Paddle Avon
canoe · kayak · sup

PADDLE ENGLAND
AFFILIATED CLUB

Paddle Avon

Standard Operating Procedures

September 2026

Paddle Avon Standard Operating Procedures

1. CHANGE LOG 1
2. AIM 1
3. AFFILIATION 1
4. CONTACT DETAILS 1
5. HEALTH AND SAFETY 2
   - 5.1. Approach to health and safety 2
   - 5.2. Use of Buoyancy Aids (BAs) / Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs) 2
   - 5.3. Use of helmets 2
   - 5.4. Water borne diseases and infections 3
   - 5.5. Lone paddling / paddling in groups 3
   - 5.6. First aid & accidents 4
   - 5.7. Emergency contact details 4
   - 5.8. Incident reporting 4
   - 5.9. Fire & evacuation 4
   - 5.10. Emergency services 5
   - 5.11. Risk assessment 5
6. DISCIPLINE 5
7. CLUB WELFARE 5
8. CLUB ACTIVITIES 6
   - 8.1. Membership and use of equipment 6
   - 8.2. Guests of members 6
   - 8.3. Juniors 6
   - 8.4. Scope of ‘Club Activities’ 7
   - 8.5. Regular club sessions 7
   - 8.6. River attendance register 7
   - 8.7. Paddling outside of a ‘Club Activity’ 8
   - 8.8. Club Coaches 8
   - 8.9. Club equipment 8
   - 8.10. Boat storage 9
   - 8.11. Club notices 9
9. THE SALTFORD ROWING CENTRE 9
   - 9.1. Access 9
   - 9.2. Showers & changing rooms 10
   - 9.3. Kitchen & communal area 10
   - 9.4. Gym equipment 10
10. PADDLING AND THE ENVIRONMENT 10

1. Change log

Version	Issue Date	Change
1.0	Jun 2019	Initial Issue
1.1	Jan 2020	Updated defibrillator details. Minor revisions to align with the club's latest Risk Assessment for the Saltford Rowing Centre.
1.2	Aug 2020	Updated Paddlesafer guidance; coach details; member numbers; boat storage guidance; accident and incident reporting guidance; water borne disease and infections; member welfare; club activities, scope and membership.
1.3	Jun 2021	Table of approved coaches, PDF guidance for SUP, safeguarding contact details, scope of club activity.
1.4	Apr 2022	Annual update. Clarification of terms and use PDFs for SUP.
1.5	Oct 2023	Updated Paddlersafer link, club activity descriptions, river attendance register guidance, links to club documents on website
1.6	Jan 2024	Clarified age restrictions for junior members
1.7	Jul 2024	Updated references to Paddle UK, updated links to external documents, minor updates to PFD and helmet guidance
1.8	Jan 2026	Updated club name to Paddle Avon and welfare officer details.
1.9	Sep 2026	Updated with the changes approved at AGM 2025 ref Guest policy and competent parent paddler policy.

2. Aim

The aim of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) is to outline how Paddle Avon is operated and managed. It provides a description of how the club runs on a day-to-day basis, covering who is responsible for carrying out certain tasks within the club as well as general responsibilities of club members.

3. Affiliation

Paddle UK Affiliation Type: Senior Club	Affiliation Number: 749
Club Chair Name: Emma Askew	Paddle UK Club Size: Large Club

4. Contact Details

- Address: Saltford Rowing Centre, Saltford, Bristol, BS31 3JS
- Email: info@paddleavon.club

5. Health and Safety

5.1. Approach

Paddle Avon wishes to ensure the safety and well-being of its members and promote a safety culture that runs through all our activities and is a normal part of everyday thinking and practise. To embed a culture in the way we operate, we have fully adopted the Paddle UK *Paddlersafer* guidance and incorporated key elements within this SOP that members are to follow. The guidance in this SOP is not exhaustive, and members are advised to familiarise themselves with the full Paddlesafer guidance.

5.2. Use of Buoyancy Aids (BAs) / Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs)

BAs (or PFDs) are to be worn at all times.

For stand-up paddle boarding, Paddle UK **strongly recommends** that paddlers have both a primary and secondary form of floatation support. For moving water and challenging water conditions, traditional foam BAs/PFDs should be worn and considered as the **primary** floatation support. When paddling more placid, sheltered conditions, alternative types of PFD (such as inflating PFDs) can be worn and considered as the **secondary** form of floatation, with the SUP acting as the primary support. If you do not have access to an inflating PFD, a traditional foam BA must be worn.

Exceptions. The only exception to the wearing of a BA/PFD is where the rules of competitions do not require buoyancy aids to be worn, or where ***experienced adult racing paddlers*** (kayak or SUP racing) choose not to wear a buoyancy aid for performance reasons during spring, summer and autumn months only. In these circumstances paddlers must:

- Undertake their own risk assessment before going onto the water, consider the environmental factors and take appropriate precautions. Being prepared and thinking ahead can eliminate many risks
- Have reliable self-rescue skills
- Have the ability to swim
- Check their craft and equipment thoroughly before setting out
- Be able to use their craft for floatation in the event of capsize and consider if there are any measures they can take to avoid being separated from their craft

5.3. Use of helmets

It is not always necessary to wear a helmet for paddlesport activities. Members are expected to wear a helmet for specific activities or environments where there is the risk of a head injury including:

- Paddling in moving or moderate water conditions on ungraded rivers
- Paddling in any graded river
- Surfing
- Paddling among rocks or in sea caves

- During rescue practice
- Playing games including canoe polo where accidental contact may be made.

Coaches will consider a range of risk factors when coaching juniors and may insist helmets are worn in their groups.

5.4. Water borne diseases and infections

All rivers, however clean they might appear contain a level of natural contamination from things such as rotting vegetation, insects and animal activity. In addition to this there may be other types of contamination including algal blooms (blue green algae), sewerage or chemical contamination. Illnesses are normally caused by bacterial infection, viruses or toxins in the water.

Weils Disease or Leptospirosis. All water users should be aware of this potentially fatal infection. This is a bacterial infection normally believed to be spread by rat urine, though it can also be transmitted by cat, fox and rabbit urine. Transmission is usually through an open wound or abrasion but can also be caused by ingestion of contaminated water. Symptoms are lethargy, diarrhoea, headaches, vomiting and muscle pain; sometimes referred to as flu-like symptoms, if untreated can be fatal.

Prevention measures against water borne infection are largely common sense:

- Cover all cuts and abrasions with waterproof plasters
- Always wear footwear to avoid cutting the feet
- Avoid capsize or rolling practice in suspected waters
- Where possible shower soon after the activity
- As a minimum always wash your hands as soon as possible after paddling and wash your face too before eating or drinking (top tip – carry a small amount of hand sanitiser with you where possible)

5.5. Lone paddling / paddling in groups

Paddling on your own does not significantly increase the risks when compared to paddling in a group, however the collective capability of the group acts to provide a safety net if things go wrong. Lone paddlers should be guided by the sections on the River Attendance Register and Activity outside of Club Sessions. If you have a pre-existing medical condition such as epilepsy, heart problems, diabetes, asthma etc, you are strongly advised to paddle as part of a group. It is therefore recommended that you paddle in a group, but it is recognised that some paddlers will choose to go out alone. Members choosing to paddle alone must be over 18, have acquired the necessary knowledge, skills and experience before doing so, and therefore must have been assessed as having a minimum of Paddle UK 2 Star / Paddle Explore or equivalent. Members meeting these criteria may paddle alone provided they also undertake their own risk assessment before going onto the water, consider the environmental factors and take appropriate precautions, which may include carrying a means of contacting other people, e.g. a mobile phone. Being prepared and thinking ahead can eliminate many risks. Members who paddle alone must:

- Have reliable self-rescue skills
- Wear a buoyancy aid (subject to conditions described at Section 5.2)
- Check their boat and equipment thoroughly before setting out

5.6. First aid & accidents

All coaches are trained in first aid and will generally have their own first aid kits with them. The Club first aid kit is located by the sign-in book in the Boat Store. Site-wide first aid kits are located downstairs in the main clubhouse as well as in the kitchen. An Automated External Defibrillator is located in the clubhouse gym (right hand wall facing into the gym).

Paddle UK provide access to a free first aid e-learning package. While this does not provide a formal qualification, it offers a useful introduction for members.

5.7. Emergency contact details

Prior to paddling from Saltford Rowing Centre during a club session, members are required to sign in the River Attendance Register and record their emergency contact details in case of emergency. In addition, full emergency contact details for our members are held on the Paddle UK club portal, but due to GDPR this data is accessible to only club committee members and Paddle UK. If emergency contact details are required, the River Attendance Register should be consulted in the first instance, otherwise details can be provided by one of our committee members (their details are provided on the club whiteboard and inside the River Attendance Register).

5.8. Incident reporting

Incidents must be reported using the Paddle UK online reporting system. This is used to report all on-the-water incidents and on the Saltford Rowing Centre premises, whether you are a member of Paddle UK or not. Note that you should also report near misses using this system, as well as actual incidents. Paper copies of incident reporting forms are held in the *Equipment Fault & Incident* folder in the main boat shed to aid the recording of incidents which must be subsequently reported online. The Club Committee must be notified of any reported incidents as soon as practicable after they occur and ideally before they are reported online.

5.9. Fire & evacuation

In the event of a fire, all personnel must assemble at the Fire Muster Point which is in the car park close to the railway line. The river attendance register will be used to support a roll call of members on club nights as appropriate.

Fire extinguishers are positioned downstairs in the clubhouse hallway and upstairs in the kitchen but should only be used in the last resort if your escape route is impeded.

5.10. Emergency services

If there is a need to call the emergency services, be prepared to provide the following information (remember the acronym *LIONEL*):

- **L**ocation of the accident/incident
  (e.g. Saltford Rowing Centre, Saltford, Bristol, BS31 3JS, or use a what3words reference such as *bolts.bracing.wand* if outside the main clubhouse)
- **I**ncident, what is the accident
- **O**ther blue light services required (Fire, Police, or Ambulance)
- **N**umber of casualties
- **E**xtent of the injuries if known
- **L**ocation of the accident/incident (repeated)

5.11. Risk assessment

All members are advised to assess risks before setting out on the water, consider environmental factors, their skill level relative to the water and other conditions, equipment needs, clothing and the capability of those they are paddling with. Hazards and associated mitigating actions for paddling from the Saltford Rowing Centre are captured in the club Risk Assessment and it does not remove the need for members to assess risks for themselves. The Risk Assessment also covers off-the-water activities at the Rowing Centre. It is recognised risk assessments are based on a specific set of circumstances at a particular moment in time, i.e. “static”. Therefore, members should undertake their own informal and dynamic risk assessments before going on the water and whilst on the water, continually identifying hazards throughout the duration of their activities, assessing risks and taking appropriate mitigating actions.

6. Discipline

The club Codes of Conduct outline the behaviours expected of all members and their families. Disciplinary procedures for those who fail to uphold them are outlined in the Paddle Avon Disciplinary and Appeal Policy.

7. Club Welfare

Canoeing and kayaking should be safe and fun. Everyone should be treated with respect and should give respect to others. You should feel safe to enjoy your sport and protected from any form of poor practice, abuse or neglect. If you are worried about how you or someone else is being treated by another young person or adult (whether it is something you have observed/witnessed or it has been disclosed to you by someone else) – always report the concern to one of our club welfare officers:

Welfare Officer: Andy Hains	Welfare Officer: Emily Davies
Tel: 07729 832368	Tel: 07557 948907
email: welfare@paddleavon.club	email: welfare2@paddleavon.club

or

NSPCC (Mon to Fri 10am - 4pm)	0808 800 5000	www.nspcc.org.uk
Childline (24 hr helpline)	0800 1111	www.childline.org.uk
Paddle UK Safeguarding Team	0115 8655354	safeguarding@paddleuk.org.uk

8. Club Activities

8.1. Membership and use of equipment

The club and its members have liability insurance through the club affiliation to Paddle UK during 'club activities' as defined in this SOP as well as a waterways license. Paddle Avon is responsible for ensuring members are given appropriate training and that they meet the minimum standards through the Paddle Discover Award or demonstrating equivalent skills to use equipment independently. Therefore, club equipment and the site facilities can only be used by members of Paddle Avon.

8.2. Guests of members

Because members must meet the minimum standards of Discover Award (or equivalent), any potential guests of members must be supervised by a club coach and cannot be brought on site without advance agreement with club coaches. Note that the number of times a guest can attend without joining the club is capped at 3 per year. A charge of £10 should be paid to the club for each visit and visitor.

If a member has a friend or a family member who would like to have a go and is considering joining, please contact the committee directly (executive@paddleavon.club) so that a suitable time can be arranged with a coach in advance.

8.3. Juniors

Junior members must be supervised at all times by parents/guardians who are members of the club. The exception to this rule is where juniors have been handed to the charge of a club coach for a prearranged coaching session. Although juniors are to be supervised by a parent or guardian, the minimum age for junior members is 12 years old or in Year 7 at school. The exception to this is where juniors are sponsored by a club coach who will act in *loco parentis* for the duration of a club session.

Club members who are deemed by the committee to be 'Competent Parent Paddlers' are permitted to take their own children paddling, even when the children are younger than the minimum age for junior members. This will be covered by their existing membership. Parents should provide appropriate buoyancy aids and paddling clothing.

8.4. Scope of ‘Club Activities’

In accordance with Paddle UK guidance, our 'Club Activities' which are covered by Paddle UK liability insurance and waterways licence, are defined as follows:

Activity	Definition	Example(s)
Supervised Club Activity	A club session or event that is in the club calendar, where there is coach or leader supervision	Regular Sunday and Wednesday club sessions where there is coach or leader supervision; a club organised race event; organised litter pick; safety/rescue training sessions; Discover/Explore Award training, pool session (where there is coach supervision); supervised club trip.
Collaborative Club Activity	A planned club session in the club calendar, where keyholders take responsibility for opening and closing club facilities or a pool on other premises.	Regular Sunday and Wednesday club sessions where keyholders take responsibility for opening and closing; pool sessions coordinated by club officials but without coaches present.

For the purposes of limiting club liability insurance, club activities are constrained between the downstream side of Weston Island Lock (upstream from the Clubhouse) and the upstream side of Swineford lock (downstream from the Clubhouse), unless specified otherwise.

8.5. Regular club sessions

Regular club sessions (currently Sunday morning and Wednesday evenings) are open to members who have, as a minimum, completed Discover Award (or equivalent) or have been assessed by a club coach as having equivalent skills.

Beginners who have joined Paddle Avon must complete the Discover Award training prior to attending the regular club sessions.

8.6. River attendance register

A River Attendance Register is located in the main boat shed in front of the club’s central boat rack (in Avon County Rowing Club boat shed), for all members to sign in and out while paddling at the club as part of a club activity. Members must complete this when attending club activities (as described above) in order to alert others that they are out on the water and to help the committee develop plans to mitigate safety risks and manage equipment where possible.

Note there is no requirement to complete this outside a ‘Club Activity’ – for example when a keyholder and one or two additional members attend, when there is no advertised club session taking place. However, if the register is freely accessible then it is good practice to

complete it. Good practice is for lone paddlers, small groups and all those paddling outside of Club Activity to complete the River Attendance Register

8.7. Paddling outside of a 'Club Activity'

Members are permitted to use the site and equipment outside the scope of 'Club Activities' but will not be covered by the club's liability insurance. For example, members arranging access to the club through the club WhatsApp outside of a Club Activity as defined above, will not be covered by the club liability insurance.

For members paddling outside the scope of a Club Activity we advise:

- They hold Paddle UK membership
- They have paddling skills ***beyond*** Discover Award
- They ensure they have robust self-rescue skills
- They know how to correctly use club equipment
- They do not to paddle alone when in closed-cockpit kayaks, unless proficient in self-rescue
- They seek assistance in handling double canoes (a trolley is available to assist lone paddlers)
- They carry a phone or at least agree to contact someone by a set time when they expect to be off the water.

8.8. Club Coaches

A list is available on request of coaches and leaders approved by the committee to undertake coaching or leading on club sessions and courses.

Paddle UK deployment guidance outlines the remit and limitations of the coaching and leadership qualifications.

8.9. Club equipment

Club equipment is available for use by all members. Kayaks and canoes belonging to the club will generally be numbered and display a Paddle UK label with the Paddle Avon affiliation number 749. If boats are not identified as club boats, they should be assumed to be privately owned and not to be used by other members.

- Members who use club kayaks or canoes, must record the boat number in the River Attendance Register when used or state if using their own.
- Members are responsible for checking the suitability and serviceability of club equipment before taking it out. If unsure about the use of club equipment, then they must seek advice from a coach or committee member.
- If there are any problems with equipment or any damage is sustained while in use, members must record details in the equipment incident log in the *Equipment Fault & Incident* folder located in the boat shed beside the River Attendance Register. The

club Quartermaster is responsible for ensuring that club equipment is checked on an annual basis and can address faults or issues identified in the log.
- Those wishing to remove club equipment from site for personal use must seek the express permission from the committee in advance and note that a small fee may be payable.

8.10. Boat storage

Provided there is sufficient storage space and the committee have agreed to such a request, members will be able to store their own boats at the site for a fee of £60 per boat per year. Members are responsible for identifying their equipment as being private, securing it, carrying out repairs and maintenance. Paddle Avon will not be held liable to loss of damage to personal equipment stored on site. Members can arrange their own equipment insurance through Paddle UK if required.

Where personal equipment has been left with Paddle Avon for 6 months or more after a member has left the club or not paid for storage, then Paddle Avon will assume ownership, either allowing use by other members or selling it to recoup unpaid fees as well as make space for other equipment.

8.11. Club notices

Club notices will be emailed to members through the Paddle UK Membership & Events Portal. However, a club whiteboard and notice board are also located in the boat shed and clubhouse respectively.

9. The Saltford Rowing Centre

The Saltford Rowing Centre is a shared facility for the members of a number of rowing and paddlesports clubs. The site can often be busy, and therefore for their own safety and the safety of others, members must be mindful of other activities taking place around them.

9.1. Access

Access to the main site is managed through a small number of key holders. During coach supported club sessions, the site, boat shed and kayak store will be available to all members. The club house door is controlled by PIN access, so please see a member of the Paddle Avon Committee if you need to know what this is.

Outside coach supported sessions, the site is frequently used by rowing club members, enabling access to facilities such as the clubhouse and boat shed. Non-key holders using this opportunity to paddle must check with those on site when they intend to leave to avoid being locked out and their car locked in! A set of spare keys is held in the site safe in the clubhouse, enabling access to the boat shed and kayak store if locked. Please see a member of the committee for the safe combination.

9.2. Showers & changing rooms

The Saltford Rowing Centre is a multi-club site that is frequently in use by other clubs and users. The Paddle Avon shower and changing room policy outlines the use of these facilities with this in mind.

9.3. Kitchen & communal area

The clubhouse boasts a large comfortable communal area with kitchen. Members are welcome to use these facilities but must ensure they are clean and tidy after use.

9.4. Gym equipment

A club ergometer (kayak machine) is available for members to use. Members must ensure they are familiar with instructions on setting up and storing when not in use to avoid damage to the equipment and injury to themselves. If in doubt, please seek assistance from experienced club members.
Other gym equipment may be used by members when available (e.g. outside dedicated rowing club training sessions that are communicated at the entrance to the Gym) on condition they've been shown how to correctly use the equipment.

10. Paddling and the Environment

Please following the Paddlers Code to help you be a considerate, respectful and environmentally friendly paddler. Key points are listed below:

- Find out about the area before you go, noting its sensitive places, species and breeding seasons
- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home with you
- When clearing litter left by others, handle it with care
- Leave the environment as you find it
- Keep noise to a minimum
- Avoid 'seal' launching or dragging boats on natural banks to reduce erosion
- Constantly assess wildlife. If you see signs of disturbance, move away
- Check, clean and dry wet equipment after use. Always take these bio-security measures to minimise the risk or prevent the spread and environmental damage from invasive non-native aquatic species and diseases