

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR MALLAIG & DISTRICT CANOE CLUB

This Risk Assessment is provided to give leaders and participants guidance as to the standards and precautions to be expected when taking part in Club activities. It is designed to ensure that everyone can have fun on the water in the knowledge that they are protected from harm to a reasonable degree. It does not guarantee safety but it gives sensible advice to minimise risk. Dynamic risk assessments should be carried out throughout the activity and appropriate action taken. Other pertinent information can be found on the Club Calendar page mallaigcanoecub.co.uk/clubcalendar.html

General risk control measures:

- Organisers must equip themselves with appropriate knowledge of the particular venue. They should also have experience of and be comfortable on more challenging grades of water and conditions than they find on the day.
- Organisers should be able to rescue others and control the group. They should be prepared for emergency situations and know the procedure to be followed for different types of incident.
- All activities should be preceded by a group briefing covering hazards, safety, group control, signals, emergency action, any participant illness, water confidence and roles, as appropriate.
- Organisers should ensure that they and the participants are fit to undertake the activity.
- Participants exhibiting signs of exhaustion or illness must not be allowed to participate.

The following are Club rules:

- No club (water-based) activity shall take place with less than three participants.
- A properly fitted buoyancy aid must be worn at all times on the water.
- Where an individual is unsure of their ability to run a trip they must seek advice from the Committee before submitting to the Club calendar.
- The Club will always support the decision to cancel, abort, or change the day, location of, an activity for safety reasons.

Activity - Sea kayaking		KEY TO RISK LEVELS – 5 very likely to 1 very unlikely.	
Hazards to health & safety	Risks posed	Risk level	Mitigating actions
Remote location	Delay in emergency services arriving. Lack of phone/radio reception.	5	Carry emergency communications – VHF, mobile phone, PLB, SPOT, EPIRB, flares, spare clothing/shelter.
Deteriorating weather	Participants become cold, unable to communicate/respond effectively. Possibility of hypothermia. Difficulty continuing. Low morale.	4	Keep an eye on weather forecast, ensure group clothing suitable, abandon trip if necessary. Modify/abandon trip if necessary. Inform shore contact/coastguard if trip altered. Check on and support weaker paddlers. Identify escape routes.
Wind – gusting/strong / adverse direction	Drifting offshore, capsize, exhaustion. Difficulty continuing planned route. Low morale.	4	Know/check the capabilities of group members in advance. Carry emergency communications – VHF, mobile phone, flares, spare clothing/shelter. Carry spare paddles, towline and pump. Identify escape routes. Seek shelter, keep group close together and encourage weaker paddlers. Tow if required.
Large waves, swell	Capsize, drowning, injury, loss or damage of equipment. Group getting split up. Difficulty continuing. Fear. Low morale.	4	Check forecast and sea state before setting off. Garner local knowledge of locations. Keep group close together. Raft up to rest if required/possible. Support weaker paddlers. Carry spare paddles. Carry emergency communications – VHF, mobile phone, PLB, SPOT, EPIRB, flares. Modify/abandon trip if necessary. Inform shore contact/coastguard if trip altered.
Exposure on hot day	Sun/wind burn, dehydration	3	Apply cream, wear hat, drink fluid. Ensure drinking water is carried.
Immersion in cold water	Drowning, hypothermia, shock, panicking swimmer.	3	Ensure group are familiar with capsize and rescue procedures. Ensure suitable clothing. Carry survival bag, group shelter, hot drink, food.
Wet clothing	Hypothermia, impairing ability to paddle.	2	Ensure change of clothing carried. Advise suitable clothing . Carry survival bag, group shelter, hot drink.

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Capsize	Difficulty exiting kayak, panic, hypothermia, drowning, losing boat and/or paddle	3	Ensure group are familiar with capsize and rescue procedures as well as righting and emptying kayak. Carry a pump spare paddles, pump and towline.
Multiple capsize	Prolonged period of time in water, hypothermia, drowning, group drifting apart, loss of boats, paddles etc.	2	Ensure group are familiar with capsize exercise and rescue techniques. Carry spare paddles, pump and towline. Keep group together/raft up when back in boats. Head for shore if appropriate. Carry emergency communications – VHF, mobile phone, PLB, SPOT, EPIRB, flares. Carry spare paddles.
Tides	Capsize, drifting off course. Inability to make headway.	2	Carry spare paddles and towline. Modify plan if necessary. Support weaker paddlers – tow if necessary/possible. Ensure group are familiar with capsize and rescue procedures.
Rocks	Capsize, injury, damage to equipment.	3	Alert group to rocky areas. Don't paddle alone. Carry First Aid kit and repair kit. Ensure group are familiar with capsize exercise and rescue techniques.
Surf or rocky beach landings/launchings	Capsize, injury. Damage to boats/paddles.	4	Try to plan safe landing spots. Be aware of tides. Carry spare paddles, pump, First Aid kit, repair kit, portage straps. Exit/enter water one at a time if necessary. Assist others.
Lifting heavy equipment	Damage to back/body	2	Demonstrate and practise correct lifting technique. Lift/carry with 2+ people. Use portage straps or trolley with loaded boats.
Incorrect paddling techniques	Damage to body	1	Demonstrate and practise good stroke technique in sheltered conditions.
Tired paddler	Capsize, falling asleep, panic, drowning	3	Be aware of anyone falling back. Have someone experienced stay with them. Tow if required. Give encouragement. Gauge state by talking to them. Bring group together. Take breaks, food and drink.
Injury/ medical incident	Injury or illness could mean prolonged time on water or on land, possible worsening of conditions. Incapacity to paddle. Group safety may be jeopardised.	2	Check if any known medical problems before setting out and carry appropriate medication if required. Carry first aid kit and emergency communications – VHF, mobile phone, flares, spare clothing/shelter. Make sure all participants are aware and make a plan. Contact emergency services if necessary/possible.
Badly fitting boat or equipment	Damage to body, difficulty exiting kayak, poor self esteem, discomfort, drowning, panic, difficulty swimming.	2	Check fitting of boat, foot rests, thigh grips, hatch covers, spray deck, buoyancy aid before setting out. Make sure handle of spray deck is outside boat. Keep regular checks on club equipment
Other water users	Collision, capsize, separation of group, unexpected waves or turbulence.	2	Watch out for large vessels. Move out of way and gather group together if possible.
COVID RISKS			
Off the water	Catching/spreading Covid-19.	3	Pre- trip briefings to be given online to outline ground rules and expectations. Use hand gel. Wash hands regularly. Clean Club kit using appropriate cleaning products or leave untouched for 72hrs. Don't share equipment. Read and abide by the Club Covid protocol and current Covid guidelines.
On the water	Catching/spreading Covid-19.	2	Don't share equipment or pass things to each other. If helping to carry boats always carry same end of boat. Abide by the Club Covid protocol and current Covid guidelines. Wear buff or similar to cover nose and mouth if rafting up is necessary.