

Risk assessment: Lagan Warrior Paddlers						
Assessors name: Mary McGahon		Risk assessment drawn up: 2/5/25		Renewal date: 2/5/26		
Description of assessment: Risk assessment for canoe polo and related activities						
Location details: Overarching document						
Reviewed by _____ (external coach) Date of site specific assessment: _____ Reviewed and adopted by LWP committee, Patrick Walsh (Leader LWP), Thomas McGahon (Instructor LWP), Toby McCrea & Bertie McCrea (Junior Instructors LWP) Date of adoption:						
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already 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
All activities	All participants, injury or harm through lack of awareness of club policies	1. Participants must comply with club policies (including health and safety policy) and therefore with relevant Paddle NI policies. Policies available via club website . 2. Coach/leader/instructor led safety briefing at start of the session emphasising safety rules and emergency procedures, capsizing or entrapment, specifying roles and communication procedures	Annual review of risk assessment.	Coaches, Leaders, Instructors and Club Officials Health and Safety officer	Each session 2/5/26	2/5/25
Safeguarding	All participants, general welfare due to non compliance with club Safeguarding policy	1. All members and people involved in the club have agreed to follow our club policies and procedures, including safeguarding and code of conduct . 2. Coaches, leaders, instructors and safeguarding officers are Access NI checked and have attended the appropriate safeguarding course.	Continuous monitoring. Annual review of risk assessment.	Coaches, Leaders, Instructors and Club Officials. Safe-guarding officer & volunteers. Health and Safety officer	Each session 2/5/26	2/5/25

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Water conditions (river flowing too fast)	Paddlers (in particular less experienced paddlers) from fast flowing river conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Health & safety officer consults Hydromet cloud water flow station on the Lagan to ascertain if water levels are within normal ranges on the day of paddling 2. Coaches, Leaders, Instructors can also assess the water levels before paddlers enter the water taking into consideration the level of the paddlers based on the number of steps (5 in total) visible above the water level adjacent to the boat house can be used as a measure of flow. When the water height is raised (leaving only 3 steps remaining above the water level) the flow is likely to be too fast for safe paddling with inexperienced paddlers. More experienced paddlers (under the supervision of a coach or leader only) can paddle until the river rises to leave only 1 step visible provided other weather conditions / speed of flow does not preclude safe paddling (dynamic assessment of risk by the coach or leader only). 3. If flow is sufficiently fast (or currents sufficiently strong) to prevent paddlers from easily maintaining position in the river whilst paddling against the flow/current then paddling is not deemed safe. 	<p>Continuous monitoring</p> <p>Annual review of risk assessment.</p>	<p>Coaches, Leaders, Instructors and on land support.</p> <p>Health and Safety officer</p>	<p>Each session</p> <p>2/5/26</p>	2/5/25

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Changing weather conditions	All paddlers from changing weather conditions particularly lightening or high winds	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Coaches, leaders or instructors assesses the weather conditions. Weather forecasts are consulted before setting out. Wind speeds in excess of Beaufort scale 3 (gentle breeze where leaves and twigs are in constant motion or light flags are extended) are deemed unsafe for sheltered/very sheltered water. If conditions are not deemed safe paddlers do not enter the water. Appropriate plans are in place for emergencies with on land support in the event of an unexpected change in weather. If lightening is observed when on the water or weather conditions become unsafe, the paddlers will exit the water by the nearest safe egress point. Coach, leaders and instructors each carry a sufficiently charged mobile phone (in a waterproof case) to summon help if required. 	<p>Conditions are monitored throughout the paddle to rapidly identify any changes.</p> <p>Annual review of risk assessment.</p>	<p>Coaches, Leaders, Instructors.</p> <p>Health and Safety officer</p>	<p>Each session</p> <p>2/5/26</p>	2/5/25

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Paddling general (injury or misadventure)	All paddlers from lack of awareness of risks inherent to paddling resulting in injury to self and others, or via straying outside the safe paddling zone (beyond sheltered water)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Paddlesports is an ‘assumed risk sport’. Risks are communicated in writing during the membership process and when signing up to ‘taster’ sessions using the present document. Confirmation of understanding of the risks is obtained before undertaking any activities (annually during membership renewal, or prior to undertaking a taster course). The coach, leader or instructor checks PPE (buoyancy aids etc) and all paddlers are told who their designated lead is for the duration of the paddle. Before anyone enters the water the coach/leader/instructor provides a safety briefing outlining the safe areas to paddle, the hazards that paddlers may encounter, the ingress and egress points and procedures to follow in case of an emergency. If an incident occurs the coach, leader (or most senior instructor in the case of the coach/leader being incapacitated) decides the appropriate actions and alerts appropriate authorities/on land support. 	<p>Review of controls carried out</p> <p>Annual review of risk assessment.</p> <p>If an incident occurs the coach etc contacts on land support or emergency services for help as appropriate.</p>	<p>Coaches, Leaders, Instructors</p> <p>Health and safety officer</p> <p>Coaches, Leaders, Instructors</p>	<p>In the event of an incident.</p> <p>2/5/26</p> <p>In the event of an incident.</p>	2/5/25

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Paddling general (injury or misadventure) continued		<p>6. Coaches, leaders & instructors have provided their phone numbers to on land support and vice versa. Depending on the nature of the incident mobile phones are available to summon appropriate help.</p> <p>7. All coaches, leaders or instructors are qualified 1st aiders. 1st aid equipment carried by all Coaches, leaders & instructors and available at pool/waterside.</p> <p>8. Any injuries, concerns and medical conditions affecting kayaking are reported to the coach, leader or instructor and/or Health and safety officer prior to the session or immediately upon occurrence.</p> <p>9. Health & Safety policy documents includes diagrams and maps of water areas. Boundaries visually reinforced during safety briefing.</p> <p>10. Paddlers stay together at all times unless instructed otherwise by a coach, leader or instructor.</p> <p>11. Coaches, leaders, instructors and on land support remain vigilant to ensure no paddlers stray outside the sheltered water region.</p>	<p>All injuries requiring 1st aid are reported to PaddleUK as a near miss.</p> <p>Any injuries requiring a hospital visit are reported through RIDDOR</p> <p>Any paddlers deliberately and/or repeatedly straying outside designated paddling areas are dealt with as per the club code of conduct.</p>	<p>Health and Safety officer or coach etc</p> <p>Health and Safety officer or coach etc</p> <p>Club chair when alerted by coach, leader or instructor</p>	<p>In the event of an incident.</p> <p>After all near misses or hospitalisation</p>	

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Paddling general (injury or misadventure) continued		12. Prior to any paddle beyond line of sight of on-land support (ie out of very sheltered water), a plan of where the coach or leader is intending to paddle to and a time by which they will be due to make contact or return to land will be communicated to on-land support.	If paddlers are more than 30 mins late arriving to any designated point in the paddle or returning to land. On land support will contact the coach etc via mobile phone. If contact is not successfully made with 5mins, on-land support will contact emergency services.	Coaches, Leaders, Instructors Volunteers (on land support)		
Cold and hypothermia	All paddlers due to exposure to cold or wet conditions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paddlers checked for clothing appropriate to the conditions during safety briefing to prevent cold-water shock during colder weather conditions. 2. If any paddler complains of being cold, or shows any signs of hypothermia, the coach, leader, instructor or any officials will remove them from the water to get dry, put on warm clothing. 3. If still cold, hot drinks are administered to assist in boosting body temperature and the causality moved to a warmer location, use bivvy bags etc to warm the paddler further. 	<p>If causality still shows signs of hypothermia after administering hot drinks and moving to a warmer location emergency services will be contacted.</p> <p>Annual review of risk assessment.</p>	<p>Coaches, Leaders, Instructors 1st aiders</p> <p>Health and Safety officer</p>	<p>In the event of lack of recovery.</p> <p>2/5/26</p>	2/5/25

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Cold and hypothermia (continued)		4. Mobile phones available to summon help if the causality is still not improving. 5. Trained 1 st aider available at all times. 6. Spare clothes and access to hot drinks provided on land at all outdoor sessions.				
Entrapment	All paddlers due to not being able to right or exit the boat efficiently during a capsize.	1. During the safety briefing paddlers are instructed regarding the capsize drill. 2. By the end of a block of taster/beginner sessions and before progressing to playing canoe polo, all paddlers should be capsize competent demonstrating their ability to wet exit in a controlled environment with 1-to-1 supervision of a coach, leader or instructor. 3. Paddlers are checked for competency to wear a spray deck if one is to be used (spraydeck test shows ability to pull the deck underwater and exit the kayak in a controlled manner). 4. Until paddlers have successfully performed a wet exit safely with spray deck they will be regarded as inexperienced and ratios for supervision are adjusted accordingly. 5. Spray decks are appropriate for the kayak used.	Coaches etc or those in the vicinity of a paddler who is trapped render help as appropriate. Annual review of risk assessment.	Coaches, Leaders, Instructors, other paddlers or volunteers Health and Safety officer	In the event of someone becoming trapped. 2/5/26	2/5/25

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Entrapment continued		<p>6. Following on from successfully performing the spraydeck test, paddlers are taught how to signal that they are in need of rescue by slapping the bottom of the boat and how to provide help to others via t-rescue.</p> <p>7. Paddlers are instructed to look out for others on the water and render help as appropriate/alert coaches etc if someone becomes trapped.</p> <p>8. As part of advanced training paddlers are taught to roll by coaches etc and how to rescue an entrapped paddler.</p> <p>9. Teaching rolling is done in shallow water, coach, leader or instructor ensures other paddlers will not harm the paddler rolling (coach, leader or instructor positions themselves at the most appropriate point to prevent harm by other paddlers) and to ensure rapid intervention if necessary.</p> <p>10. Paddlers use uncluttered cockpits</p>				

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Drowning or not able to self-rescue	All participants due to accidentally entering the water and not being able to self-rescue	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Paddlers must be water confident and must wear a buoyancy aid on the water (unless the coach decides the mitigating circumstances allow an exception). Paddlers are trained with regard to means of self-rescue (rolling or wet exit) as appropriate to their level of experience. Spraydecks only to be worn after the paddler has demonstrated the ability to pull the deck underwater and exit the kayak in a controlled manner as assessed by a Coach, Leader, Instructor or volunteer. Paddlers informed during safety briefing as to where the nearest egress points are. Coaches/leaders/instructors on the water remain vigilant for any capsized boats or paddlers/swimmers entering the water. Supervision ratios are adjusted if inexperienced paddlers are participating. 	<p>Deployment of a throw line</p> <p>Rescue by a suitably qualified paddler</p> <p>Annual review of risk assessment.</p>	<p>On land support, volunteers or referee</p> <p>Coaches, Leaders, Instructors any paddler</p> <p>Health and Safety officer</p>	<p>Upon a paddler entering the water having restricted ability to self-rescue or if someone enters the water and are not wearing a buoyancy aid</p> <p>2/5/26</p>	2/5/25

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Drowning or not able to self-rescue continued		<p>7. Extra care taken along the water edges.</p> <p>8. On land support, referees and officials are aware of water edge obstacles.</p> <p>9. General swimming is not allowed when there are paddlers in the vicinity.</p> <p>10. If a paddler wet exits their kayak during canoe polo activities, a coach or leader assesses the risk of continuing play while the paddler and kayak is removed from the pitch area. If an instructor is in lead role play must stop until the paddlers is safe. During match play the risk may be additionally assessed by the referee.</p> <p>11. A throw line and tow line will be available with a minimum of 1 person experienced in deploying them present at all sessions.</p> <p>12. Suitably qualified or experienced paddlers can assist in rescue on water.</p>				

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Collision with other water users	All participants, by watercraft users, partially and fully submerged objects, fishermen and swimmers due to collision.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paddlers instructed during safety briefing to be aware of other watercraft in their vicinity, to avoid direct contact and to turn to face any wake emanating from watercraft. 2. Paddlers instructed to keep to the opposite bank from any fisherman's lines. 3. Paddlers instructed to avoid known partially and fully submerged objects eg fallen trees during safety briefing and to identify and alert the coach, leader or instructors of any previously unidentified objects as soon as they become aware of them. Paddlers to move towards the opposite bank to avoid submerged objects. 4. No swimming is permitted in the immediate vicinity of canoe polo activities. 5. Risk to paddlers and swimmers is continually monitored and assessed by coach, leader or instructors. 6. If the risk of injury to any individual is deemed uncontrolled the activity will cease immediately. 	<p>Make any members of the public who enter the vicinity of the paddling activity aware of the risk.</p> <p>Annual review of risk assessment.</p>	<p>Coaches, Leaders, Instructors and Club Officials. volunteers, paddlers or referees.</p> <p>Health and Safety officer</p>	<p>Immediately upon entry of a member of the public into the paddling area.</p> <p>2/5/26</p>	2/5/25

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Tripping and slipping	All participants from injury during falls	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All participants advised to wear suitable footwear with a non-slip sole when on the water edge. 2. No person is to run under any circumstances at the water edge. 3. Rubber matting to increase grip are used at boat ramps where the buildup of river silt makes the surface slippery. 4. Paddlers are taught to get into and out of boats safely. 5. Safe access and egress points identified during safety briefing with instructions to avoid slips and trips through safe storage of equipment during ingress and egress. 	Annual review of risk assessment.	Health and Safety officer	2/5/26	2/5/25
Water Quality	All participants from contaminants in water	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coach, leader, instructor or Health and safety officer checks water quality (outdoor venues before paddlers enter the water), looking for weed, debris, floatsum, discolouration, scum, dead fish, presence of harmful algae bloom or pollution etc. 2. Participants are made aware for signs and symptoms of waterborne illnesses during pre-session briefly as appropriate. 3. Pool staff provide up to date water analysis for pools. 4. Any indications of pollutants are reported to the H&S officer or coach. 5. If pollutants are detected paddlers do not enter the water until a clean water test has been documented or River's agency had declared it safe. 	<p>Any change in water quality results in paddlers being removed from the water.</p> <p>Annual review of risk assessment.</p>	<p>H&S officer, Coaches, Leaders, Instructors and Club Officials</p> <p>Health and Safety officer</p>	<p>Immediately upon detection.</p> <p>2/5/26</p>	2/5/25

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Canoe polo related activities	All participants, risk of injury due to contact with another player, their boat, their paddle or the ball.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Canoe polo is a contact sport so inherent risk is present. See Health and safety policy document for more details. Participants wear the appropriate helmets and safety equipment (including Buoyancy aids) to comply with Chapter 16 of the ICF Competition Rules for Canoe Polo 2025 (link to rules). All Canoe Polo activities are compliant with Chapter 10 of ICF rules above. Players are schooled in the rules as they advance. Polo boats and paddles meet the minimum safe standards for the level of play (see Health and safety policy document). Competitive canoe polo play is only played in suitable and safe watercraft ie a canoe polo kayaks with suitable bumpers and not in eg river kayaks or sit on tops. 	<p>Participants in deliberate breach of canoe polo rules are reprimanded using green, yellow and red card system as per rules.</p> <p>Repeated and/or dangerous offenses are dealt with as per the club code of conduct.</p> <p>Annual review of risk assessment</p>	<p>Coaches, leaders, instructors/1st aiders, club officials & referees</p> <p>Club committee.</p> <p>Health and Safety officer</p>	<p>As deemed necessary</p> <p>When concerns are raised by coaches, officials, players or parents/other clubs/officials outside LWP.</p> <p>2/5/26</p>	2/5/25

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Canoe polo related activities	All participants, risk of injury due to contact with another player, their boat, their paddle or the ball.	5. Minimum standard for undertaking any canoe polo related activity is to have demonstrated the ability to wet exit with or without spraydeck. 6. Junior members compete against similar ability players. 7. Participant to make coaches aware of any injuries. 1 st aid administered to be administered by coaches or a suitably trained individual. 8. Mobile phones available to summon help as required.				