

Risk Assessment – Use of Motor Powered Boats (St Denys Boat Club)

Activity: Use of Motor Powered Boats (including induction / refresher sessions)

Location: Priory Avenue, St Denys, SO17 2LT (River Itchen)

Activity Type: Informal Skill Sharing Session (low power / sheltered water)

Date last reviewed: 23 January 2026

Assessor: Stephen Everitt

Reviewed by: James Wardle

Review due: January 2027

Scope and Context

This risk assessment applies to the use of club vessels fitted with outboard motors (petrol and electric) on the River Itchen.

RYA guidance for Powerboat instructing typically covers planing RIBs up to 10 m in length with 60 to 100 hp engines, and requires RYA Powerboat Instructor status and substantial prior experience on a wide variety of motorboats.

At St Denys Boat Club, we operate very small electric and petrol outboard motors up to 2.3 hp on up to 3 m displacement boats operating on a relatively sheltered river. This is why we allow competent and experienced members with an RYA Power boat operating qualification (without a formal instruction qualification) to run these informal skill sharing sessions, provided the controls in this risk assessment are followed.

In parallel, members are encouraged to obtain RYA Powerboat Level 2 training from external commercial training partners.

Induction / Refresher Session Add-On Controls

- Pre-session briefing: kill cord use, throttle control, neutral/forward/reverse, stopping distances, and safe approach to pontoons/slipway.
- Define and agree a sheltered operating area and clear boundaries before departure (turning points, no-go zones, return points).

- Supervision kept close enough for immediate intervention; keep novice numbers manageable (consider 1:1 or 1:2 for first-time helms).
- Low-speed operation only: no high-speed turns, no rapid acceleration.
- Controlled launch/recovery: only one boat manoeuvring at the slipway/pontoon at a time; clear communication before engaging drive.
- Propeller safety rule: do not approach anyone in the water until petrol engine stopped and kill cord removed OR electric battery disconnected.
- Cancel/modify the session if wind/tide/visibility reduces boat control or increases risk of separation; monitor cold exposure.
- Post-session checks: fuel off, battery disconnected, equipment secured; defects reported and labelled Do Not Use.
- Make clear to attendees the person running this session is not a qualified instructor and this session is an informal skills sharing session

Risk Assessment Table

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Risk	Control Measures (club aligned)	Risk Level	Further Actions
Drowning	Everyone, particularly inexperienced	Serious injury or death	Everyone to wear buoyancy aids or life jackets. Operate motors carefully; do not change speeds suddenly; do not carry out high-speed turns.	Low	Review after any incident / near miss
Injuries from propellers	Everyone, particularly inexperienced	Severe injury	Do not operate motors except when securely attached to vessel and with vessel in the water. Electric outboards: do not connect battery unless mounted and in the water. Do not approach anyone in the water without stopping petrol engine and removing kill cord OR physically disconnecting the battery on an electric motor. Do not put hands or other body parts in the water near propellers. If propeller becomes fouled: stop engine, remove kill cord, or disconnect battery. Always use kill cords.	Low	Brief propeller hazards before each session
Collisions	Everyone, particularly inexperienced	Injury / damage	Ensure inexperienced only taken out by experienced people. Keep a good lookout. Keep hands/limbs inside boat and do not fend off collision.	Medium	Reduce speed / relocate if traffic increases
Slips, trips and falls	All	Minor injury	Warn of risk areas, edge of slipway and pontoons. Children supervised at all times.	Low	Use alternative access point if needed
Immersion / cold	All	Hypothermia / reduced dexterity	Activities and boats chosen as appropriate for conditions. Dress appropriately. Anyone who falls in or shows signs of becoming too cold to be taken ashore immediately and warmed up.	Low	Shorten session in winter

Entrapment	All	Injury / panic	Manage ropes to reduce risk. Participants briefed on actions in event of capsize. Safety craft and supervision where required.	Low	Stop session if hazards increase
Fire	All	Burns / smoke inhalation	Petrol is flammable and electrical systems can cause fires. Batteries and fuel not stored in clubhouse—use designated external storage. Turn off fuel when not in use. Disconnect battery when not in use. Do not refuel hot engines or on the water. Use only certified and approved fuel containers. Do not carry/store excessive quantities of fuel. Larger cruisers carry fire extinguishers.	Low	Check storage and containers
Contaminated water	All	Illness	Be aware of signs of Weil's disease. Cuts/grazes covered. Injuries disinfected and covered/treated. Seek medical advice if required.	Low	Remind participants to wash hands
Damaged equipment	All	Injury / failure	Do not use damaged equipment (fuel leaks, damaged electrics). Report for repair and mark Do Not Use.	Low–Medium	Maintain defect log
Pre-existing medical conditions	All	Variable	Individuals responsible for managing their own health conditions and limitations.	Low	Encourage disclosure to organiser
Protection of children	All	Safeguarding risk	Under 18s only allowed if accompanied by a parent/guardian. All members vigilant of risks to very young children. Comply with safeguarding policy.	Low	Ensure safeguarding contact known

General Notes

- Leads are responsible for dynamic risk management and adapting activity to conditions and participant ability.
- Participants must follow instructions and communicate any concerns promptly.
- This risk assessment should be reviewed annually or following any incident or near miss.