**Non-Thames Leader Rules**

**Version 5: Jan 2024**

**Chelsea Kayak Club (CKC) – Trips away from the Thames Summary Note**

This note sets out the different sorts of trips that are run away from the Thames, their grading and the competency requirements that individuals must meet in order to lead CKC trips. It should be read in conjunction with CKC’s Operating, Risk Register and Incident Procedures.

There are three different sorts of paddling trips that CKC members may be involved with away from the Thames:

1. **“Club led paddling”** any activity involving **leadership** on the water. Club activities are offered expressly by, or on behalf of the Committee, or by any experienced CKC member. Any promotion or notification of these trips using the CKC trip notification process (namely emailing CKC google group email). These trips are only to be led by a trained and qualified British Canoeing (BC) Sea Leader.

A “Sea Kayak Leader” should lead within their remit. CKC Leaders are expected to follow good practice as recognised in the sport. Club led paddles will be graded in accordance with Club operating procedures. Club led paddles can be led by either:

* 1. A club member who is trained, up to date, experienced, and a qualified BC Sea Leader.
  2. External provider Sea Leader, suitably qualified leader / coach.

1. **“Peer group paddling”** – any personal paddling activity promoted by individual members and not offering leadership on the water beyond that found in a peer group situation and individuals are self-reliant and competent to paddle the proposed / anticipated conditions. It is for every individual to assess their own plan, ability and equipment. Peer group paddling is very distinct from Club/External led paddling. There is no designated leader and a trip organiser may co-ordinate the logistics.

Any club member may organise the logistics of a Peer group paddle – suggesting a location, campsite and travel arrangements. Paddle planning is down to each and every trip member. There will be no leadership (assumed or otherwise). It is for paddlers to decide if they stay together and where they go. It is generally advised that people below Sea Kayak Award (3\*) standard do not join peer paddles as they are unlikely to have the skills to look after themselves on the water. When advertising a peer group paddle the following text (or similar text) should appear in the advert:

“This is a CKC Peer Paddle, as defined in the Club Operating and Safety Procedure. That means there will not be a designated leader and all participants are taking responsibility for themselves - to include trip planning, assessing the conditions and dynamic risk assessment during the day. Peer paddles are for Sea Kayak Award (3\*) equivalent skill level (or above) (i.e., competent and self-sufficient paddlers).”

1. **“Extended remit paddling”:** a trip activity which allows existing agreed CKC Thames Leaders to act as non-Thames leaders under certain defined circumstances. These sea paddlers who lead under this remit are not necessarily qualified BC Sea Leaders as yet.

* Extended remit paddling allows existing CKC Thames Leaders to act as non-Thames leaders under certain defined circumstances.
* This has been an agreed protocol by the CKC Committee, November 2023.
* This protocol has been reviewed within the framework of the CKC risk assessment process and is also included within the CKC Safety Policy and Risk assessment process.
* The protocol has been developed and reviewed so as to operate safely for CKC’s club affiliation agreement with British Canoeing (BC), and thereby its liability responsibilities.
* This protocol was developed within the BC guidance for competence of a member to ‘Lead a Paddlesport’.
* The Extended Remit defined circumstances are reviewed on a three yearly basis by the CKC Committee and the designated Safety Officer. Each time it is, it is documented as being signed off as being reviewed.

The defined circumstances of extended remit are:

* The paddler/ member must already be a CKC Thames Leader, which already have these existing requirements, which in summary are:
* To have completed
  1. Kayak sea leader (moderate water) training,
  2. Coastal Navigation & Tidal Planning (CNTP),
  3. Aquatic first aid,
  4. Foundation safety and rescue training (FSRT),
  5. To be at a Sea Kayak Award or above level paddler,
  6. To have been supervised as competent by two existing Thames Leader,
  7. Have knowledge of the PLA paddling code.
* The paddler/ member must be a currently active sea paddler, i.e., has been paddling on the sea at least once within the past 6 months.
* The paddler/ member must demonstrate recent sea kayak training (within past three years).
* The paddler/ member must have recently been leading Thames trips - 3 or more within the past 12 months.
* The paddler/ member must be familiar with the trip location and have paddled previously in similar conditions (or lesser conditions).
* The other paddlers in the group must be at least Explore (2\*) qualified, or known to the trip leader as a paddler at this level or above.
* Whatever the level of paddler it is still within the discretion of the Trip Lead to decide if any particular paddler is competent enough to join the trip.
* There must be a published trip plan in advance of the trip start.
* There must be a shore-based contact advised of the trip prior to the start and on return. The shore based contact should be advised to raise an alarm with the coastguard if no contact is possible by an agreed time after the planned trip end.
* The other BC standard remit conditions apply: i.e., BC Moderate Water Conditions:
  + Inland: Large areas of open water that exceed the sheltered water definition, where the paddlers are no more than 500 metres offshore and in wind strengths that do not exceed Beaufort force 4.
  + Sea: A stretch of coastline with some areas where it is not easy to land but there will always be straightforward land points a maximum of two nautical miles apart. Crossings not exceeding two nautical miles. Up to 2 knots of tide (but not involving tide race or overfalls). Wind strengths do not exceed Beaufort force 4. Launching and landing through surf (up to 1 metre, trough to crest height).
  + Surf: Sections of sandy beaches free from significant hazard (e.g., rocks and strong rips) and easy access. Gentle, sloping and spilling waves, preferably peeling. Not pitching or dumping. Wave height should be no more than double overhead when seated in a kayak in the trough of the wave (head high for a stand up surfer).

**Leader Activity**

On any led trip the CKC Leaders must:

**Plan, grade and advertise the trip:** Research the area, tides, weather forecasts, group capability, intended launch/break/exits and emergency options – plan a route that is well within the capabilities of the group. The trip should be graded in accordance with CKC grading guidelines (below) and advertised with the grading – so people with suitable experience can sign up.

**Access / Security**: All Thames Leaders have keys to the Brentford Boating Arches (BBA) and codes exist for various padlocks too. The CKC leader will need to arrange access to CKC equipment and ensure it is suitably secured away from BBA.

**Equipment**

* Leader – Map/chart (laminated or in waterproof case), towline & knife, VHF radio, first aid kit, mobile phone (accessible and waterproofed), whistle, spare paddles, pump and spare (dry) clothing.
* All – Buoyancy aid (BA), spray deck, paddle, Appropriate clothing and footwear (including cags), lights if paddling could extend into the dusk (or darkness) (2 per boat), water and food. Consider a hat and/or sunglasses depending on the weather. If in doubt take lights.
* Leader/all – Leader to brief on safest way to get the boats out, (and carry them) and the correct way to secure paddles to boats. Boats should be carried one at a time in pairs.
* All - All damage / kit issues should be tagged immediately (“Do not use” tags are in the cage) and reported to the Kit Officer immediately after the trip.

**Inform.** On-land briefings to include route, likely conditions, re-grouping points, and key information (on-land because briefings on the water are less effective due to difficulty in hearing). Discuss everyone’s abilities and limitations as a group and action in event of a capsize (who will roll, who will swim, who wants a T-Rescue). PLA / local coast guard should be called before the group launches to inform them of numbers and direction of paddle. Radio/call again to inform them that group is off river. Monitor channel 14 when on water. Club call sign is “Chelsea Kayak”.

**Ability.** All paddlers should have the appropriate experience for the trip (see Trip Grading/level, this does not mean they need the formal qualification). At leader’s discretion weaker paddlers may be put in a more stable craft. **It is absolutely the leader’s final call on the ability of a paddler – if they are not comfortable taking them out then they should be left behind.**

**Guests** – all guest paddlers should read the disclaimer and complete their details in the guest log and pay the appropriate fee. The leader should ensure this is done.

**Alcohol -** Any participant the leader believes to have consumed too excessive an amount of alcohol to paddle can be refused participation at the sole discretion of the Leader.

**Health.** Ask the group about any health conditions, chronic or acute, and make sure paddler has correct medication or other strategies to manage.

**Group Management.** Check tides and weather / wave height forecasts. On land (before launch) brief group on the paddle plan and on keeping clear of any hazards / obstacles – e.g., barges, piers, buoys, etc. Hazards can come from behind – other craft. Keep watch all the time. Brief on any signals that may be used during the paddle, or any triggers that necessitate action (e.g., if the group is spread beyond shouting distance – stop; if a capsize occurs – everyone not involved in the rescue raft up). The group should stay in close formation and move together on the leader’s call.

* Maximum group ratio is 1 leader to 8 paddlers. Group size can be increased to 12 if another leader or Level 1 Coach (or above) is present in the group.
* Minimum group size is 3 including the leader. Group size can be reduced to 2 if both are experienced paddlers.
* It is completely at the discretion of the Group Leader to reduce the maximum group size if they prefer (or the conditions/paddle plan necessitate).
* Solo paddling is not permitted.

**Navigation:** Follow progress on a map / chart held on your deck. Monitor against the paddle plan.

**CKC Leader Competency Requirements**

“CKC Leaders” are individuals willing and able to lead who meet the generic and environment specific requirements in Table 1 (below) as appropriate. CKC Leaders must operate within their ability and remit (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Required knowledge and skills for CKC Leaders

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Knowledge / skills** | **Environment Remit (Definitions in Appendix 1)** | | |
| **Very Sheltered Water, Sheltered Inland Water, and Sheltered Tidal Water / Sea.** | **Moderate Sea / Surf 3** | **Advanced Sea / Surf 4** |
| BBA / CKC security / operating protocols | X | X | X |
| Paddling skills appropriate to remit. | X2 | X 1 | X1 |
| Foundation Safety & Rescue Training (FSRT) and / or other rescue skills appropriate to remit 1. | X | X | X |
| Safety leadership and group skills appropriate to remit 1. | X | X | X |
| Valid First Aid qualification | Recommended | X | X |
| VHF use / operation |  | X | X |
| Coastal navigation and tidal planning | Recommended | X | X |
| Open water and tidal planning |  | Recommended | X |
| Two led trips appropriate to remit with two different existing CKC Leaders OR  A Sea Kayak Leader (4\*) / Advanced Sea Kayak Leader (5\*) qualification | X | X | X |
|  |  |  |  |

Supporting Notes:

1. Other professional awards, training and assessment schemes that are of an equal or higher standard are also permissible. Regardless attendance at a BC leaders (or old 4 / 5 Star) training course in any discipline is considered advisable.
2. BC Sea Kayak Award or equivalent level is considered to be a general indication of the level of proficiency. “Moderate Water – Sea Kayak Leader” or “Advanced Water – Sea Kayak Leader” (or old BCU 4 Star) training is recommended.
3. “Moderate Water – Sea Kayak Leader” or “Advanced Water – Sea Kayak Leader” or BC 4 Star, Old BCU Level 3 Coach or equivalent level is considered to be a general indication of the level of proficiency. Moderate Sea / Surf Leaders can also lead on Moderate Inland Water.
4. “Advanced Water – Sea Kayak Leader, BC 5 Star or equivalent level is considered to be a general indication of the level of proficiency. Advanced Sea / Surf Leaders can also lead on Advanced Inland Water.

CKC Leaders must have the ability to judge the conditions and the standard of the group and make appropriate decisions about the planned route along with the need to modify plans as required. On the day the CKC Leader has final say on how things are run and who gets to paddle. They should also be mindful of their own personal ability too and should not feel obliged to operate at the top end of their remit.

CKC Leaders should ensure that they read and clearly understand their agreed remit and the Club’s trip grading guidelines.

**Trip Grading**

Please see the trip grading on the website (under Trip and Session Guidelines) for a comprehensive description of the skill levels required for each trip grade. In summary these are:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Indicative Proficiency** | **Description** |
| **A** | BC Discover and above | Generally more relaxed trips including sheltered tidal areas and flatwater touring trips. |
| **B** | Explore to Sea Kayak Awards | Generally coastal paddles not more than ½ mile (c.800 metres) from the shore **–** potentially some slightly choppy seas, wind below force 4, tide approx 2 knots max. Plenty of opportunity for landing and resting. You are **not** required to be able to roll or self-rescue. These trips will not involve open crossings. Any particular additional prerequisites will be specified. |
| **C** | Sea Kayak Award and above | More testing/advanced conditions or longer paddles where paddle fitness is extremely important. May involve short open crossings. Longer gaps between landing opportunities (more committing paddles) with the potential for more difficult landings and some moderate surf. Potentially some choppy seas, wind up to force 4, tide approx. 2 knots max. |
| **D** | Sea Kayak Coastal Award and above | These trips are for experienced paddlers who are capable of looking after themselves in fairly testing conditions. These trips may well extend beyond the technical Sea Kayak Coastal remit. You would be expected to be able to roll in ‘moderate’ seas (1 **–** 2.5M waves) and be able to perform a self-rescue |

**APPENDIX 1 ENVIRONMENT REMIT DEFINITIONS**

Very Sheltered Water: Quiet canals with easy bankside access and egress; small lakes, which are not large enough, and do not have difficult landing areas for problems to occur it there is a sudden change in conditions; specified sites on gentle, slow moving rivers. The definition implies weather conditions which are not in themselves likely to cause problems. Care must be exercised when water temperatures are low. At any point the paddler will not be >50 metres from the bank.

Sheltered Inland Water: Flat-­‐water rivers; faster flowing, but not involving the shooting of, or playing on weirs or running rapids. Discretion and common sense must apply when considering the use of lakes/lochs. To operate further than 200 metres from shore on a large lake can be a serious undertaking. To paddle in offshore breezes on large lakes requires the same degree of caution as for the sea. Water temperature (especially in Scottish lochs) must always be a consideration. Suitable lagoons or sections of sheltered bays of larger lakes can sometimes be designated “Sheltered” or even “Very Sheltered" water by careful and sensible selection. The definition implies normal conditions. Care must be exercised when water temperatures are low.

Sheltered Tidal Water/Sea: Small enclosed bays, where there is minimal possibility of being blown offshore; enclosed harbours, where there is minimal possibility of being blown offshore; defined beaches (a short section of beach with easy landing throughout, no tide races or overfalls beyond the beach), in conditions in which swimmers and beach craft could be happily, operating winds not above force 3 (force 2 if offshore when greatest of caution must be exercised); the upper reaches of some suitable, slow moving estuaries during Neap tides. In all cases the wind and weather conditions must be favourable.

Moderate Inland Water: Large areas of open water which exceed the sheltered water definition, that are no more than 500m off shore and in wind strengths that do not exceed force 4.

Moderate Tidal Water/Sea: The definition involves: A stretch of coastline or estuary in close proximity to the shore, with available landings at every 1-­‐2 miles / 1 hour and areas where it is not easy to land. Up to a maximum of 2 knots tide but not involving tidal races or overfalls, winds not above force 4 Beaufort sea state 4 (if offshore the greatest of caution must be exercised), or the upper reaches of some estuaries; launching and landing through moderate surf.

Moderate Surf: Beaches that are free of significant hazards (strong rips or undertow, tidal streams, rocks or groynes). An area of beach must be marked out to contain the group and prevent any loss of communication. The area selected must not interfere with other beach users – swimmers and surfers in particular; small to moderate waves – 3 feet maximum.

Advanced Inland Water: Large areas of open water which exceed moderate water and have winds in excess of force 4.

Advanced Tidal Water/Sea: Any journey on the sea where tidal races, overfalls or open crossings may be encountered, which cannot be avoided; Sections of coastline where landings may not be possible or difficult; difficult sea states and/or stronger winds (force 4 or above), launching and landing through moderate surf.

Advanced Surf: The surfing of reefs, points and offshore features; surfing from beaches where the surf height exceeds 3 feet of where stronger winds, cold conditions, rips, long shore drift, rocks or other potential hazards are involved.