

# Risk Assessment – SUP Coastal/Estuary Trip – Keyhaven to Hurst (Salt Marsh Route)

**Activity:** SUP Coastal/Estuary Trip – Keyhaven to Hurst (salt marsh route)

**Location:** Keyhaven / Hurst Castle / salt marsh channels (Hampshire/Dorset border)

**Activity Type:** Supervised Coastal/Estuary Paddle (tidal, shallow, navigation)

**Date last reviewed:** 23 January 2026

**Assessor:** St Denys Boat Club

**Reviewed by:**

**Review due:** January 2027

## Scope and Context

This risk assessment covers a supervised stand-up paddleboard (SUP) trip from Keyhaven to Hurst Castle using the salt marsh/estuary route.

The area is tidal with shallow channels that change with the tide, soft mud, strong currents near the entrance, and exposure to wind. There is potential for separation and for individuals to become stuck in mud or cut off by the tide.

Because the route is coastal/estuarine, conservative conditions and strong group control are required.

## Additional Controls (Activity Specific)

- Leader must have appropriate local knowledge and tidal planning competence; a nominated Lead and Sweep are used.
- Tidal window planned: depart with sufficient depth in channels and time margin to return; avoid being 'cut off' by rising tide; set a fixed turnaround time.
- Navigation: use a planned route (map/photo) and avoid unknown channels; do not enter areas of soft mud unless part of planned safe crossing.
- Wind limits set conservatively due to SUP windage; cancel/shorten in strong wind or poor visibility.
- Personal kit: buoyancy aid, suitable clothing for immersion/cold, whistle, waterproof phone, spare warm layer in drybag. Leash policy: waist leash with quick release; avoid ankle leash in areas with snag risk/strong current.

- Mud/grounding plan: avoid stepping into unknown mud; if stuck, stay calm, use board for support and move to firmer ground; leaders assist one-by-one.
- Brief wildlife sensitivity and protected habitat: keep to channels and avoid disturbance.

## Risk Assessment Table

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Risk	Control Measures	Risk Level	Further Actions
Tidal currents and changing channels	All participants	Being swept off route; fatigue; separation	Plan tidal window and route; strong group control with Lead/Sweep; keep compact; avoid peak currents near entrance; turn back early if drift increases.	Medium-High	Leader to monitor tide/time continuously
Being cut off by tide (trapped beyond safe return)	All participants	Extended exposure; need for rescue	Fixed turnaround time; generous time margin; avoid committing beyond decision points without return margin; identify bail-out options.	Medium-High	Abort early if behind schedule
Soft mud / getting stuck	Participants	Injury, panic, delayed return	Avoid stepping into unknown mud; stay on board where possible; if dismounted, test ground carefully; assist one-by-one; carry throwline/towline.	Medium	Brief 'mud protocol' clearly
Wind exposure on boards	All participants	Loss of control; drift	Conservative wind limits; route selection to minimise exposure; paddle into wind first; shorten trip if control reduced.	Medium	Cancel if gusty or forecast uncertain
Cold water immersion	All participants	Hypothermia, cold shock	Appropriate clothing; spare warm layer; leaders monitor; immediate return/rewarm plan if immersion occurs.	Medium	Consider drysuits in winter
Other water users / narrow channels	All participants	Collision, near miss	Keep lookout; stay to agreed side; regroup in wider areas; do not block channels.	Low-Medium	Choose quieter times
Leash entanglement/snags	Participants	Entrapment risk	Waist leash with quick release; demonstrate; avoid snag areas; keep distance from posts/lines.	Low-Medium	Check quick release before launch

## General Notes

- Leads/organisers remain responsible for dynamic risk assessment and adapting the activity to conditions and participant ability.
- Participants must follow instructions, communicate concerns promptly, and be honest about competence and health.
- This risk assessment should be reviewed annually or following any incident or near miss.