

DCC Full River Deben Risk Assessment



Assessor:	Joff Hayes	Date:	8 April 2026
Approver:	David Rich	Date:	10 April 2026
Next review due:	By 31 March 2027	All ongoing DCC risk assessments should be updated as required but in any event should be formally reviewed between January and March every year, to be valid until 31 March of the following calendar year.	

Description of assessment:	This Risk Assessment builds on the Generic Home Water Risk Assessment but covers the complete river from the upper tidal reaches to Felixstowe Ferry / Bawdsey.
Location details:	The River Deben from the upper tidal limits above Wilford Bridge to Felixstowe Ferry / Bawdsey.

What are the Hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks?
Limited Egress particularly between Ramsholt and Bawdsey/ Felixstowe Ferry	Paddlers, Coaches	The River Classification defines this stretch as Moderate Water so a MW endorsed Coach / Leader will lead the group on this stretch. Spraydecks to be worn and fitted between Ramsholt and Bawdsey / Felixstowe Ferry. Go / No go decision at Ramsholt based on groups health & fitness.	
Paddling a long way from base	Paddlers, Coaches	Ensure all participants have any relevant medication with them. Provide a strategy to shorten the trip if required. e.g. leave those struggling at Ramsholt (pub) and continue to collect the cars, recovering paddlers on the way back.	

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Wind & Tide	Paddlers, Coaches	The Deben is a tidal river. Conditions can change significantly if the tide changes, especially if there is a significant wind. Coaches consider the wind and the tide when deciding on the direction and distance to be paddled. Coaches should adjust the paddle if conditions change.	
Loss of Paddler	Paddlers	Initial head count and regular checks Coaches position in and control of the group to prevent issues arising In inclement weather and low light conditions keep the group closer together and if necessary implement strategies to keep control (e.g. numbering, buddying etc.) If there are multiple coaches in one group then one needs to be in overall charge. For larger groups consider a nominated lead and tailend paddler (not necessarily a coach) for effective group control. If multiple groups are on the water at the same time then special care needs to be taken to ensure that paddlers are not lost between groups and the coach leading each group maintains control of all of their group.	
Collision with river objects (Buoys, Piers etc)	Paddlers, Coaches	Paddlers briefed to pass obstruction down river. Obstructions highlighted on the water where appropriate Route planned to avoid significant hazards	
Grounding	Paddlers	Grounding is generally not a big issue in a kayak / canoe. It can become a bigger issue if it leads to the group getting separated, especially in conditions of poor visibility. Extra group control is maintained when there is poor visibility.	

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Other river users	Paddlers, Coaches, other river users	Paddlers instructed to be aware of other river users Moving clear of the main channel early when larger craft are passing	
Capsize / Drowning	Paddlers, Coaches	All paddlers must wear a correctly fitted buoyancy aid (Coaches check novices and give advice) Capsize & reentry practised as part of beginners courses. Closer supervision of novice paddlers Coaches are all trained in capsize technique. Practice sessions in the pool and on the river for this eventuality	Conduct regular practice rescue sessions for coaches
Exhausted paddler	Paddlers	Activity choice appropriate for the group Route choice should take the tide and wind conditions into account so that typically it is a "harder" paddle out compared to back in	
Equipment failure	Paddlers, Coaches	All club equipment is checked periodically Coaches to check newcomers' personal equipment Participants to conduct an equipment check during the pre-paddle brief	
Pollution and water quality	Paddlers, Coaches	Ensure that any participants with open wounds have them covered or don't participate Advise on the potential health hazards Advise on hand washing and bathing soon after immersion Avoid intentional capsizes when there is heavy rain.	Ask about open wounds in the pre-brief

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Slips, Trips and Falls	Paddlers, Coaches, Others	Regular maintenance of the steps at the club house General housekeeping of the clubhouse (internal and external areas)	
Sprains, Strains and soft tissue injuries	Paddlers, Coaches, Others	Training and guidance on lifting crafts correctly Encouraged to paddle correctly with good technique	
Minor injury	Paddlers, Coaches	Identify any medical issues any participants may have at the pre-paddle briefing All deployable coaches are First aid trained	
Hypothermia	Paddlers, Coaches	All participants briefed on the weather conditions Advised on type of clothing to be worn Adjustment to clothing as required	
Hyperthermia / heat exhaustion	Paddlers, Coaches	All participants briefed on the weather conditions Advised on type of clothing to be worn (including sunscreen and hats). Adjustment of clothing as required Adjust pace of paddle and frequent breaks as required Drinks carried by participants as required	
Serious injury / incapacitation	Paddlers, Coaches	Identify any medical issues any participants may have at the pre-paddle briefing Mobile phone carried in a waterproof bag/pouch. Coach and assistants should know where the getout is. All deployable coaches are First aid trained	

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Paddling with other clubs – group management issues	Paddlers	Paddling with another club leads to a risk that paddlers can get missed. DCC leaders to be alert to possible issues.	DCC leaders to keep an extra eye on all paddlers to ensure group control is maintained.

Notes:

a) Items which MUST be carried by the group (usually the leader-in-charge):

- phone in watertight bag – number to be published on the leaders' WhatsApp group
- first aid kit to include reflective blanket
- tow system (which could be the ability to push the paddler in distress or could be a tow belt)
- torch (if paddling at dusk / night)

b) Additionally when paddling beyond Waldringfield, the following otherwise optional items would be expected to be carried:

- split paddles (optional depending on the trip)
- group shelter (optional depending on trip)
- spare food, hot drinks and extra warm clothing (optional – generally for more challenging trips)

c) Optional Items – usually carried for trips further away from base or for longer trips. Leaders should make an active decision about which items are appropriate for any given trip:

- throw line (optional depending on the trip)
- knife
- boat repair kit (optional depending on the trip)

Document history: this risk assessment was first produced on 22 May 2025 and has been kept under regular review since then.