

Elmbridge Canoe Club Operational Risk assessment

Elmbridge Canoe Club Operation Risk assessment **Addendum for paddling when the river is on Red boards**

Event description:

This addendum is to capture the risk assessment for club activities when the river is in high level / high flow conditions. This includes club activities when the river is under red board conditions with an Environmental Agency strong stream warning in place.

This is designed to supplement the Operational risk assessment to evaluate the additional risks / mitigations. This risk assessment is split into two parts

- (1) A risk assessment of the identified specific hazards on our stretch of river, and
- (2) A risk assessment of the club activities when paddling on the river during periods of high flow

This covers all routine club activities that operate from the club

Assessment carried out by: Bruce Price

Date assessment was last updated on: 24th January 2026

Part 1: River specific risks (see Appendix 1)

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	Controls	What further action do you need to consider to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?
Strong pull on the Top of D'oyle Carte Island	Paddlers	- Paddlers should be in coached groups when paddling around the small island - The Thursday small island race should not run when the river is on red boards.	Update Red board paddling guidance	ECC Safety officer	Done
Shepperton Lock island weir stream, strong flows and eddies	Paddlers	- This is not an area groups would train - All groups to keep away from the weir stream when the river is in high flow / red boards	Update Red board paddling guidance	ECC Safety officer	Done
Strong flow around the top of desborough island. Potential for impact with island or trees	Paddlers,	- Training groups to be supervised by a coach. Coach to be positioned to see paddlers in their control as they navigate through this area - Coaches to monitor paddlers waiting in the safe area prior to sessions starting.	None		

potential for long swims around the back of desborough in areas where rescue is difficult	Paddlers	- Coaches to make sure paddlers are wearing the right clothes for the conditions - Paddlers to be in coached groups and visible to the coach at all times - BAs to be worn when the river is on red boards. - No paddling in the dark when the river is on red boards. Div 1-3 may be given an exception by a club coach.	Update Red board paddling guidance	ECC Safety officer	Done
Risk of paddlers being trapped in branches or moored boat during capsize	Paddlers, Coach	- When the river flows are increased, there is an increased risk of a swimmer becoming trapped in branches or under a moored boat - Paddlers will be with a coach on the water and will follow instructions of the coach. - Coach awareness of hazards of trees and boats. - Coaches to assess competence of paddlers vs river conditions. - Briefing sessions to be held before all sessions when river flows are above 200m³/s. This is to cover the risks of moored boats when travelling upstream where paddles are often close to boats. - Coaches to adjust sessions to manage risks of moored boats. Specific high risk areas when travelling upstream are by vessels are moored upstream of Walton rowing club and vessels moored by walton bridge - No paddling during the hours of darkness when the river is on red boards.	None		
Risk of capsize or collision when navigating lower cut bridge due to strong eddies	Paddlers	- Paddlers are aware of flows - Coach to be positioned to see paddlers in their control as the navigate through this area - Space to be given when racing through this area of the river - Other paddlers to stop and offer assistance in the event of a swim.	None		

Risk of collision on blind bend when racing down stream by the slipway and upstream by the marina cafe	Paddlers	Navigation guidance in place to prevent paddlers cutting the corner in efforts. This is more important when the river is in fast flow as the closing speeds will be faster.	None		
Risk of a collision with vessels exiting Shepperton marina	Paddlers	Powercraft will be unlikely to be leaving the marina when the river is on red boards.	None		
Risk of capsize or swamping due to waves on the walton bridge stretch	Paddlers	- Coaches to monitor river conditions in strong wind conditions - Paddlers to use spray decks if needed - Group to turn around and look for sheltered river areas if needed or when requested to by the coach	None		
Risk of injury or drowning in the event of a capsize or kayak being swept over the long weir above Walton rowing club	Paddlers	- Paddlers should avoid the area when the river is on red board. - This means paddling on the towpath side when travelling both downstream and upstream. - Coaches to monitor their group position to keep them clear of weirs when the river is on red boards	Update Red board paddling guidance	ECC Safety officer	Done

Risk of capsize when paddling upstream by the skiff club due to shallows	Paddlers	- Paddlers are aware of the shallow and potential sunken steps when paddling close to the bank when going upstream by the skiff club - Care to be taken. Risk considered low as rescue is straightforward in this area	None		
Risk of injury or drowning in the event of a capsize or kayak being swept over the side weir below Walton rowing club	Paddlers	- This is a very hazardous weir when the gates are open. The pull from this weir can be high. - Paddlers should avoid the area and never paddle on the weir side of the river when the river is on red boards. - This means paddling on the towpath side when travelling both downstream and upstream. - Coaches monitor their group position to keep them clear of weirs when the river is on red boards. - No groups are to run up the weir side of the river regardless of age or experience when the river is on red boards	Update Red board paddling guidance	ECC Safety officer	Done
Risk of injury or drowning in the event of a capsize or kayak being swept over Sunbury weir	Paddlers	- The pull from the main weir gates can be strong. Paddlers should be on the towpath side of the river when paddling upstream and downstream. - There is a strong eddie line when entering the lock cut. Paddlers to be aware. - Coaches monitor their group position to keep them clear of weirs when the river is on red boards. - No groups are to run up the weir side of the river regardless of age or experience when the river is on red boards	Update Red board paddling guidance	ECC Safety officer	Done
Risk of injury when portaging Sunbury rollers	Paddlers	- The rollers can be underwater, slippery with significant debris when the river levels and flows are high - No paddlers are permitted to portage the rollers when the river is on red boards.	Update Red board paddling guidance	ECC Safety officer	Done

Part 2: Incremental river hazards when the river is on red boards

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	Controls	What further action do you need to consider to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?
Increased risk of capsize due to river currents and eddies	Paddlers	- Recommended all paddlers wear BAs. This is mandatory for all juniors (u18). - All juniors to be in coached groups, with the coach positioned behind the group to monitor and group and effect rescue where needed. - There must be suitable coach ratio's (or club deemed competent paddlers) to supervise junior group sessions. If there aren't sufficient paddlers the session will be cancelled or move to land based.	Update Red board paddling guidance	ECC Safety officer	Done
Risk of hypothermia during cold weather conditions and longer rescue times	Paddlers	- Coaches to monitor paddlers before the session to make sure they have the right clothes for the conditions - Coaches have a means to raise help in the event of an emergency when on the water. - Coaches to monitor river conditions. - All club water based activities will be stopped when the river floods the banks or when the river flows reach 300m3/s at Walton bridge - The club safety officer will monitor river conditions carefully during flood alerts and warnings	Update Red board paddling guidance	ECC Safety officer	Done
Risk of capsize or injury due to a collision with river debris	Paddlers	- There is increase likelihood of floating river debris during periods of high levels and flow - Paddlers and coaches to be aware and to notify others in the group of any observed hazards	None		

Risk of illness when sewage discharge is occurring (due to rainfall)	Paddlers	• Paddler to report illness to their medical provider • Paddlers to shower or wash hands after every water based session	• None		
Risk of injury or drowning for non-paddlers on the landing stage	Parents, members of the public	• Parents and spectators to keep clear of the landing stage and river banks when the river is on red boards	• None		

Elmbridge – River risks

Hazards identified to support risk assessments
for high flow paddling

Section 1 - Desborough Island

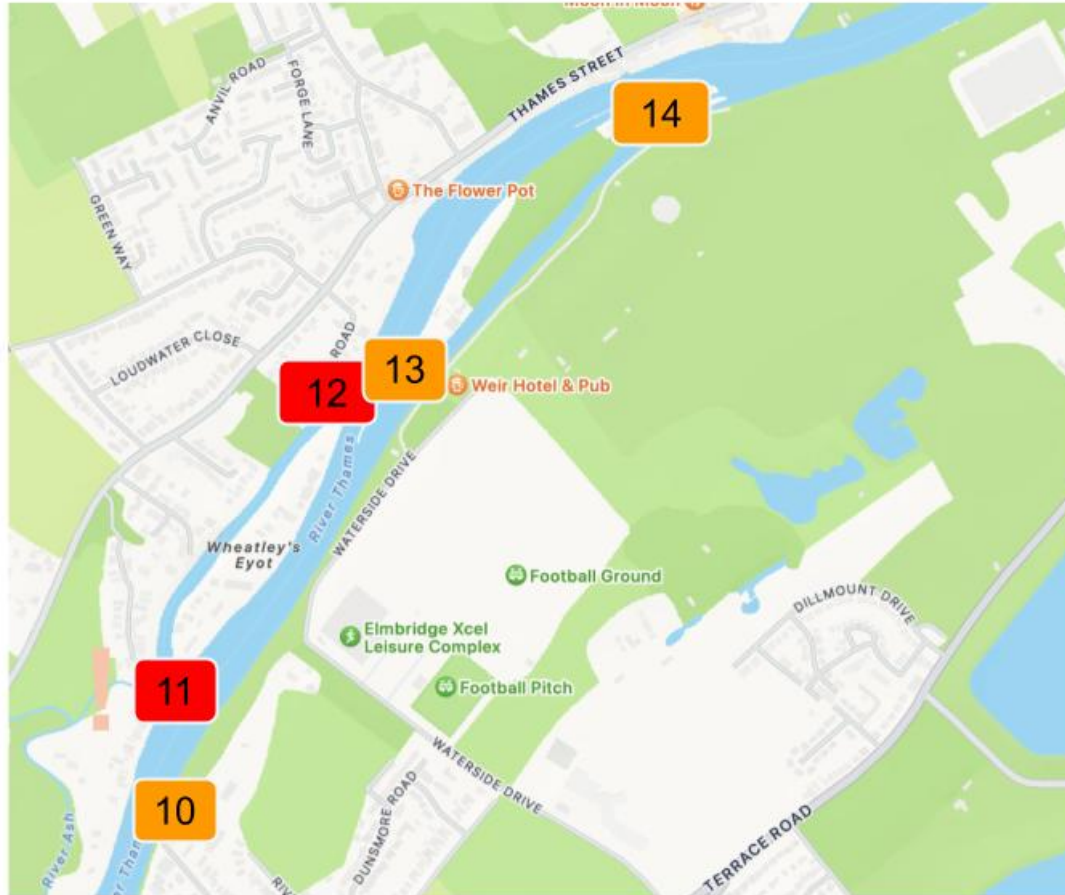


Risk areas during high flow

- (1) Top of D'Oyley Carte island
 - Strong pull onto top of island
- (2) Lock Island weir stream
 - Strong flow from weir steam.
 - Restricted access when on red boards
- (3) Cut bridge – bottom of island
 - Strong eddies. Potential for long swim.
- (4) There are a number of places around the back of the island where rescue may require a swim downstream. Risk of entrapment in trees or boats
- (5) Blind bend when doing efforts downstream.

There is also a risk of moored vessels by Walton bridge. Particular care to be taken when river flows are high.

Section 3 – Sunbury Lock approach



Risk areas during high flow

- (10) Potential shallow area and submerged step by skiff club.
- (11) ATTENTION: Sluice weir has significant pull in high flow condition. ALL padders to keep on the towpath side whenever the river is on red boards.
- (12) Sunbury main lock weir gates can have a pull during high flow. Keep towpath side
- (13) Sunbury overflow. Manageable pull, potential strong eddie line as you enter the lock cut.
- (14) Sunbury roller portages is often underwater and hazardous. Portage not to be used when the river is on red boards

There is also risk of moored vessels, just upstream of the Walton rowing club