

Risk & Operational Assessment Activities / **Paddle sports**

Next Review: Dec 2026

Whitemoor Lakes	Reviewed annually by senior team as recorded below:					
Assessed by:	Name	Date 2026	Date 2027	Date 2028	Date 2029	Date 2030
Nicola Whiting	Nicola Whiting					
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Overview- All water activities usually take place as 1.5 hour taster sessions on the 40 acre lake on site. Occasionally, progressive sessions, coaching or trips further afield may arise; these will be staffed on a case by case basis with appropriately experienced and qualified instructors working within the remit of their qualifications.

Canoe/ Kayak/ Stand up Paddleboard/ Raft building:

Instructor leading the session will hold a minimum of BCAB Paddle Sports Instructor and PSRC and complete session specific induction training.

Ratios:

2 instructors per 12 participants, plus a responsible adult on or off the water

3 instructors per 24 participants plus 1 to 2 responsible adults in exceptional circumstances

To be used in conjunction with Special Educational Needs, Disability and Medical conditions risk assessment.

STEP ONE	STEP TWO	STEP THREE	STEP FOUR	STEP FIVE
List significant hazards here:	List groups of people who are at risk from the hazards you have identified:	List the Control Measures for the identified risks:	Identify any residual risk remaining after the control measures have been put in place:	Identify any benefits that may result from exposure to the perceived and residual risk for participants:
As a result of capsize: drowning, head injury, entrapment	Instructors Guests	Safety brief given on land at start of session to include actions in event of capsize. Instructors supervise group and deal with any rescues efficiently.	Weather elements, participants' desire to enter the water, loss of balance	Instructors are there to help them back onto their craft. Feeling of safety.

Drowning	Instructors Guests Public	Buoyancy aids worn by all watersports participants and instructors and fit checked by instructors. Brief on site tour regarding boundaries/ not accessing lake when not with an instructor	Delay in help due to positioning of boats/ participants and/or instructors not spotting issue soon enough	Participant's exposure to perceived risk promotes a sense of achievement and pride at overcoming fear, whilst actual risk remains low.
Minor trauma	Instructors Guests	Safety rules for games- participants briefed not to reach for balls in the water with their paddles	Excited kids struggle to follow rules	Games are an enjoyable way of consolidating paddle skills
Entrapment	Instructors Guests	Equipment safety checks Entrapment hazards identified to participants and briefed to avoid risk Knives are carried by instructors.	Instructors may panic and forget what they have been trained	
Head Injury	Instructors Guests	Helmets are provided for all watersports activities and mandatory for under 18s. Over 18s and/or level 2 or above sailing may be permitted to participate without helmets subject to senior instructor approval but should be briefed on risks.	Injury to area/ person not protected by helmet.	Encourages awareness of potential hazards and risk. Flexibility with regards adults may allow for participation by those with religious headwear that would not allow for a helmet to be fitted correctly.
Illness due to water quality issues/ water borne viruses and bacteria (i.e. Weil's, algae)	Instructors Guests	Hand sanitiser/showering facilities. Participants to be briefed on hand washing after activities/ before eating and showering if they have entered the water. Regular water quality testing carried out by centre, decisions on swim games/ water entry made based on water conditions	Small amount in water	Encourages proper hygiene practices and awareness of water borne viruses in the wider world
Wildlife	Instructors Guests	Briefing about any animals- avoid chasing or paddling very close/ directly towards at speed Awareness of any nesting areas- instructors briefed to avoid current nest zones due to territorial birds and minimise noise & disruption nearby	The Unpredictable nature of animals.	Having the lake open creates a natural outdoor environment from which groups benefit and increase their connection with nature through seeing local and migrating wildlife.

Medical emergencies	Instructors Guests	Instructors to check group medical information and carry any emergency medicines (inhalers, epi pens etc) in group dry bag with first aid kit. Instructors to manage group effectively to keep group together	Effects of wind and lack of skills leading to group being spread across lake	
Adverse weather	Instructors Guests Public	Shelter available in centre within 200m of the north shore Adequate clothing for the environment, survival shelters available if needed. Senior activity team to monitor weather forecasts and conditions and make decisions on changes and cancellation of activities based on weather. Instructors aware of adverse weather procedures to be followed.	Weather conditions can change rapidly, with difficulty in identifying accurate forecasts for storms.	Exposure to cold/heat and inclement weather has proven positive developmental effects and teaches people about their limitations. Having the lake open creates a natural outdoor environment from which groups benefit.
Effects of wind and lack of skills leading to group being spread across lake resulting in poor communications, panic and welfare issues	Guests	Instructors to work within specified areas of the lake and in craft appropriate to the conditions, identified based on wind directions and conditions on the day. 2 instructors per team improves group management and allows one to paddle with the front of a group on any journey and another to assist weaker paddlers if necessary.	Variation in group member's abilities may lead to a significant spread but instructors should be able to supervise all effectively	Participants develop a sense of independence and self-reliance when journeying.

Unauthorized access	Instructors, guests, member of the public	Signage, safety talk at beginning of groups' stay, Area left tidy after use, no paddles to be left by the lake.	Misuse of equipment by outside parties/ trespassers.	Having the lake open creates a natural outdoor environment from which groups benefit.
Injury from poor Manual handling	Guests Instructors	Participants only asked to assist minimally with manual handling and briefing to be given including bending at knees, back straight and communication for lifting. Where paddles are used these are to be sized appropriately and participants briefed on their use. Instructors undergo manual handling training	Risk of participants injuring themselves through poor technique remains. Mistakes can still be made, human nature.	Transfer of skill to daily life, learning about manual handling and appropriate techniques that can be applied in other environments and situations.
Canoe Group management issues due to spread of group leading to poor communication and lack of support available to participants	Participants, Instructors	Senior team and instructors to liaise on whether canoes need to be rafted based on a) instructor skills and experience b) age, abilities and learning outcomes of group and c) weather conditions Instructor ratios to be maintained, instructors trained in group management	Weather conditions may change during session or participants' abilities over estimated may mean group still become spread out	Participants experience an element of independence and decision making leading to development of problem solving skills
Entrapment between rafted canoes/ tied painters	Participants	In case of a capsize, participants directed to outside of raft to gain re-entry. Games involving leaning out of raft to take place on the outer sides of raft. If participants fall between boats, instructor to supervise return to craft and warn them of the pinch points on rafting spar/ danger of entanglement in ropes. Instructors to carry rescue knives to cut lines if needed.	Children panic and fail to follow instructions	The use of rafted canoes provides a more stable craft which is more accessible to a range of needs and abilities and allows a safer opportunity to access water sports, particularly in more challenging weather conditions.

Entrapment in kayak	Instructors, participants	Only instructors to wear spraydecks so that participants can exit the craft easily in case of a capsize. Instructors trained in self rescue and 2 instructors per group	Participant entrapment in capsized kayak (instructors trained in rescue)	Challenge by choice to overcome fears
Kayaks becoming swamped & gradual sinking/ instability	Instructors, participants	Rescuing any boats filled with water to be done by instructors with well fitted spray decks. Air bags and bungs on kayaks checked on a regular basis	Kayak may partially submerge if participant gets back in with a large quantity of water still in the boat, will need to be told to get back out until boat is emptied	Opportunity to explain physics and buoyancy to participants, enjoyment at the funny concept of how wobbly a partially submerged kayak is.
Raft build equipment – Knocks, bumps & bruises	Instructors & Guests	Shown and told correct manual handling technique for handling barrels and poles whilst building the raft and ratios for carrying briefed based on size/ nature of group. Helmets and buoyancy aids to be worn whilst building the raft to provide extra protection.	Poor communication between team mates/ poor manual handling due to lack of awareness	Awareness of need to work together and support each other to minimise risk
Slips & trips	Instructors & Guests	Ropes to be placed back in bucket when not in use. Instructors to be vigilant regarding equipment on floor and point out items to group when making and deconstructing raft. Paddles to be placed all together in a pile.	Participants not looking where they are standing.	Without the ropes there would be no raft building which is a STEM activity.
Entrapment	Guests	Staff always Carry a Knife on water activities for cutting ropes in emergencies. Rafts assessed before launching and instructors to brief participants on not putting limbs in gaps and that	Guests choose to ignore rules. Risk of catching feet/arms when falling off raft.	Participants learn about identifying entrapment risks. Wouldn't be able to build raft and learn about construction without this residual risk remaining.

		elements may move independently when floating. Support given in planning stage to create a suitable shape raft with minimal entrapment risks.		
Poles and barrels (crushing)	Instructors Guests	Participants briefed in manual handling techniques and clear communication from instructors when launching raft. Care taken to ensure communication when dismantling raft so that no parts are dropped when untied	Participants' poor communication skills or behaviour may result in misuse of equipment	Awareness of body, self and others
Manual handling injuries during SUP rescues	Instructors, participants	Utilise buoyancy aid shoulder straps to assist participants back onto their board rather than pulling whole body weight by their arms. Instructors trained in ergonomic rescue techniques.	Risk of injury during rushed or complex rescues	Effective rescue still achieved
Falling off SUP in shallow water	Instructors Guests	Helmets to be worn by all participants. When close to the bank or pontoon participants will be asked to sit or kneel and a signal will be given i.e. whistle blasts to make them aware. Participants briefed that they will be told when it is appropriate to stand (over deep water).	The helmet will still have exposed areas of the head that would be left open for potential injury.	The perceived risk is reduced, and it is not as bad as they first thought.

Tangle/ snagging of SUP Leashes	everyone on single SUP and Instructor on MEGA SUP	On solo sup, participants briefed about their leash. Only instructor on mega sup to wear leash, maintaining awareness of positioning on board and not allowing participants between them and attachment.	Leash not attached properly and the wind taking the board(s) from the group.	Instructor able to regain control of megasup in the event of capsize or board flipping
Equipment failure due to exceeded SUP weight limits	Instructors Guests	Larger sized guests are to use the higher capacity boards	Guests swap boards without permission or may land on a small capacity board if their balance is lost.	There are no benefits to exposure

Water based games and jumping in

Overview: As part of any of the water activities, participants may be given the opportunity to play games in the lake or jump off the pontoon towards the end of the session. Before any participants enter the water intentionally, a safety brief is given, outlining boundaries and expectations.

Pontoon use

The gate to the pontoon must remain closed once all of a group have entered or exited the area. Participants are briefed on where they can jump in from and what type of jumps are allowed, (no flips or dives).

1 instructor should be on the pontoon with a paddle, that can be used as an aid to assist participants returning to the swim ramp or ladder. Another instructor should be present with a throw line available if needed.

Shallow water games

Participants may enter from the bank into a small area of the lake designated by their instructor. At least 1 instructor must be in the water with them, no deeper than to the bottom of their buoyancy aid, and participants should be briefed not to pass this instructor. (For some groups a shallower depth may be more appropriate). Splashing, swimming and games may take place, but participants are briefed not to push or jump on each other.

Jumping in from a craft

Instructors may also allow an 'all in' situation where participants jump in from their canoes, sup or raft in an area close to the bank, whilst instructors provide safety cover from a boat or board. Instructors will discuss this in advance and ensure boats/boards are either held by them or have some participants remaining to get all equipment back to the bank whilst ensuring the safety of any swimmers.

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Hypothermia and cold water shock	Participants, instructors	Weather conditions to be considered prior to any water based games. Instructors to verbally check participants have spare clothes placed in changing rooms at the start of the session. Instructors to consider/ discuss additional risk to participants with medical conditions that may increase risks.	Unexpected physiological response	Open water swimming has proven health benefits in relation to the circulatory system, mental health and immune system in otherwise healthy individuals. Exposure to water in this safe environment with appropriate supervision and equipment gives participants a new experience and may

Drowning	Participants, instructors	Buoyancy aids to be kept on until groups are back at the fort, well away from the water. Instructors to supervise, maintaining line of sight with participants.	Drowning happens a lot more quietly than people expect/ realise. Instructors to be hyper vigilant.	inspire future participation in open water swimming. Overcoming fears of entering the water/ jumping in has a positive mental effect on participants.
Entrapment	Participants, instructors	Instructors to be aware of underwater hazards such as the position of chains securing the pontoon.	Participants in a panicked state may become disoriented/ have difficulty following directions	
Slips, trips and falls	Participants, instructors	Participants briefed to walk not run on the pontoon, advised that it may be slippery and any raised hazards such as eyelets pointed out to them.	Excited children may not listen to rules	
Impact injuries (from other participants/ equipment)	Participants, instructors	Participants briefed not to push/ jump on each other. Helmets to be worn. Instructors to supervise and cease activity if participants do not engage safely. Participant's paddles to be left on the bank and swim games to take place away from boats.	Participants may not be aware of where other people are around them, some accidental impacts may still occur.	
Risk of being blown into the water or losing balance in strong wind/ swells	Participants, instructors	Wind over 35mph, consistent gusts over 40mph or swells over 1.5ft – CLOSE ACCESS to PONTOON	Unexpected gusts or participants with poor balance may cause issues	