



Health and Safety Policy

1. Notes

- i. This document is intended to offer guidance to competent and responsible individuals. Reading the document with the intention of finding 'loop holes' does not reflect the spirit in which it is presented.
- ii. This document should be made available to all Club members, those who paddle with the Club. The document should be published on the web.
- iii. The club is affiliated to Canoe England.

2. Participation Statement

- i. The activities undertaken by Kayak Northumbria carry an element of risk, including the risk of injury and death. Participants must make their own decisions about participation in any activity and are empowered to ask questions if in doubt about the nature or risks inherent in any activity.

3. Individual Responsibilities

- i. All participants in Club activities are responsible for their own actions and for making their own assessment of risks. If they are unsure about any issue or have any problems, questions or concerns it is the individual's responsibility to raise these with leaders or committee members.
- ii. All participants in Club activities must fill in a participation form when joining or on an introductory session form. They are responsible for informing the Committee of any changes to the information given on the form. It is the responsibility of the individual to notify their next of kin of their desire to participate in canoeing before engaging in Club activities. Participants should read these guidelines and abide by them. It is impossible for the Club to take responsibility for the actions of members who ignore these guidelines or the advice of river leaders or those holding positions of responsibility in the Club.
- iii. It is the responsibility of the individual to bring to the attention of any trip/activity leaders any known medical condition or previous injuries that may affect their or other Club member's safe participation in canoeing activities.
- iv. Members are encouraged to seek further training at every opportunity.
- v. Members should be aware of the potential for injuries caused by manual handling of canoeing equipment. They should seek guidance and training on the best methods to use for manual handling and use these techniques whenever they are handling equipment.
- vi. Buoyancy aids must be worn at all times and helmets will be used when canoeing in moving water including below weirs. Individuals are responsible for ensuring the serviceability and suitability of any Club equipment that they use.

4. Leadership

- i. These guidelines can be used for any paddling activity. For activities on local waters, there is no requirement for trip registration or a safety meeting, but the identities and responsibilities of the session/trip leader, river leader and group leaders on the river should be clear.
- ii. Any member may be appointed as a 'trip leader' and organise the logistics of a canoeing trip. At an early stage they should identify the most competent and experienced paddler, who then becomes the trip's 'river leader'. The river leader may choose to appoint 'group leaders' to lead groups on the river. Club coaches should follow the same guidelines as group leaders.
- iii. Trip leaders:
 - a. The trip leader should ensure that the activities planned are safe and conform to BCU guidelines and recognised best Practice. They may wish to consult with the river leader in this regard.
 - b. The trip leader should satisfy themselves that those driving vehicles on a trip are competent and responsible individuals.
 - c. Trip leaders will call a compulsory Safety Meeting before a trip to ensure that everyone is aware of the nature of the trip (venue, length, difficulty, etc.), to make novices aware of the equipment that they will need and to ensure that the trip will have an appropriate number of first aiders and



group leaders. At the meeting the trip leader must stress the personal responsibility carried by each participant.

- d. Special care must be taken to ensure that the group is aware of who the authorities on the water will be, with special inclusion to the River Leader and any First Aiders.
- e. Trip leaders must be aware of the Club's emergency procedure (see below) and should ensure that those on the trip are also aware of this, and the rest of this document.
- f. Trip leaders should ensure that the equipment being used on the trip is appropriate for the planned activities. They may wish to consult the Kit Officer and the River Leader on this issue.

5. River Leaders

- i. The river leader is the most experienced person on the trip, regardless of qualifications. They must satisfy themselves that the trip is run safely and should begin by checking that the trip leader's planning is acceptable. They have ultimate responsibility for any decisions that need to be made.
- ii. The river leader will make decisions on how the groups should be organised and will appoint sufficiently experienced group leaders for each group. They will take control of situations where groups come together (e.g. at significant rapids).
- iii. The trip leader should be particularly concerned with ensuring the safety and well being of inexperienced participants. They should ensure that they use equipment properly, arrange for training to be provided and give advice where necessary. All participants must make decisions to accept risk for themselves; leaders can only provide advice to facilitate a decision.

6. Group Leaders/Coaches

- i. Group leaders will not necessarily have any qualifications, but should have sufficient experience to lead on the water being paddled. The Club encourages leaders to obtain training including whitewater safety courses, BCU student camps, first aid training and training for the 4 and 5 star award.
- ii. Group leaders must carry sufficient equipment to allow them to look after their group and perform rescues and first aid as required.
- iii. Group leaders should brief their group before getting on the river. The brief will include: the nature of the river and any likely hazards, who is taking on what roles in the group, how the group will be organised, what river signals are to be used and what should be done if problems occur. The group leader must ascertain if any of the group has a medical condition that could affect their participation.
- iv. The group leader should make a final check of their group's equipment, including both personal and Club equipment. Particular checks should be made of:
 - a. Boats – correct footrest positions, inflated airbags, fixed grab loops, bung
 - b. Helmet – fastened and correctly fitting to protect forehead
 - c. Buoyancy aid – securely fastened
 - d. Spray deck – grab loop visible and in good condition

7. Emergency Procedure

- i. In the event of an accident occurring, the first priority will be to get a casualty to medical help as soon as possible.
- ii. If the accident is a serious one, or if the casualty is admitted to hospital in an unconscious state, the trip's home contact must be contacted as soon as possible in order to obtain the information on the casualty's membership form.
- iii. The home contact will then be responsible for informing the casualty's tutor or primary contact, if required, and should liaise with other parties as appropriate. In order for them to do this they should ensure that they have full details of the incident.
- iv. Do not make any statement to the media or discuss any aspect of the incident with anyone not connected to the emergency services. Ensure that all group members follow this guideline.