

Gate7 Canoe Race – Risk Assessment - OVERVIEW

Date of Assessment. 21st January 2025.

General particulars of event

A canoe race along the River Wear from Durham to Finchale Abbey. Five and a half miles of grade 2 to grade 3 water (depending on weather and water conditions).

The main hazards are injury, drowning or hypothermia resulting from capsizing.

We need to speculate/judge the level of danger presented by the potential circumstances.

The risk is the chance of injury, drowning, or hypothermia occurring.

Basic principles

Can an accident occur?

If it does occur, what will be the risk to the participants? Can they escape in safety?

Where the risk is considered significant, are our safety provisions sufficiently efficient and reliable?

Where that is not the case, what should be done about it?

Possible number of participants, based on experience - maximum of one hundred.

Age range and participants – eight years and upwards. Both sexes. Members of the Humbledon Outdoor Activities Association which caters for persons (age over sixteen) with special needs. Other physically handicapped persons may participate. (Usually only one or two).

Participation is encouraged for members of other canoe clubs, who take part at their own risk. Spectators, carers/helpers, family and friends will be present.

Known hazards Canoes and kayaks may capsize resulting in immersion – possible drowning and hypothermia: Entrapment in a closed cockpit kayak: Entrapment of boat on or between rocks resulting in the need for the paddler/s to exit the vessel in possibly fast flowing water to escape. Possibility of having to swim to the side of the river. Injury to the head from contact with submerged objects. Sundry cuts, bruises, dislocations or breakage of limbs. General minor injuries.

Injury due to overhanging branches.

Strains or sprains resulting from lifting boats on or off vehicles, or on to, or off the water.

Damage may occur to participating boats due to collisions with submerged or other rocks or with other boats.

Possible loss of paddle resulting in no means of propulsion.

Possibility of contracting Weil's disease.

Problems previously experienced during the 35 years of the race. Several capsizes have occurred. No known cases of injury. Hence the risk of all these possible occurrences is **LOW**.

Ensuring the safety of participants.

Basic written guidance is provided for all participants and is displayed at the start area.

Participating boats should be seaworthy and carry sufficient buoyancy to allow the boat to float in the event of a capsize.

All participants are expected to be able to swim.

Helmets are compulsory for all kayakers and others with balance or mobility difficulties, and are strongly advised for all paddlers in open boats in order to protect the head from injury.

All competitors must wear an approved buoyancy aid to provide support in the event of a capsize.

A spray cover is compulsory for all kayaks in order to minimise ingress of water at all times.

The race numbered bib (or boat sticker) must be worn (stuck to the bow of the craft) to provide identification of participants and to distinguish participants from other users of the river.

Novice competitors shall have had experience of paddling Grade2/3 water or shall be accompanied along the course by an experienced paddler.

Safety cover is provided along the course at appropriate points (especially Pipe Bridge) and a competent paddler is appointed to follow the last boat in the race. This is to enable the organisers to account for all starters. Safety cover includes provision of throw lines, spare paddles and mobile phones.

First aid equipment is provided as required and qualified first-aiders are available if needed. Hot drinks are available at the finish.

Telephones are available in the event of any problems.

All competitors are advised that they participate at their own risk and must judge for themselves whether they are competent to participate, bearing in mind the prevailing circumstances.

Members of the organising club are covered by the risk assessment of that organisation for An entry form will be provided for all competitors, with their relevant details. This will also include a disclaimer which will be worded so as to protect the organisers.

Action to be taken.

Ensure that safety rules are prominently displayed at the start area, together with a warning card relating to Weil's disease.

Confirm that safety personnel are actually present.

Conduct a physical check that helmets, buoyancy aids and spray decks are worn where necessary.

Check on location of telephones and the availability of mobile phone signals.

Hand sanitiser and paper towels will be provided for the staff handling refreshments at the end of the event.

Dated Tuesday 21st January 2025.