

Risk Assessment – Kayaking from South Shore of Brownsea island (Self-Led Activity)

Activity	Kayaking (Self-Led)	Location	Poole Harbour – South Shore of Brownsea Island
Activity Area	South shore of Brownsea Island, Furzey Island, and surrounding islands in the south-west corner of Poole Harbour		
Activity Type	Self-led, peer-to-peer kayaking activity with no formal supervision or instruction		
Assessment Review	Review annually or following any incident or near miss		
Date	11 Jan 2026		
Assessor:	James Wardle		
Reviewer:	Stephen Everitt		

Scope and Context

This risk assessment covers self-led kayaking activity departing from and returning to the south shore of Brownsea Island, operating around Furzey Island and other small islands in the south-west corner of Poole Harbour.

This is a self-organised, peer-to-peer activity. Participants kayak together as equals and are individually responsible for their own safety, navigation, decision-making, and emergency response. No participant is acting in a supervisory, instructional, or leadership role on behalf of the club.

The area has narrow navigable channels used by ferries and leisure traffic, and extensive areas that dry at low tide. Any landing point other than Brownsea Island itself may be isolated, inaccessible, or lack emergency access.

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Risk	Existing Controls	Risk Level	Further Actions
Strong tidal streams near harbour entrance	All participants	Loss of control, separation, inability to make progress	Trip planning using tide tables; conservative routing; avoidance of harbour entrance area in stronger flows	High	Confirm tidal windows before launch and avoid harbor entrance
Narrow navigable channels used by ferries	All participants	Collision with commercial or passenger vessels	Avoidance of main channels; high visibility clothing; group awareness; listening for vessel movements	Medium–High	Observer ferry routes from south shore before setting out
Drying areas at low tide	All participants	Grounding, entrapment, delayed	Local knowledge applied; route	Medium	Carry chart or electronic navigation

		return	planning to remain afloat; awareness of tidal height and timings		
Isolation of alternative landing points	All participants	Delayed assistance in emergency	Expectation of return to Brownsea Island; participants carry personal safety equipment and communications	Medium-High	Confirm emergency contact plan
Capsize or swimmer in water	Individual participants	Cold shock, immersion, injury	Buoyancy aids worn; peer awareness; self-rescue and assisted rescue skills expected	Medium	Participants to assess own rescue capability
Changing weather conditions	All participants	Exposure, navigation difficulty	Forecast checks; appropriate clothing; conservative decision-making	Medium	Abort trip if conditions deteriorate
Equipment failure	All participants	Loss of propulsion or control	Pre-launch equipment checks; spare paddle carried	Low-Medium	Remove defective equipment from use
Medical issue	Individual participants	Medical emergency	Self-declaration; personal medication carried; emergency services access planned via Brownsea Island	Medium	Ensure group aware of emergency procedures

General Notes

- This is a self-led kayaking activity with no formal supervision or instruction.
- Participants kayak together as equals and are individually responsible for their own safety.
- All participants must assess their own competence, fitness, and suitability for conditions.
- Decisions should prioritise safety over completing the journey.
- This risk assessment aligns with Paddle UK safety guidance.
- This document should be reviewed annually or following any incident or near miss.