

Risk Assessment – River Thames Paddle

Activity: Supervised Kayaking / Canoeing

Location: River Thames – Battersea to Greenwich (Thames Barrier closed)

Activity Type: Supervised Paddle UK-aligned journey

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Reviewed by: Andrew Ktenas

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Participant Responsibilities

All participants are responsible for acting in a manner that supports their own safety and the safety of the group. Participants must follow the instructions of the trip leader, comply with navigation rules, wear buoyancy aids at all times, maintain situational awareness, and communicate promptly if they are tired, cold, or experiencing difficulty. Participants must not intentionally obstruct commercial traffic and must be prepared to assist others if requested.

Risk Assessment Table

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Risk	Control Measures (PLA & Paddle UK aligned)
Commercial and passenger vessels	Participants	Collision or serious injury	Operate in accordance with PLA guidance; a channel where practicable; tight group control; clothing; deliberate crossings only
Wash from fast ferries and trip boats	Participants	Capsize or loss of control	Avoid waiting near piers; turn bow into wash between boats; leader positions upstream
Restricted visibility at bridges and bends	Participants	Collision with vessels or structures	Keep right of channel; cross bridges promptly at angles; sound signals if appropriate
Strong or gusting winds	Participants	Blown off course, fatigue	Weather forecast reviewed; wind considered

			decision; dynamic routing and rest breaks
Cold water immersion	Participants	Cold shock or hypothermia	Buoyancy aids worn at all times; suitable clothing; participants briefed and understood
Fatigue over extended distance	Participants	Reduced coordination	Leisurely pace; planned breaks; leader welfare
Slips, trips, and falls at access points	Participants	Injury or immersion	Controlled launching and landing; suitable footwear; constant supervision
Muddy or unstable foreshore	Participants	Entrapment or falling	Land only at known suitable beaches; avoid rocks and sharp edges; controlled landings
Group separation	Participants	Delayed assistance	Buddy system; regroup points; regular head counts
Emergency communication failure	Participants	Delayed rescue	Phones in waterproof cases; emergency numbers; regular location awareness using landmarks
Equipment failure	Participants	Loss of control	Pre-launch checks; spare paddles carried; familiarization

General Notes

- This assessment aligns with PLA guidance for rowing and paddle sports on the tidal Thames.
- The leader retains overall responsibility for dynamic risk management.
- The journey plan includes planned stops at South Bank, Prospect of Whitby, and Greenwich.
- The trip may be modified, shortened, or cancelled if conditions deteriorate.
- Review annually or following any incident.