

St Denys Boat Club - Accessibility Policy

10 September 2024 v1

Boating participation statement

St Denys Boat club recognises that kayaking, SUP, sailing, rowing and other boating are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of the risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

Commitment to disabled access

St Denys Boat club welcomes all members of the community, regardless of their abilities. SDBC will include people with disabilities in our organisation in both participating and non-participative roles to the greatest extent that is possible. SDBC endeavours to make the club as inclusive and accessible as possible, based on the commitment to comply with the equality act 2010, and to implement the RYA best practices on disabled access <https://www.rya.org.uk/about-us/policies/equality-diversity-and-inclusion>

About St Denys Boat Club

St Denys Boat Club is a volunteer lead sailing canoeing and rowing club on the upper river Itchen in Southampton. St Denys has a significantly different operating model to most RYA or Paddle UK clubs. Boats are provided for members to use. Members can use boats at any time. There is no safety cover and no requirement for formal qualifications. Members are responsible for assessing and managing their own safety, in much the same way as if they took out a boat they owned privately from a public slipway.

Building and boats

St Denys Boat Club is housed in a building built in 1914 and as such it is not very accessible for some people with disabilities. As areas are refurbished, we will always seek to improve the accessibility. SDBC have a standard fleet of boats with no specific adaptations for disabled people. However, some of these boats may be suitable for some people with disabilities. The specific boats below may have changed since this policy was last updated.

- Puffin is a light weigh inflatable with an electric engine. Suitable for members with limited mobility or strength.
- Kittiwake is a Drascombe lugger suitable for sailing for people with limited mobility.
- Kiwi 2 is a large stable Kayak. Suitable for people with poor balance, or wheelchair users with very good mobility.
- McConks 12.8 are oversized paddle boards suitable for people with poor balance.

Environment

St Denys Boat Club is on the upper reaches of the river Itchen river. Tide and flow can reach three knots, but the river above Cobden bridge is never wider than 30 meters. The river flows through a public park and any boating activity are usually overlooked by members of the public. The short distance to swim to the bank, and the usually large number of people watching activity on the river somewhat mitigates the risk of solo boating for both our able and disabled members.

Sign off process

Members who join the club undertake an informal Induction / assessment session and are "Signed off" as competent to use a boat unsupervised. In the event a new member is not considered sufficiently competent they are invited to attend further sessions with experienced club members or are recommended to take a course at a local RYA or Paddle UK training centre.

Insurance

All club members and accompanying guests, children or carers (referred to by our insurers as members from time to time) are covered by the boat club's public liability insurance. The boat club does not provide personal accident insurance. Club members, guests, children and carers are covered by boat club public liability insurance irrespective of ability, disability or sign off status.

Risk assessment

All activities at St Denys Boat Club are covered by a general risk assessment. This risk assessment is not updated on an individual basis for members with disabilities, but we may periodically update the generic assessment based on our experience with new members with differing abilities.

Members with paid support workers are required to create a formal risk assessment (as you would be for any activity) which covers the activities they undertake at the Boat Club. The boat club are happy to assist with compiling your risk assessment.

First visit

Our overriding aim in providing access for people with disabilities is to provide a positive experience with safe access to Boat club facilities.

Potential members with disabilities are invited to visit the boat club, and to go out on the water with an experienced club member to ensure the boat club will be a good fit for their needs, prior to committing to join.

Adaptations

Adaptations and accommodations are made on a personalised basis to meet the needs of individual members.

The section below details some of the adaptations we have made for members to date. We have changed names for privacy. The accommodations we have been able to put in place for each person has been described. This information is provided to give you an idea if the club could be suitable for you.

Members without support workers

Members without support workers have sole responsible for their own safety on the water.

Member profile: Kate is 70 years old and has MS impacting her balance and coordination and strength. She is not capable of self-rescuing in the event of a capsiz.

Boat club adaptations: A boat suitable for Kate is stored low down and near to the doors so she can easily load the boat on to a trolley to be launched. Kate is proactively invited to club kayaking sessions to ensure she has opportunity to be out on the water with other people in a safer environment. Kate is encouraged to stick to her regular journeys where she is always visible from the park.

Member profile: Robert is 20 and has autism. He can find group settings overwhelming.

Boat club Adaptations: The boat club has arranged for induction and sign off session to be done on a one-to-one basis when the boat club is quiet. Robert is very likely to go out on the water alone. The boat club has reminded him of the very flexible guest policy allowing him to bring someone he is comfortable with to be on the water with him. The boat club provided extra information and advice on what to do should he capsizes on his own and has highlighted that solo paddling is a high-risk activity. Robert is proactively invited to any small group club paddles as we know he would not be confident to join a group event unless specifically invited.

Member profile: Charlotte is 25 and has Eller Darnos Syndrome this means she dislocates joints regularly she also has other complex medical needs.

Boat club Adaptions: Charlotte brings a set of instruction on what other members are to do in the event of an incident. Trip leaders she regularly paddles with have been taught how to resolve common problems on the water under Charlotte's instruction. The boat club do not restrict Charlotte from joining longer more adventurous Journeys, but these are well planned with Charlotte.

Members with support workers

Members with support workers are jointly responsible for their safety. Support workers are not members of the boat club and must only visit with their designated member. Support workers must all attend sign off session(s) with the boat club member.

There is no charge for support workers, though they may be asked to contribute to 3rd party costs such as external training or pool hire for kayak safety session where there is a per person charge.

Member Profile: Ben is 50 and an experienced sailor and pilot. Ben is physically able but has suffered a hypoxic (lack of oxygen) brain injury as a result of a hospital operation which impacts most severely on executive functioning and memory, and he now requires 24/7 care. Ben attends the Club with a support worker who assists him if/as required

Boat club adaptations: Volunteer members from the boat club have provided additional induction sessions for Ben and his support workers. In most situations Ben can recover himself from the water following a capsize without assistance. However, Ben's support workers are sufficiently physically able and confident in water to assist Ben recover himself from the water without further outside assistance if required.

People we could not accommodate

Person profile: John is an experienced sailor with Sailability. John has a T4 spinal injury and uses an electric wheelchair.

Boat club adaptations: In order to accommodate John, the boat club would need to improve level access, provide an accessible boat and a hoist. In discussion with John, it was agreed that that it would be possible to provide level access, and this has been planned as funding allows. It was agreed with the limited space on the foreshore and the high tidal range that it was not practical to install a hoist. John chose not to join the boat club and continues to sail with Testwood lakes Sailability.

Summary

St Denys boat club aims to be accessible to everyone. As a volunteer run club with no paid staff, having limited funds and space sometimes adaptations take us longer than we would like. If we can get you out on the water safely you are welcome to join St Denys Boat Club.