



SUDBURY CANOE CLUB

AFFILIATED TO BRITISH CANOEING



Standard Operating Procedures 2024 Version¹

Sudbury Canoe Club is an active and family friendly club that gives new and inexperienced paddlers the opportunity to learn to canoe and kayak and provides more experienced paddlers the opportunity to enhance and develop their skills.

Canoeing/Kayaking is an assumed risk, water contact sport and it is the responsibility of the participant (where appropriate, parent or guardian) to make themselves aware of the risks involved. The club has a clear procedure for all paddlers to follow to ensure that the foreseeable risks involved with this sport are minimised to the best of our ability.

About SCC

Sudbury Canoe Club's ordinary schedule is as follows:

- Our usual meetings are at the Quay for 9.30am on a Saturday morning; weekday paddles may also be held.
- Pool Sessions may be offered on selected dates during the winter period either at Kingfisher or Tye Farm.
- Other paddles along the Stour, Cam and River Thet or further afield are organised throughout the year.
- Family camping and intro to white water at Slenningford on the River Ure, May bank holiday annually.
- Introduction to white water trips organised twice a year (usually to North Wales for newcomers and further afield for more competent paddlers).

The club can be contacted through the website (www.sudburycanoecub.org.uk), e-mail (scc.onthestour@gmail.com) or by turning up at one of the events detailed above. The club is affiliated to British Canoeing ("BC").

Paddle Leadership

All official club paddles (including regular Stour paddles and pool sessions) will be led by a coach/leader ("**Leader**") who the club has assessed as competent. Normally the Leader will be someone who has an appropriate BC qualification, but other experienced paddlers may be assessed as competent in accordance with BC guidelines. Where paddlers decide to paddle independently outside an official club paddle (a "**peer paddle**") it is their responsibility to satisfy themselves as to all safety matters.

Equipment

With respect to equipment the club will provide each club member, if required, with equipment conforming to BC guidelines. This equipment shall be as follows:

¹ Updated Feb 2024 by Chair and safety Officers (NMCG/DH/JMcG). To be reviewed Feb 2025 by Chair and Safety officer(s)

- A buoyancy aid of the correct size and capacity for the paddler
- When appropriate, a helmet that fits securely
- A spray deck that is correctly sized for boat and paddler (only to be used after suitable training)
- A kayak or canoe of a suitable shape/model and paddle (within reason and related to paddling skills)

Sufficient safety equipment will also be available to a group as follows:

- First Aid Kit (fully stocked and with a coach/leader)
- Spare paddles (for away trips)
- Throw lines (carried by river leaders or trained paddlers)

The equipment shall be stored in the Shed. Equipment is monitored and maintained by the Equipment Officer, who will keep records of the maintenance carried out. If equipment is unsafe or damaged it will be clearly labelled to prevent accidental use. The equipment is inspected on an annual basis and before use.

Any personal equipment that is used is the owner's responsibility and the owner (or appropriate adult in the case of juniors) should ensure that it conforms to the necessary standards for the activity being undertaken. The Leader may however prevent an item of equipment being used if they feel that is unsuitable for the activity being undertaken. The club assumes no responsibility for any personal equipment used.

Personal Responsibilities

Whilst the club aims to provide a safe operating environment for the members, responsibility for safety and personal behaviour ultimately rests with individual club members. These responsibilities include:

- Declare on the membership form any medical conditions or allergies
- Inform Leader of any medical conditions or injuries that may affect activity
- For those with medical conditions (e.g., asthma/allergies), always carry any prescribed personal medication for own use (e.g., inhaler/autoinjector) that will not be in the First Aid kit
- Pay attention and adhere to the advice and instructions of Leaders or other members leading an activity
- Generally, to behave responsibly
- Not jeopardise others, the public or the environment during club activities
- Ensure personal kit is correct for the activity (the trip leader can advise)
- Inform Leader of any issues of concern that may affect ability including safety concerns

Use of equipment

Training will be given on the use of equipment and paddlers will not be allowed to use certain equipment until they have demonstrated competency (e.g., neoprene spray deck may only be used after a paddler has demonstrated a successful capsized drill).

Pool Sessions

Pool sessions will be booked, and appropriate skills training organised for the range of paddlers seeking coaching or development of skills. Paddlers are only allowed to enter the water when there is a lifeguard on the side when using the Kingfisher facility. Seal launching is not permitted.

The Leader will organise the training in the pool and has overall responsibility of making sure the pool is left on time and in good order. Where appropriate peer pool sessions may be organised by suitably experienced paddlers at Tye Farm.

Club River Paddles (including regular Stour Saturday trips)

Club river trips will be announced and posted in order to ensure appropriate leader/paddler ratios. Should there be

limited space on the trip, places are allocated on a first-come-first-served basis. The Leader's decision on whether a trip takes place or whether a paddler can attend a trip is final. A Leader may have to cancel or modify a trip or stop a paddler participating at the last moment depending on conditions.

While it is the responsibility of each paddler, before getting onto the river, the Leader will make sure all paddlers are wearing suitable clothing and have the right equipment. It is the responsibility of paddlers to have a warm change of clothes. Where appropriate there will be a briefing given by the Leader and river signals will be agreed.

During paddling the river, the Leader will be continuously assessing the risks around the river and should there be a feature too risky for some members of the group to paddle, appropriate action will be taken to reduce the risk. This may include splitting into smaller groups, or portaging the feature i.e. weirs.

As noted above, members wishing to go paddling outside the club's official paddles (peer paddles), do so at their own risk.

Ratios

BC guidance on ratios and remits to be followed. River Stour is regarded as either very sheltered water or sheltered water depending on conditions. Weirs to be treated with appropriate caution.

Normally there will be no more than one Leader to 8 led participants, but common sense to be exercised depending on skill of participants and overall environmental conditions. Eg in flat conditions with experienced paddlers, group sizes may be larger. In bad weather or if the river is flowing, group sizes may need to be smaller, with less experienced paddlers excluded completely or individually supervised by more experienced paddlers.

Emergencies

In the event of an incident or emergency the following procedure shall be adhered to:

Rescues in accordance with BC guidelines should be attempted to the best of the ability of those present given the situation. However, individuals have no responsibility to attempt rescues if it puts themselves or the group at risk. They must always put their own safety and the safety of the group first and are never carry out a rescue if they do not feel safe or confident.

In an emergency the leader or their designate should take charge, and delegate responsibilities. They should ensure that as appropriate first aid is administered, emergency services are contacted, head counts are taken, an incident log is written, etc. The incident log should include the time and date, nature, names and numbers of casualties and the condition of the casualties.

The club will keep the First Aid kit up to date and fully stocked with an appropriate range of bandages, plasters, gloves and tissues. There will also be an advice sheet and a facemask. If the incident takes place in a swimming pool, first aid will be given by the pool Lifeguard.

Other issues

See addendum on good practice

Ethos

The aim of the club is to be safe and have fun.

Addendum - notes re good practice for regular Saturday paddles

Safety briefing

Leader on the day to give a clear safety briefing before every club paddle even if the group is largely or entirely experienced paddlers.

Use MYABCDE approach. Briefing points to cover include

- who leader is so everyone is clear - who is leading the group(s)
- intros to any new paddlers and double check everyone is signed on
- where we are going (and where we are not going)
- check boats and kit incl each group has throw line, First aid kit, mobile and other emergency kit depending on the conditions
- communications
- any medical conditions leader needs to be aware of
- what to do in an emergency (e.g. group to gather safely while designated paddlers effect rescue)
- Emphasise that if anyone wants to leave the main group(s) then they need to tell the group leader. If anyone is to leave the group(s) then unless an exception is agreed by the group leader, those leaving need to be led by a suitable leader (either BC qualified or club assessed), and the sub group must have phone, first aid kit and throw line.
- Ask before we set off if anyone might wish to come back early or paddle independently and dynamically assess and agree a plan for that (eg might be acceptable for an experienced paddler to return early on their own on a warm summer day when there is minimum flow but not in all conditions).
- Ask if there is anything the leader(s) needs to know and discuss conditions, any particular risks, etc, e.g. if river flowing more strongly than usual, need to leave a wider margin around hazards than usual

Return to Quay

Leader on the day to ensure steps are going to be taken to check people back in, esp if more than one group is out. Agree before a group breaks off who the group leader is, which paddlers they are going to paddle and that they take responsibility for check in of those paddlers. That way we can make sure we always know everyone is back.

When the river is flowing more strongly than usual

All of the above would apply regardless of river conditions but if the river is flowing more strongly than usual, in addition we should do the following before we set off.

- Put off newcomers
- Be ready to put off other paddlers depending on their level of skill
- Decide if we should stay as a single group or if splitting make sure there are enough strong paddlers for any emergency.
- If there are paddlers present who have a lower skill level, overall paddle leader to dynamically assess who is to lead the group they will be in and what other paddlers should be in that group, bearing in mind that emergencies might arise.
- Ensure that in any sub group there are enough throw lines and other emergency kit.
- Double check that among the whole group we have adequate kit, including spare clothing if cold, group shelter/survival bags, hot drinks, etc.

Contact details in case of an emergency.

Overall paddle leader to system in place (depends on the number of paddlers and groups exactly what this is) so that there is availability of contact details to river leaders

Clothing

Advice should always be given on appropriate clothing and paddlers turned away if not suitably dressed. But in addition, make sure spare clothing is readily available in case of emergency. This is relevant esp for kids who will not have left a vehicle in the car park. In appropriate cases insist on spare clothes being brought and put in the stores for changing after the session.

In summer do not forget need for sunscreen and hydration.

--