

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

Assessor: James Wardle

Reviewed by: Andrew Ktenas

Date last reviewed: January 2026

Version: v1.1

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) | Risk Level | Further Actions |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---|------------|---------------------------------------|
| Commercial and passenger vessels | Participants | Collision or serious injury | Operate in accordance with PLA guidance; avoid main channel where practicable; tight group control; high-visibility clothing; deliberate crossings only | Medium | Rebrief before entering busiest zones |
| Wash from fast ferries and trip boats | Participants | Capsize or loss of control | Avoid waiting near piers; turn bow into wash; spacing between boats; leader positions upstream | Medium | Reduce speed through ferry areas |

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| Restricted visibility at bridges and bends | Participants | Collision with vessels or structures | Keep right of channel; cross bridges promptly and at right angles; sound signals if appropriate | Medium | Extra caution at central London bridges |
| Strong or gusting winds | Participants | Blown off course, fatigue | Weather forecast reviewed; wind considered in go/no-go decision; dynamic routing and rest breaks | Medium | Abort or shorten journey |
| Cold water immersion | Participants | Cold shock or hypothermia | Buoyancy aids worn at all times; suitable clothing; rescue plan briefed and understood | Medium | Reinforce self-rescue skills |
| Fatigue over extended distance | Participants | Reduced coordination | Leisurely pace; planned breaks; leader welfare checks | Medium | Early finish if required |
| Slips, trips, and falls at access points | Participants | Injury or immersion | Controlled launching and landing; suitable footwear; leader supervision | Medium | Review access on the day |
| Muddy or unstable foreshore | Participants | Entrapment or falling | Land only at known suitable beaches; avoid steep or muddy edges; controlled landings | Medium | Monitor water height |
| Group separation | Participants | Delayed assistance | Buddy system; regroup points; regular head counts | Low | Reinforce during briefing |
| Emergency communication failure | Participants | Delayed rescue | Phones in waterproof cases; emergency numbers shared; location awareness using landmarks | Low | Check signal coverage |

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| Equipment failure | Participants | Loss of control | Pre-launch checks; spare paddles carried; faulty kit removed | Low | None |
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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.