

Nevis Canoe Club Risk Assessment



Purpose

This risk assessment sits within the Nevis Canoe Club (NCC) safety framework. This risk assessment examines, and identifies, the potential hazards associated with the activities carried out by the Nevis Canoe Club, such as water conditions, weather, equipment, and participant experience levels.

Paddle Scotland, in their Standards for Deployment, Appendix 1, provide examples of different types of Club Activity <https://www.paddlescotland.org.uk/resources/standards-for-deployment> . At the time of writing (February 2025) the activities of NCC sit, predominantly, within the category of a Collaborative Club Activity (buddy groups on river or sea trips). In a Collaborative Club Activity there is no designated 'person in charge'. Participants are **ALL** responsible for managing safety, enforcing/following club guidelines and making decisions in response to changing conditions or emergencies. Individuals are all responsible for their actions and must make their own decisions as to whether their experience, their craft and equipment and they, themselves, are equipped for the trip. At the same time, there is an expectation that NCC paddlers will share their varying experience to assist others. All individual participants are expected to behave as a cohesive group during a Collaborative Club Activity.

It is important that all paddlers are familiar with the risk assessment and it should, therefore, be published on the NCC website. It is recognised that the document will need to be updated regularly and this will be the responsibility of the nominated Safety Officer. As a minimum the risk assessment will be reviewed:

- After the Annual General Meeting by the new committee
- After any accident or 'near miss'
- When any member identifies a significant hazard not already mentioned in the document

Date:	30/6/2025
--------------	-----------

Assessors Name:	Lindsay Barr Bridget Thomas	Review Date:	2026, following the club AGM or sooner, if indicated
------------------------	--	---------------------	--

Description of assessment	River Kayaking in and around Lochaber
----------------------------------	---------------------------------------

Nevis Canoe Club Risk Assessment



What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	Risk level	What are you already doing to control the risks?	Review comments and further actions required
Loading and unloading kayaks from vehicles				
Passing Traffic	May injure participants	High risk of serious injury	Choose unloading area away from traffic. Unload on side away from traffic. Post a guard to warn of passing vehicles.	
Heavy lifting	Can cause back strain	Medium	Work in pairs. Use boxes or steps which are stable. Use correct lifting techniques.	
Poor roof rack equipment and/or tying on.	Risk of serious road traffic incident or injury	High	Driver is responsible for using appropriate equipment and technique See Paddle UK Paddle Safer Guidelines (2024) for more information:	
Launching and landing				
River levels	High water covers hazards Low water – could be a struggle over rocks etc	Med	Check river levels and Scottish white water guide book. Check Seppa website for planned release dates Home Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)	

Nevis Canoe Club Risk Assessment



What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	Risk level	What are you already doing to control the risks?	Review comments and further actions required
Slips banks covered rocks	Risk of broken limb, hip, wrist etc	High	Avoid steep loose rocky banks . Use paddle for support. Slide boats, if possible	
Launching or landing in challenging conditions; rocky beaches	Risk of capsizing, possible head or limb injury. Damage to boats/paddles	High	Try to plan safe landing spots. Use correct technique.	
Weather				
Weather: the conditions and forecast	Weather conditions will impact on a planned trip and often change, significantly, throughout the day	Medium - High	<p>The latest relevant general, and local forecasts, are readily available. These forecasts will be used to inform planning; prior to the planned paddle, as a core component of the risk assessment, and considered as part of the dynamic risk assessments undertaken throughout the trip.</p> <p>All members to be aware of the weather forecasts, river levels and any plan river releases and to be involved in decisions around the trip taking into account their level of skills, experience and confidence.</p> <p>Met Office inshore forecast; this is updated every 6 hours</p> <p>https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/specialist-forecasts/coast-and-sea/inshore-waters-forecast</p>	

Nevis Canoe Club Risk Assessment



What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	Risk level	What are you already doing to control the risks?	Review comments and further action required
River hazards Rocks Holes Standing waves	Paddlers at risk of capsizing, drowning, injury, loss or damage of equipment. Group become split up/less visible. Difficulty continuing. Possible fear and low morale.	Medium	Check water level before setting off. Keep group close together. Support weaker paddlers. . Modify or abandon trip if necessary. Training in capsizing rescue procedures	
Deteriorating weather	Participants become cold, tired, demoralised and at risk of hypothermia. Difficulty communicating and group may split.	Medium - High	Maintain awareness of group throughout the trip and modify or abandon trip if necessary. Ensure group clothing is suitable. Support weaker paddlers	
Hot weather	Sun/wind burn, dehydration	Medium	Apply sun block, wear hat and drink extra fluids. Ensure extra water is carried.	
On the water				
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	Risk level	What are you already doing to control the risks?	Review comments and further action required
Immersion in cold water	Drowning, hypothermia, shock, panic.	Medium	Ensure group are familiar with capsizing and rescue procedures. Ensure suitable clothing for conditions and spare clothing should be carried.	

Nevis Canoe Club Risk Assessment



Capsize in shallow water/immersion in cold water	Paddler may be at risk of drowning, hypothermia and panic. Difficulty exiting kayak due to depth.	Low	Ensure group are familiar with capsize and rescue procedures; righting and emptying kayak. Paddlers to wear suitable clothing for kayaking	
Capsize in deep water/immersion in cold water	Panic, hypothermia, drowning, loss of boat, paddle	Medium	Ensure group are familiar with capsize and rescue procedures. Carry thrown line and knife and whistle Paddlers to wear suitable clothing for kayaking	
Multiple Capsize Immersion in cold water	Potentially increases the time paddlers are immersed in the water, hypothermia, drowning, group drifting apart, loss of boats, paddles etc.	High	Ensure group are familiar with capsize exercise and rescue procedures.	
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	Risk level	What are you already doing to control the risks?	Review comments and further action required
Rocks	Capsize, injury and potential damage to equipment.	Medium	Wear a helmet Ensure group are familiar with capsize exercise and rescue techniques. Use of throwline or boat to move capsized paddler from danger.	
Overhanging branches	Capsize and entrapment especially in a current.	High	Avoid places where this is likely and paddle midstream.	

Nevis Canoe Club Risk Assessment



Incorrect paddling technique	Damage to, and strain on, body	Medium	Demonstrate and practice an effective and efficient stroke technique in sheltered waters.	
Tired Paddler	Capsize, falling asleep, panic, drowning	Low	Be aware of anyone falling behind and have someone experienced accompany them. Take breaks, eat and drink.	
Injury/Medical incident	Paddler is incapacitated, injury or illness may prolong time out, possible worsening of condition. Remote location may delay the arrival of emergency services.	Low	Check if any known medical conditions before setting out and carry appropriate medication if required. Carry first aid kit. Contact emergency services if necessary/possible.	
What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	Risk level	What are you already doing to control the risks?	Review comments and further action required
Badly fitting boat or equipment	Damage to body, difficulty exiting kayak, lack of stability in rough water, discomfort, panic and drowning	Low	Check fitting of boat, foot rests, thigh grips, spray deck, buoyancy aid before setting out. Make sure spray deck handle is outside the boat. Regular checks and maintenance of equipment.	