Overview

Haverfordwest Kayak Club is strongly committed to encouraging our members to take part in paddlesport, but the health, well-being and safety of each individual is always our paramount concern. We recommend levels of training and activity appropriate to each member’s age and ability, and expect our members to participate within these boundaries.

Scope

This policy concerns all water-based leisure activities associated with the sport of kayaking and canoeing, organised and undertaken by the Club as part of its programme of events. This document is provided to give leaders and participants’ guidance on the standards and precautions to be expected when taking part in Club activities. It is designed to ensure that everyone can have fun on the water in the knowledge that they are protected from harm to a reasonable degree. It does not guarantee safety but it gives sensible advice to reduce risk to acceptable levels. Leaders will need to carry out dynamic risk assessments throughout the activity and act appropriately when circumstances are not covered by this document.

All members agree to abide by the club member’s statement of participation which includes understanding and following the club’s health and safety policy.

Membership

The Club was established in 2002. It has approximately 100 members, including a junior section, and is managed by a committee of volunteers drawn from the membership. Within that membership there is a mix of abilities ranging from those with coaching qualifications, supported by many years of advanced paddling experience, through to complete novices with little or no familiarity with the sport or associated equipment at the time of joining. The club aims to bring together this diverse resource in order to provide an opportunity both indoors and on open water, for members to learn and gain experience in an environment that is challenging, enjoyable and fun.

Applications from new members are invited subject to capability and membership capacity. For beginners and less experienced new members, the induction includes a series of training sessions covering basic rescues and safety drills as well as basic boat handing skills. These sessions may either be run in the pool or outdoors subject to appropriate conditions.

Activities

The club arranges a range of outdoor paddling sessions on weekdays from spring to autumn and year round at weekends. This activity is supplemented by weekly training sessions in the swimming pool at Haverfordwest Leisure Centre from October to March. In both cases, the junior sessions are normally run separately to the adult events. Pool training sessions are led by the more experienced members, some of whom possess relevant coaching qualifications, or are in the process of working towards them. A similar approach is employed when leading open water paddles.

Many members own and use their own equipment for open water paddling. However, the Club has a number of craft and associated equipment available for hire by its members in return for a nominal fee. A member of the committee maintains an inventory of club-owned kit and monitors its condition.

The club endeavours to give all members appropriate levels of activity, training or competition taking into account individual ability, age, maturity and development.

Leadership

Members participating in club activities are reminded that they have a responsibility towards personal health and safety and that of other members. Ensuring that clothing and equipment match the conditions is primarily a personal responsibility, though the Leader will endeavour as far as is reasonably possible, to ensure that all participants are suitably equipped prior to launch. The club will support trip leaders in refusing participation in an event if a paddler does not have appropriate equipment / clothing.

Leaders of Club activities will either hold an appropriate British Canoeing coach qualification, leadership qualification or have suitable experience of a variety of locations and grades of difficulty for the proposed activity. Leaders shall acquaint themselves with appropriate knowledge of the particular venue. They have experience of and are comfortable on more challenging paddling conditions. Leaders are able to rescue others, control the group and administer first aid. They will plan for emergency situations and know the procedure to be followed for different types of incident. All activities must commence with a group safety briefing.

Leaders shall ensure that the group carry appropriate safety equipment for the proposed event.

Leaders will use the CLAP principle of leadership. (CLAP: Communication, Line of Sight, Avoidance, Position of Maximum Usefulness. “Avoidance” really means continuous dynamic risk assessment to identify and then avoid problems)

Leaders should ensure that they and the participants are fit to undertake the activity. Participants exhibiting signs of exhaustion, feeling ill, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol must not be allowed to participate. No activity is acceptable if it includes the consumption of alcohol before or during paddling.

The “HWKC Event Approval Procedure” must be followed before posting details on the events calendar. The Club will always support the decision of a leader to cancel, abort, or change the location of, an activity for safety reasons.

Club Risk Management

The Club committee will be responsible for the process of managing risk within the club. The “HWKC schedule of documents” shows the documentation that controls the activities of the club and the committee members responsible for each document. The “HWKC Committee Responsibilities” document details the part each committee member plays to ensure the club operates safely.

The Health and Safety Officer will be the point contact for members with any safety concern. Any injuries or accidents sustained during any club activity or whilst on the club premises will be reported to the Health and Safety officer and documented in accordance with Canoe Wales procedures.

Hazard Analysis and Risk Assessment

The club Generic Risk Assessment below is an analysis of the significant generic hazards that may be encountered on a club event and the control measures that the Club puts in place to mitigate risk. All club members have access to this information and are encouraged to familiarise themselves with it regularly. In addition to this generic risk assessment, the club has also prepared:

* The “HWKC Event Approval Procedure” detailing the process by which club trips are authorised.
* Venue specific risk assessments for locations that may be used by Paddlesport instructors (level 1 coaches) for running beginner sessions.
* Pembrokeshire Coastal Trips risk assessment detailing the planning expected for most club trips.
* Pembrokeshire Surf Beach risk assessment detailing the safety information for surfing activities in the county.
* Other paddling activity risk assessments.

New club activities will be risk assessed as appropriate.

Prior to every club event, details shall be posted on the website events page. Details will include the trip plan, the expected conditions, the level of the trip and the trip duration.

Following the CLAP principle each group leader (safe person) will maintain a dynamic risk assessment of each activity as they progress. Appropriate remedial action will be taken on the water if necessary.

All members are required to read and abide by either the Adult Member Statement of Participation or Youth Section Statement of Participation.

All members are also reminded:-

No club water based activity shall take place with less than three participants.

A properly fitted buoyancy aid must be worn at all times on the water during club outdoor events.

All participants in club events will abide by the instructions and decisions of the activity leader.

Review

The Committee will review this policy annually or sooner if needed, and this process will take account of any potentially harmful incidents or formal complaints arising during club activities that warranted intervention by the leader.

Reviewed on 3/10/24 by RML and committee. Next review due October 2025