briefing.	Trip Leaders will make the ultimate decision on whether a session goes ahead in unfavourable environmental conditions and regarding which paddlers are permitted to participate in a particular paddle.	Trip Leaders	Ongoing requirement whenever a Thames paddle session takes place.	NA	M	M
Obstructions on the Thames	Capsize, foot entrapment/entanglement and pinning	Attendees paddling on the river	Trip Leaders to remind attendees of the paddling protocol, including potential dangers (overhanging trees, buoys, moored boats, pontoons, piers, bridges, etc., in particular the notorious 'black spots' such as Dove Pier, Chiswick Pier) during pre-paddle group briefing. Ensure attendees paddle 5m or more away from these hazardous sites. See Attachment 1 below for list of dangerous spots in the Club's usual paddling stretches along the Thames.	Trip Leaders and experienced paddlers must act as 'traffic islands' to warn and guide other paddlers away from any potential danger.	Trip Leaders and experienced paddlers	Ongoing requirement whenever a Thames paddle session takes place.	NA	M	M
Capsize on the Thames	Swim resulting in hypothermia	Attendees paddling on the river	Wear appropriate clothing, footwear and equipment for the conditions in which the session is taking place. Trip Leader to ensure all attendees are wearing suitable apparel.	Spare clothes and cag carried, when necessary.	All attendees	Ongoing requirement whenever a Thames paddle session takes place.	NA	L	M
Inexperienced paddlers	Capsize, injury	Attendees paddling on the river	Inexperienced paddlers, newcomers and race boat users are only allowed on the river with an accessible shore. Inexperienced paddlers and newcomers should 'buddy up' with an experienced paddler. Sessions close to high water, spring tides, high fluted flow (and therefore more difficult launching conditions and strong currents) and other unfavourable environmental conditions (strong, gusty winds, etc.) only suitable for experienced paddlers. Trip Leaders will carry a mini First Aid kit, including scissors and/or a knife, and fully charged mobile phone on all trips and will ensure that ICE details are obtained for all attendees.	Trip Leaders will make the ultimate decision on whether a paddle goes ahead in unfavourable environmental conditions and regarding which paddlers are permitted to participate in a particular paddle.	Trip Leaders	Ongoing requirement whenever a Thames paddle takes place.	NA	L	M
Cold and poor weather	Exposure leading to hypothermia, wind chill, slower progress than expected	Attendees paddling on the river	A review of weather forecast and tide conditions will have been carried out by the Trip Leader prior to the session and communicated to the attendees in the pre-paddle group briefing shortly before launching. Trips in conditions above Beaufort 4 need to be reviewed and possibly cancelled. Trip Leaders are required to have knowledge and awareness of Tideway Code, Colliage and River Thames warning system (e.g. Ebb Tide Flag Warning system, Stream Warnings on boards etc). The Club's Thames Guidelines are available on the Club's website and members are strongly encouraged to familiarise themselves with said guidelines and the Tideway Code. Ensure suitable clothing equipment is worn. Change or cancel activities if weather conditions pose a significant threat to the safety of the group. Trip pace to be set to accommodate the weakest member of the group.	Trip Leaders will make the ultimate decision on whether a session goes ahead in unfavourable environmental conditions.	Trip Leaders	Ongoing requirement whenever a Thames paddle takes place.	NA	M	M

Other river users: rowers, coaches launches, sailing and powered boats	Injury from collision, capsize	Attendees paddling on the river	The Trip Leader will highlight the risks in the pre-trip group briefing. A 1:6 or 1:8 ratio of leaders to group will ensure that appropriate warnings can be communicated on the water should a dangerous situation arise. Knowledge and awareness of surroundings will help the Trip Leader anticipate and prevent occurrence of dangerous situations. Watch for the wash from large crafts (Uber ferries, barges and their towpush-boats, pleasure craft, etc.) and promptly shout warning to the group, advising them to turn their kayaks towards the incoming waves. Be alert to wash reflected off river walls. Be alert to wash in shallow water. Understanding of sound signals from powered craft is required. Tight group control and leadership. Respect Tideway Code and ColRegs rules, as appropriate. Be aware of additional activities on the Thames, such as reported by Notices to Mariners that may adversely impact the riverine environment. When paddling in darkness each attendee must display a clearly visible (from at least 600m, 180° constant (not flashing) white lights, on chest and back of the paddler - see the relevant provisions of the Tideway Code.	All attendees to stay alert to the presence, proximity and anticipated movement of other river users. Warnings to be communicated to the rest of the group, especially when a vessel approaches from behind. Bear in mind that boats with electric /hybrid engines are unlikely to be heard until they are in close proximity (Uber ferry fleet includes several hybrid boats and rowing clubs have some electric-powered coach launches).	All attendees	Ongoing requirement whenever a Thames paddle takes place.	NA	L	M
Injury	Cut injuries	Attendees paddling on the river	BS6099-1 compliant First Aid Kit is kept in the container. Trip Leaders will take a mini first aid kit on the water for all paddles and will act as First Aiders, unless they have delegated that role to another competent/qualified attendee. Regular first aid training is given to Trip Leaders and experienced club members. For serious injuries Trip Leaders will call 999. Paddlers should should cover any existing cuts, sores or scratches with waterproof plasters prior to getting on the water.	NA	NA	Ongoing requirement whenever a Thames paddle takes place.	NA	L	L
Disease	Wet's Disease (Leptospirosis)	Attendees paddling on the river	Although the risk of contracting Wet's disease (Leptospirosis) from recreational water sports is small, the serious nature of the disease means that all water sports participants should be aware of the dangers and should take precautions to reduce the risk of infection. Wet's disease is not thought to survive in salt water on the tidal Thames, and the Club has not had one incident in 20 years. (N.B. Cases have been reported up-river beyond Windsor, near weirs and particularly after paddling on floodwater). If an attendee develops persistent flu-like symptoms, they should contact and inform their GP that Wet's disease might have been contracted. Should symptoms be severe, request an urgent GP appointment or call 111 (see https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/leptospirosis/ for further details) Cover any existing cuts, sores or scratches with waterproof plasters prior to getting on the water. Always wash hands after paddling and especially before eating. Thoroughly clean cuts and abrasions suffered during a session. Ensure Club equipment (spraydecks, BA's, jingles, towlines etc.) is rinsed thoroughly in soapy water after use. Attendees are advised to thoroughly rinse their personal kit.	NA	NA	Ongoing requirement whenever a Thames paddle takes place.	NA	L	H
Disease	Other waterborne diseases	Attendees paddling on the river	Releases of storm water into the Thames following heavy rainfalls may result in increased presence of e-coli bacteria, which can cause severe gastrointestinal illness. Trip Leaders to monitor Event Discharge Monitor (EDM) information (https://www.thameswater.co.uk/edm-map/) information, and alert attendees in the pre-trip group briefing. The Club does not cancel sessions if there are storm water releases, but attendees are encouraged to take extra caution. Cover any existing cuts, sores or scratches with waterproof plasters prior to getting on the water. Always wash hands after paddling and especially before eating. Thoroughly clean cuts and abrasions suffered during a session. Ensure Club equipment (spraydecks, BA's, jingles, towlines etc.) is rinsed thoroughly in soapy water after use. Attendees are advised to thoroughly rinse their personal kit.	NA	NA	Ongoing requirement whenever a Thames paddle takes place.	NA	L	M
Paddlers under 18 years of age	All of the above	Attendees paddling on the river	The PBC's Constitution states that junior member may participate in activities provided that their parent, carer or guardian is participating in the same event and has agreed to be directly and solely responsible for the junior member's safety and wellbeing. However all of the risk control measures listed above will apply to both junior participant and parent/carer/guardian.	NA	NA	Ongoing requirement whenever a Thames paddle takes place.	NA	L	H

Swimming Pool (Phoenix Fitness Centre and Janet Adegoko Swimming Pool) (generic)									
What are the hazards?	Risk	Who might be harmed?	What are you doing to control the risk?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by	Done	Probability	Severity
Slippery floor	Trips and slips	Attendees of swimming pool sessions	No running. Obey the pool's rules.	NA	NA	NA	NA	L	M
Water	Drowning	Attendees of swimming pool sessions	Check that participants can swim prior to attending and ask each newcomer upon arrival. Teach capsize drill in first session, with wet exit first without spraydecks and then with spraydeck. Lifeguard on duty at all sessions. Experienced paddlers should be observant and ready to assist when needed.	NA	NA	NA	NA	L	H
Equipment	Injury whilst moving boats from storage area to side of swimming pool	Attendees of swimming pool sessions	Attendees should be extremely cautious when moving the boats from the outside storage racks to the swimming pool side and back, in order to avoid injuries to themselves and to others. Training club members in correct manual handling techniques.	NA	NA	NA	NA	L	H
Equipment	Entrapment in boat after capsize	Attendees of swimming pool sessions	Attendees should only use boats that are easy to exit. Make sure attendees fit in their kayak easily. Beginners should first use kayaks without spraydecks, or with a loose fitting spraydeck before moving to neoprene spraydecks. Make sure they are aware of how the spraydeck grab loop should be pulled in a wet exit. Show alternative ways of removing a spraydeck. No footwear with shoelaces.	NA	NA	NA	NA	M	L
Injury	Shoulder dislocation	Attendees of swimming pool sessions	Teach avoid bracing techniques with elbows bent in front of body.	NA	NA	NA	NA	L	M
Injury	Defective equipment	Attendees of swimming pool sessions	Check condition of all kit whilst using it. Attendees. Decommission kayaks that have any sharp edges, protruding nuts, bolts, or abrasive surfaces (inside or outside), until defects are fixed. Mark equipment "unservicable", as necessary. Regularly check and maintain kit.	Conduct an annual review of all equipment and condition	Equipment Officer	By the end of each year	NA	M	L
Overcrowding	Limited space for practice	Attendees of swimming pool sessions	Control number of attendees by use of a booking system (only pre-booked participants are allowed to attend pool sessions). Ensure a good ratio of coaches/experienced paddlers to beginners. Identify 1:4. Beware of the other paddlers whilst practicing rolling, support strokes, rescues etc. and make sure that there is sufficient space around to avoid accidentally hitting other participants with a paddles, boats, etc.	NA	NA	NA	NA	M	L

Attachment: Potential hazard points on the Thames

Club base		NB: Surrey side = South bank; Middlesex side = North bank
Taking kayaks off the racks and out of storage container	Barn Elms, behind the Barn Elms Boathouse	Surrey side
Stored rowing boats at head height	Barn Elms, behind the Barn Elms Boathouse	Surrey side
Crossing Thames Path whilst carrying boats	Barn Elms, in front of the Barn Elms Boathouse	Surrey side
Wet and muddy slipway	Barn Elms, slipway to down to Thames bank in front of Barn Elms Boathouse	Surrey side
Upriver - more accessible, but more river users (normal river sessions up to Barnes Bridge, occasionally up to Key Stone Bridge)		
Barn Elms slipway - fast ebb current at spring mid-tide	Barn Elms, on the river at Barn Elms Boathouse slipway	Surrey side
Harrods furniture depository - eddies at west end	on the river, if front of Harrods furniture depository, Castelnau	Surrey side
Hammersmith Bridge - fast currents underneath bridge; no stopping for 75m either side of bridge; rowing boats working the stacks under arch #2 at low tide	on the river, in the vicinity of Hammersmith Bridge, Castelnau	Surrey side
Dove Pier - rowing black spot, pontoons, moored barges, fast current on flood tide	on the river, upriver of Hammersmith Bridge, Hammersmith	Middlesex side
Chiswick Sloop crossing - need to cross from Surrey side to Middlesex side when working the stacks; beware of rowers	on the river, Chiswick Reach	Surrey and Middlesex sides
Barnes Railway bridge - beware of rowers	on the river, Barnes	Middlesex side

Chiswick Bridge crossing - need to cross from Middlesex side to Surrey side when working the slack; beware of rowers	on the river, Chiswick Bridge crossing	Surrey and Middlesex sides
Kew Bridges - swirling currents around road and rail bridges; beware of rowers	on the river, Kew Railway Bridge and Kew Stone Bridge	Surrey and Middlesex sides
Downriver - more industrial and commercial vessels and sea-like water conditions (normal river sessions down to Battersea Bridge, occasionally down to Chelsea Bridge or further)		
Rowing clubs along Putney Embankment launching, rubbish scum, mooring buoys and boats	on the river, Putney	Surrey side
Putney Pier - Uber ferries arriving and departing (be aware of timetable); occasional arrival and departure of pleasure boats	on the river, Putney Pier	Surrey side
Putney Pier - Tideway Tunnel Project's new Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO), and associated warning lights, at their site at Putney Foreshore Embankment operational as of 6/3/2020; possible discharges of variable amount and velocity. Old CSO outfalls beneath Putney Bridge will cease operation	on the river, just below Putney Pier	Surrey side
Putney Bridge - wash from Uber ferries	on the river, Putney Bridge	Surrey side
Fulham Railway Bridge - eddies around bridge piers	on the river, Putney Bridge	Surrey side
Hurlingham Harbour pontoon - ferry wash on shingle banks - capsizes risk	on the river, Hurlingham Pier	Middlesex side
Wandsworth Riverside Quarter Uber Ferry pier - ferry wash and collision danger	on the river, Wandsworth Riverside Quarter Pier	Surrey side
Wandsworth Bridge - wind tunnel effect through arches with strong westerly winds - all small boats must inform London VTS when they are afloat in the dark below Wandsworth Bridge	on the river, under Wandsworth Bridge	Surrey and Middlesex sides
Plantation Wharf Uber Ferry pier - ferry wash and collision danger	on the river, Plantation Wharf Pier	Surrey side
London Helipoint - turbulence on water due to helicopter down-draft on take-off and landing - exclusion zone prohibits stopping within 100m of helipoint	on the river, around London Helipoint	Surrey side
Stationary and towed rubbish barges - wash and collision danger	on the river, including in the proximity of the Western Riverside Refuse and Recycling Centre	Surrey side
Chelsea pontoon and Battersea Railway Bridge - current and eddies causing entrapment from pontoons and wash	on the river, in the proximity of Chelsea pontoon Harbour Pier	Middlesex side
Chelsea Harbour Uber Ferry Pier - wash and collision danger	on the river, Chelsea Harbour Pier	Middlesex side
Cadogan Uber ferries Pier - wash and collision danger	on the river, Cadogan Pier (Albert Bridge)	Middlesex side
Chelsea Bridge - all small boats must inform London VTS before navigating between Chelsea Bridge and Cherry Garden Pier (Central London)	on the river, beyond Chelsea Bridge	Surrey side
Battersea Power Station Uber ferry pier - wash and collision danger (possible use of Middlesex side of Thames with ebb tide from Cremorne Wharf and Vauxhall Bridge)	on the river, Battersea Power Station Pier	Surrey side
St George's Wharf Uber ferries Pier - wash and collision danger (possible use of Middlesex side of Thames with ebb tide from Cremorne Wharf and Vauxhall Bridge)	on the river, St George's Wharf Pier	Surrey side
W6 at Vauxhall Bridge has an exclusion zone	on the river, in front of W6 building	Surrey side
Palace of Westminster has an exclusion zone	on the river, in front of Houses of Parliament	Middlesex side
Temporary constructions - 50m off limit sites e.g. Tideway Tunnel sites	on the river, various locations, as published on PLA's Notices to Mariners	Surrey and Middlesex sides