Exmoor Canoe Club Safety Action Plan – Multi-Day Sea Kayaking

Version 1. April 2024 Reviewed:

RISKS What could go wrong?	HAZARDS Why would this happen?	SIGNIFICANT? Yes / No	CONTROLS How can we prevent it?
Injury/Death	Incorrect ratios		Use correct ratios for the activity (PSU – Maximum 1:8. Take into account paddler ability, experience, conditions.
	Leader lack of first aid training		Use leaders who are experienced / qualified in first aid, group management, planning, briefing and running activities, crisis management and risk disclosure. First aid kit(s) carried and location known by all.
	Poor briefing by leader		Leaders to give clear and easy to understand briefings.
	Undisclosed medical/health condition	**YES**	Leaders to be aware of paddler health conditions & appropriate medication available.
	Capsize in cave / proximity to rocks / cliffs in swells or confused seas		Proximity to caves, exposed cliffs, rocks and stacks to be avoided in heavy swells or confused seas. Paddlers going into narrow caves with a chance of a surge should have a helmet on & be able to self rescue.
	Capsize in surf while landing / launching		Helmets to be worn whole launching / landing in heavy surf conditions. Safe routes and beaches (ie not rocks) to be selected by leaders.
	Attack from wildlife / Injury from marine environment.		Paddlers briefed to stay back from all wildlife – especially seals on rocks. Navigation makers to be approached with caution in tide.
Injury in surf zone	Lack of knowledge of how to be in surf safely	**YES**	Brief paddlers before-hand and at the beach about hazards in the surf, and how to avoid injury
	Surf too big for novice kayakers		Start with very small surf (less than 30cm if possible) to acclimatise to bracing techniques.
			Spread paddlers out – have good management – only one person going in through the surf zone in an area at a time.

	Too many people in a small area in sea kayaks with limited control		All paddlers to wear a helmet in the surf zone. Leaders to actively manage the paddlers in the group.
Drowning	Prolonged Immersion	**YES**	Leaders to be experienced in sea kayak rescue techniques. Paddlers to practice rescue techniques in sheltered conditions.
	Inability to exit kayak		All paddlers to practice and be competent in wet exit from a kayak prior to the trip.
	Concussion underwater		All paddlers to wear helmets while surfing and / or rock hopping. Helmets should be correctly worn and fitted.
	Lack of lifejacket		All paddlers to wear pfds at all times while kayaking.
	Not water confident		Confidence drills to be practiced prior to trip – wet exit, forward paddling, stability to gain confidence.
	Kayak sinks		Kayaks to be fitted with bulkheads. Spray decks to be used while kayaking. Deck hatches to be fitted correctly. Repair kit to be carried & used as necessary.
Hypothermia	Inadequate clothing	**YES**	All paddlers to wear spray jackets as necessary Spare clothing to be available.
	Prolonged immersion		Leaders to be experienced in sea kayak rescue techniques. Paddlers to practice rescue techniques in sheltered conditions. Leaders to be trained in first aid.
	Water Temperature		In winter / cold conditions paddlers to be briefed and wearing dry suits / clothing prepared for immersion in cold water.
	Weather		Weather to be monitored prior to leaving. Contingency plan to be made (eg – cancellation, changes to route and / or destination. In adverse weather, active consideration to postponing paddling for the day / duration of adverse weather. If in doubt, don't go.
Sunburn	Inadequate sun protection	**NO**	Sunscreen & suitable 'sun safe' clothing to be worn as necessary.
Group Separates	Strong wind	**YES**	Weather to be checked prior to departure & contingency plans made on a daily basis. Group strength & wind to be monitored while kayaking & plan altered accordingly. Forecast to be obtained prior to departure and monitored. Active group management by trip leaders.

	Swells / sea conditions		Sea conditions to be checked prior to departure. Sea conditions to be monitored while kayaking, & contingency plans made & followed as necessary.
	Tides		Tides to be checked prior to departure as necessary. Areas of strong currents to be avoided. Leaders to monitor group strengths and abilities.
	Visibility Deteriorates		Weather to be checked prior to departure & contingency plans made. Visibility to be monitored throughout activity & contingency plans made.
	Poor group control		Use competent leaders with experience in group management. Leaders to inform paddlers of rafting up techniques.
	Inadequate ratios		Use correct ratios.
Medical Incident	Pre-existing medical condition	**YES / NO**	Medical information to be gathered prior to trip, conditions identified and relevant medication to be available. Leaders & first aiders to ensure they understand the effect of the condition.
	Poor health		Leaders to gauge and request fitness levels prior to departure and activities altered accordingly.
	Accident (slip etc)		Briefings to be given re hazards. Safe area to be identified for loading and unloading kayaks. Laden sea kayaks to be unloaded whenever possible prior to lifting. If this is not practicable, carry straps to be used and laden kayaks moved with four people. In the event of poor landing conditions (e.g. boulders / slip hazard), four people to manage each kayak – even empty – whenever possible.
Vehicle Accident	Collision with other road users.	**YES**	Drivers to take regular breaks as required. Share driving whenever possible.
	Loading/unloading incident.	**YES**	Vehicles to be parked in safe loading zones (laybys). Paddlers to be 'traffic aware' while carrying equipment to and from trailers. Driver to check kayaks are securely tied. Driver to check trailers are correctly hitched, with locking pins, chains and shackles.
Environmental Damage	Fires		Fires to be lit below the high tide mark.

		YES	In the event of 'no tide', consider carefully the compulsion for a fire & if necessary, unsure fires are small and protected to not spread. Do not burn plastic waste
	Poor Wild Camping Etiquette		Toileting to be below the high tide mark. Where there is little tidal flow, toileting 50m from any fresh water source & buried 15cm deep. Bury toilet tissue or better, pack it out. Ensure wild camping is in 'small numbers' (Scottish Access Code) and for no more than two nights in one place. Follow advice in 'Surviving your first camp – How did the environment survive your visit' – UK Rivers Guidebook & ECC Website.
	Stress to wildlife		Avoid camping at bird nesting sites in the nesting and breeding season. Stay 100m from nesting seabird colonies. Avoid stressing basking seals and other marine wildlife by keeping a sensible distance. Except in emergencies, avoid landing / launching on beaches with pupping seals.
Sickness	Water Contamination	**NO**	Water to be treated or boiled as necessary.
	Poor Hygiene		Facilities to be used where possible. Paddlers to be aware of toileting and cooking hygiene when wild camping.
Marine Accident	Collision with other traffic	**YES**	Leaders to know the rules for traffic on the water. Marine radio to be carried & used as necessary. Effective group management to be used. Close groupings of kayaks for crossings.
Sea sickness	Rough conditions Pre-existing conditions	**NO**	Conditions to be checked prior to departure and monitored while kayaking. Pre-existing medicals to be checked & medication taken as appropriate. Party to be kept together by leaders to minimise time spent not paddling / waiting for slower members. Group to be kept moving in so far as is possible.
Lost Kayaker	Group separates	**YES**	Group to be kept together by leaders.
	Poor group management		Leaders to be experienced in managing groups of paddlers on the water.

	Weather change		Weather to be monitored by leaders and plan altered accordingly.
Lost Group	Poor Navigation	**YES**	Leaders to be familiar with the venue/environment. Leaders to be experienced in sea kayak navigation. Sea kayak compasses to be used and navigation checked / confirmed frequently during the trip.
	Weather change (wind/fog)		Weather to be monitored by leaders and plan altered accordingly.
Fatigue / physical stress	Paddler fitness & ability.	**NO**	Paddlers and leaders to match the trip expectations against the abilities and experience of the group, using the ECC Sea Kayak Progression checklist to match the proposed trip against paddler skill level.