RISK ASSESSMENT FOR: Canoeing and Kayaking **Reviewed by Ian Sheldrake 1st October 2025**

HAZARD	Severity	Likelihood	LIST OF CONTROL MEASURES	OVERALL RESIDUAL RISK RATING (Low/Med/High)
RIVER LEVELS			All rivers are subject to fluctuating height and flow. ***Venture Out*** is licensed to operate on different rivers within their remit. ***Venture Out*** mainly uses the River Mersey and draws its information from years of operating on it and has access to live (updated every 15mins) Environment Agency river level recording at two locations. Up river in Stockport ***(Brinksway***) and down river at Northenden (***Northenden)*** Venture Out has a detailed Operating procedure but in Summary. At Northenden is a Victorian Weir which is great fun when the river is low and very dangerous when the river is in a medium flow so we use the following information **RIVER MERSEY TRIP** • **Below 60cm at *N/D*** to run the trip to Northenden and down the weir • **Between 60cm and 80cm at N/D** to run trip BUT NOT RUN WEIR WITH CLIENTS • **Above 80cm at N/D** SENIOR RIVER LEADER CAN MAKE DYNAMIC ASSESSMENTS OF CLIENT GROUP STRUCTURE and NUMBER OF CLIENTS /SUPPORTING ADULTS / OTHER VO STAFF **FIXED SESSION AT BURNAGE RUGBY CLUB ON RIVER MERSEY** The groups need to paddle upstream at the start of the session and then return with the flow and therefore the river flow can prevent that from happening. The ability to run this trip is very dynamic depending on the age (and therefore strength) of the participants. Where the river level is deemed too fast flowing for the group then ***Venture Out*** will provide other land-based activities instead. (above 80cm at Brinksway causes a flow rate which is usually deemed too much)	

			RIVER TAME TRIP The River Tame is a tributary to the Mersey and is a more natural river with small G1 rapids but with lots of trees on the river bank. This trip is used sometimes with older young people. **Venture Out** staff have river level information from **Broomstairs EA gauge. Venture Out** has run trips between 23cm and 60cm**. EACH TRIP IS ALWAYS CONSIDERED DYNAMICALLY AT WHATEVER LEVEL** There are no weirs to paddle over but one that the boats are carried around.	
Drowning	High	Low	• Participants must wear appropriate buoyancy aids throughout the activity. • In the case of capsize, staff to ensure all participants involved are accounted for and safe. • Where non-paddlers are near deep water they too must wear a buoyancy aid • Buoyancy aids checked by staff prior to the session beginning. • Staff vigilance throughout the session to ensure buoyancy aids are worn correctly.	Low
Hypothermia	Medium	Low	• Staff to ensure that clothing is appropriate to the prevailing weather conditions. • Cagoules to be issued whenever participants require them. Special attention to be paid to appropriate headwear. • Staff to carry an appropriate group shelter and survival bag in their safety kit. Location of local telephones to be known by supervising staff and mobile telephones to be carried throughout the activity • Staff to carry appropriate spare clothing throughout the activity	Low
Hit by paddles	Low	**Low**	• Ensure that participants are aware of the dangers of wielding paddles in confined spaces. • If splashing is to be allowed strict rules about distances between boats and the dangers to those in the same boat to be made known. • If rafted canoes are used participants to be made aware of the special dangers of using paddles in confined spaces. • Correct sized paddles to be used. • Staff vigilance throughout the session	Low
Trapped fingers	Low	**Low**	• Warning given during the initial briefing. • Reinforcement of the warnings when the group is to raft up or when rafted canoes are moving towards solid objects. • Staff vigilance and reinforcement throughout the session.	Low

Losing contact	Low	**Low**	• Participants briefed as to the distance they are allowed from staff supervision. A clear system of recall to be arranged prior to the session. • Staff to ensure that contact is not lost at the back of the group.	Low
Golf Courses = hit by ball	Low	**Low**	• Golf courses can be found in areas where a series of golf courses are located on both sides of the river. Advise wearing of helmets.	Low
Objects in water/debris	Low	**Low**	• There are isolated islands of debris, logs or rocks appearing from shallow water. Although visible from a distance, care should be taken to notice these in advance and take the necessary steps to avoid.	Low
Objects from bridges	Medium	**Low**	• There are several bridges (including footbridges) along the rivers and canals, which can be used by young people (children) to throw bricks or other objects. The bridges are visible from distance and canoeists need to be alert when approaching the bridge.	Low
Overhanging trees - entrapment	High	**Low**	• Ensure that participants are well aware of the dangers associated with overhanging trees. Ensure that the participants know what to do if they do become entangled. • Staff to carry emergency equipment to assist with removal from trees if necessary (knife/saw and throw line). • Working areas to be kept as clear as possible by pruning or reporting to appropriate agency for remedial work. • EMAIL ALL FREELANCERS WHERE NEW HAZARDS SPOTTED • Periodic inspection of the river especially after floods or strong winds.	Low
Weil's Disease –ill health	Medium	**Low**	• Ensure that all participants are aware of waterborne disease and the general signs and symptoms of the disease. (part of registration form) • Encourage all participants to wash their hands as soon after the activity. Encourage participants to take showers if they either fall in or decide to swim in the river. • Participants warned to seek medical assistance if they believe they have been infected.	Low.
Hyperthermia, sunburn and dehydration	Medium	**Low**	• Ensure participants are made aware of the dangers when appropriate. The need to cover up and protect the head to be of prime importance. • Staff to carry spare clothing, drink and sun block where appropriate.	Low
	Low	**Low**	• Participants warned to steer away from anglers' lines wherever possible.	Low

Anglers – caught by hooks/line			• Participants warned of the dangers of old line and hooks left in overhanging trees at specific sites throughout the session.	
Equipment failure – injury to participants	Medium	**Low**	• All equipment used to be checked prior to use by the supervising staff. Any damaged or suspect equipment to be withdrawn from service until repaired or scrapped. • Annual recorded checks to buoyancy aids and boats to be carried out as per BCU instructions.	Low
Pinning	Medium	**Low**	• Leader to carry appropriate emergency equipment including saw, knife, throw lines, pulleys, karabiners.	Low
Foot entrapment – in stones	Medium	**Low**	• Leader to carry appropriate emergency equipment including saw, knife, throw lines, karabiners. Paddlers to be informed of safe swim position before start of trip.	Low

Notes

- All leaders should be aware of **Venture Out** 'Emergency procedures' prior to delivering any sessions.
- All coaches to carry first aid kit and repair kit and appropriate equipment for weather conditions
- It is the responsibility of the coach to ensure equipment is safe and appropriate for use prior to each session.
- It is the responsibility of the coach to alert the **Director (Ian Sheldrake)** of broken or damaged equipment, or injury or near miss and to record this information in the Accident and Emergency book. If unclear how to complete this, then contact Ian immediately for support.
- If the coach is unsure of any relevant safety-related matters the problem should be resolved prior to the session
- This is an adventurous sport and some risk is assumed by participants. Removal of all risk is not only impossible but detrimental to the development of participants. However risk versus benefits have to be considered.