

# **OTLEY SAILING CLUB**

## **OPERATIONAL SAFETY POLICY**

### **FOR MEMBERS OF O.S.C. AT WESTON WATER**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Dinghy sailing is a water sport that can be enjoyed by people of all abilities and ages in a wide range of environments. As in any sport there is, inevitably an element of perceived danger, however small, if the sport is to retain its attraction for participants. Never the less, dinghy sailing, the risks having been properly assessed and managed, is essentially a safe activity. .

It must be stressed that the primary responsibility in water sports rests with the individual and that personal competence developed through thorough training and experience in a wide range of conditions is the most important single factor in achieving adequate safety standards.

Recent events elsewhere have called into question the standards of operational safety at sailing clubs and the competence of individuals running organised water sport centres. Whilst the final outcome is unclear, one possibility is that some form of legislation may appear in due course.

We believe that O.S.C. has an excellent safety record with a good, but largely unwritten, understanding of the standards required, and have been one of the founding principles of the club.

The following document lays down the fundamental safety policy that all Club members shall abide by as a condition of membership.

#### **SCOPE**

To examine all aspects of the use of Weston Water for water sports recognised and controlled by the club, and to produce a policy document for adoption by the club to cover both organised club activities, and individual members on a private basis.

#### **GENERAL SAFETY STATEMENT**

At the outset it shall be recognised and accepted by all members that collectively and individually they have a prime responsibility for the safe use of the club's facilities, both on and off the water to:

- a. Otley Sailing Club.
- b. The General Public.
- c. Other Users

- d. Themselves.
- e. Guests
- f. The Environment.

All organised water sport activities are continuously monitored by the club Race Officer or Duty Officer, the Flag Officers, Training Principal, Senior Instructors and Instructors. Anyone .of these individuals have the authority to curtail sailing entirely or for any single individual if in their considered opinion, continuing with the activity could results in unacceptable risks occurring.

The club is a recognised Training Establishment as defined by the Royal Yachting Association, the governing body for yachting. As such the club is periodically examined to ensure compliance with the high standards required for such an establishment.

All Sailing and Powerboat Instructors hold current R.Y.A. qualifications, are registered and operate under direction from either a Senior Instructor or Principal. A condition of being a registered R.Y.A. Instructor is that a recognised valid First Aid Certificate is held.

A comprehensive sail training programme, organised by the Flag Officer Training is available to all members and covers all levels of competencies. All courses are to R .Y .A. requirements, covering both theoretical and practical aspects of sailing, and are supported by the club's own senior instructors and instructors. The club has an enviable record for training, a principle laid down by founding members. It is through sound training and experience that safe, enjoyable and rewarding sailing is brought to fruition.

The club utilises various types of power boats for monitoring activities on the water and to provide assistance if required .It is recognised that the operation of the power boat imposes different safety considerations on their crews due to, speed, the machinery involved, and having to operate in close proximity with other craft, and more importantly with people in the water. This area will be covered in more detail elsewhere. Powerboat courses to R. Y .A. requirements are made available when the demand is there or alternatively on an individual basis. Currently only members authorized by the General Committee may operate the powerboats.

It has to be accepted that incidents can occur from time to time, however unfortunate that may be due to the environment in which we choose to operate.

The club does not expect that members are polymaths or prophets, but does expect that they exhibit it a competence associated with the reasonably average for the activity. Members are expected to keep up to date particularly with respect to safety related matters.

The very young, the old or infirm may be said to be more at risk than other groups. It is in every member's interest to be aware of the particular difficulties these groups may experience and be particularly vigilant. The offer of assistance will rarely be refused if required.

The above statement relates to all water users, dinghy sailors, board sailors, canoeists swimmers and powerboat activities. The word shall prefixing a statement indicates a Mandatory requirement. The word should indicate an optional requirement.

## ORGANISED CLUB ACTIVITIES

### DINGHY SAILING

#### BUOYANCY TESTING

The obligation to submit every dinghy to an annual buoyancy test as defined, is part of the club rules, and is fundamental to safe operation.

The craft shall be visually examined to determine-, as far as is possible, that the dinghy is of sound construction with no obvious defects, The test shall be performed as follows: -

a) Dinghies with buoyancy bags fitted,

(i) Bags shall be adequately secured to the hull structure.

(ii) The dinghy shall be launched and filled with water to the maximum level. Possible.

(iii) Additional weights to represent crew weight shall be placed in the dinghy.

For single handed dinghies the weight shall be 130lbs minimum.

For two crew dinghies the weight shall be 260lbs minimum,

(iv) The craft shall remain in this state for twenty minutes, and shall remain afloat in the swamped state.

(v) The craft may then be drained of water and the bag securing straps checked again for satisfactory fastening

(vi) Following the successful completion of the above, the craft shall be entered in the club buoyancy test register.

B) Dinghies with integral buoyancy tanks

(i) The buoyancy tank or tanks shall be drained of any water before launching, and the bungs refitted.

(ii) The dinghy shall be launched and filled with water to the maximum level possible

(iii) Additional weights to represent crew weight shall be placed in the dinghy.

For single-handed dinghies the weight shall be 130lb minimum.

For two crew dinghies the weight shall be 260lb minimum.

(iv) The craft shall remain in this state for twenty minutes, and shall remain afloat in the swamped state.

(v) The craft may then be drained of water and the tank or tanks checked for water content

For a dinghy with multiple tanks the maximum allowable amount of water drained per tank shall be six gallons divided by the number of tanks fitted. For a dinghy with a single all round tank the maximum allowable amount of water drained shall be six gallons.

(vi) Following the successful completion of the above, the craft shall be entered on the club buoyancy test register.

(vii) In the event being damaged and repaired, the dinghy shall be re-tested.

#### General

The club may, if circumstances dictate, change the test requirements from time to time. Every dinghy passing the test shall be signed off on the club buoyancy test register by a person or persons designated by the club.

Any dinghy found sailing without having been signed off tested, shall be ordered off the water by any member of the club and not permitted to sail until the club test has been satisfactorily performed

Note that the test described above is specific to dinghies sailing under the direction of OSC at Weston Water.

Members intending to sail at other venues should consult the relevant Class Associations for detailed requirements.

## SEAWORTHINESS

Dinghies should be visually inspected before and after every session to ensure that minor items needing repair or replacement can be attended to efficiently. The task is not onerous and is part and parcel of sailing. Minor spares such as shackles and pins, tape etc. should be carried on the person for immediate use if required.

## PROTECTIVE CLOTHING

Even at the height of summer it would be unusual if some form of protection from the elements were not required when sailing.

The greatest danger associated with sailing is without doubt the combined effect of wind, and low temperature of air and water. The rapid onset of hypothermia is a very real hazard that every sailor must be aware of and protect against.

It is not the intention here to specify the type of specific clothing that should be worn for the wide variations of conditions that pertain. Some general points, forming the basis for adequate protection are offered as follows.

## 1 PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST THE WATER

There are many types of waterproof or water resistant garments available. Many are light and strong and inexpensive. Lightness is important in the event of a capsize. Protection for the head, hands and feet are vital as they represent a major source of body heat loss. Wet suits and dry suits are now in every day use and are recommended to be used in cold conditions in conjunction with protection from the wind.

## 2 PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST THE WIND

The wind is insidious in its effect even on a warm day, and can soon lower the body temperature. Remember that the effect of wind blowing over cool water is much more apparent on the water than on the bank. The double effect of the wind evaporating water from an unprotected or wet body can be quite severe. Again simple garments will allow pleasurable sailing without risk.

## PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST THE SUN

The short term effects of over exposure to the sun is well known and can be painful but can easily be protected against with many preparations being available. The exposed areas such as the head and neck are particularly at risk, and should be covered.

## BOUYANCY AIDS OR LIFEJACKETS

It is a requirement of club membership that every member shall, when sailing, or on a pontoon wear all adequate buoyancy aid or lifejacket, properly fitted and fastened. There shall be no exception to this rule.

The decision as to which type of buoyancy aid to use is a personal one, and is dependent on circumstances. The club may however, in exceptional circumstances, require that a lifejacket be worn.

Buoyancy aids and lifejackets shall carry the B.S.I. "Kite mark " or "E" mark. New requirements in specifications should not be applied retrospectively unless specifically requested by legislation. The items should be cared for and used as directed by the manufacturer. Once again it is stressed that everyone has a personal responsibility for safety, it cannot be delegated or dismissed.

## POWERBOATS AND OPERATIVES

As indicated earlier there is potential conflict between sailing dinghies, board sailors, canoeists, swimmers and powerboats when operating in a relatively confined area. There are particular difficulties when a powerboat is in close proximity with a person or persons in the water, when assistance is being rendered. In practice however, difficulties should not arise when trained, skilled operatives are providing the service in the support craft.

## SUPPORT CRAFT TYPES

The support craft may vary from time to time but currently consist of a Dory, a RIB (Rigid Inflatable Boat) and a displacement craft. There are therefore three different types of craft. Both in appearance, performance and most importantly handling characteristics.

## QUALIFICATIONS FOR OPERATIVES

Due to the requirements briefly outlined above all support craft operatives shall be required to hold as a minimum a valid RYA powerboat level 2 or equivalent with encouragement being given to obtain the more advanced levels.

The Club believes that the RYA level 2 is the minimum acceptable qualification to operate club support craft of any type.

The support craft and its equipment will be fitted out according to the RYA Safety Boat Handbook E16/90 with due allowance s being made for the conditions applying to Weston Water. Similarly the

Club insist that support crew perform their duties in accordance and reference to E19/90 or such documents as the RYA may issue.

Support craft and crew(s) are responsible directly to the Duty Officer or race Officer who shall issue specific verbal instructions as to his or her expectations and requirements depending on the circumstances.

The number and type of support craft that are required to be in attendance is at the discretion of the Duty Officer but shall be sufficient to provide an adequate resource for the prevailing conditions. It should be noted that, particularly in adverse weather conditions the support craft are kept, as valuable time can be lost if support craft are tied up at the pontoon and not on station out on the lake, when assistance is required.

It is strongly recommended that in adverse weather conditions the support craft are kept on station on the lake at all times, only returning to the pontoons for change of crew, or landing of rescued crew, from salvage operations or having been expressly being allowed to by the Duty Officer, In any event any support craft not on station should be ready for immediate use.

## Windsurfers

Novice windsurfers need to be alert to the potential hazards associated with being immersed in water and of being rapidly cooled by the wind. In such circumstances the onset of hypothermia can be dramatic and if not checked can be serious.

In conditions of cold water and strong winds the wearing of a wet suit alone will materially assist in helping to conserve body heat.

Buoyancy aids must be worn at all times, of a type recognized as being appropriate for boardsailing.

Board sailors need to be aware of the potentially relatively high speeds that boards can attain relative to dinghies. The ability to manoeuvre and to avoid collisions applies to board sailors as well as other water users.

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CANOES / KAYAK USE WESTON WATER

NB. The terms (Canadian) Canoe (Open Cockpit) & Kayak (Enclosed Cockpit) & derivatives & boards (For Paddling) to be taken to apply throughout this guideline as relevant in the accepted custom. & Practice of that craft.

These guidelines of the above craft to apply to Weston Water only! Members should not take them to apply to: -

- A) Moving waters of any BCU (British Canoe Union) grade river
- B) Canals.
- C) Large Lakes e.g. Ullswater.
- D) Sheltered or Open Sea Situations.

Prior to use in A) to D) inclusive the relevant additional advice would need to be sought by members.

. Use

Paddlers to: -

- 1) Take into account conditions (Wind Direction & Force, Sun, Water Temperature, Water State, and Imminent Changes) relevant to their fitness and experience levels before and during their paddling.
- 2) Wear suitable clothing and buoyancy- aid relevant to their fitness & experience levels & conditions on the day.
- 3) Take into account other water users.
- 4) Paddle in the area designated by the duty & /or Race Officer or Safety Boat Crew.
- 5) Not paddle by themselves.

Capabilities

Paddlers to be capable to: -

- 1) Exit from full capsize with or without a spray deck.
- 2) Perform self-rescue to shore.
- 3) Assist fellow paddlers if they are the only other craft on the water
- 4) Perform forward s & backwards motion, emergency stop, & steer craft.

N.B. 1) To 4) not to apply necessarily if under qualified instruction at the time at the club.

Equipment

Craft to be: -

- 1) In a seaworthy state including repairs (Including paddles)
- 2) Buoyant enough to stay afloat when full of water either capsized or upright in a Level state fore & aft with either fitted air tanks or fitted airbags or fitted close cell type foam.
- 3) Fitted with fore & aft toggles to aid self-rescue & handling.
- 4) If fitted with fore & aft deck lines these to be tight enough not to hinder capsize exit of paddler.
- 5) Not in an internal state as to hinder / injure / *hamper* the paddlers when exiting from the craft in any situation with this applying to footrests & internal buoyancy also.

## SWIMMING WESTON WATER - NOTES REGARDING SWIMMERS

The club recognises the value of swimming in the development of water confidence, particularly with respect to junior members.

The objective of this note is not to prohibit but to provide a framework within which swimming can take place safely in a controlled manner and in conjunction with sailing activities.

. It is recognised that there are situations where swimming could be seen to be potentially hazardous i.e. in close proximity to powered craft operations.

### SWIMMING SHALL ONLY BE ALLOWED ON THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS.

- 1) Verbal permission from a Committee Member or the Duty Officer is required before swimming can take place.
- 2) A rescue boat shall be on the water, ready to provide immediate assistance if required, crewed by competent persons.
- 3) Swimming shall be restricted to all area designated by a Committee Member or Duty Officer who shall give due consideration to other activities taking in his/her absolute discretion.
- 4) Adequate supervision shall be provided. A Committee Member or Duty Officer may need to delegate the supervision to a responsible person on the bank to control the swimming.
- 5) Personal buoyancy must be worn at all times.
- 6) Under no circumstances shall swimming be allowed unless all of the above criteria are complied with.

## USE OF O.S.C. FACILITIES

### BY A SINGLE PRIVATE MEMBER

The following points apply to all water users; there shall be no exceptions.

The use of the club facilities by a single, lone individual calls for addition circumspection on days when there are no scheduled activities taking place.

In particular the following points must be considered before launching.

1. The prevailing and expected weather conditions.
2. An objective assessment of the experience of the individual relative to (1).
3. The suitability of the type of craft relative to (1) & (2).
4. The lack of support craft to render assistance if difficulties arise.
5. The lack of a qualified First Aider being in attendance.

The above points are not intended to deter lone water sports enthusiasts from participating in their chosen activity.

The club must however, point out that members operating on their own must expect to be responsible for, and accept the consequence of their actions.

The golden rule must be if in doubt, don't launch

Parents are reminded that they are responsible for children and junior members in their care at all times.

#### NOTE FOR WINDSURFERS

Perhaps the most significant difference with respect to dinghy sailing and safety requirements is that windsurfing must be regarded as a total immersion sport, that is where considerable amount of time is spent totally immersed in water.

Attention to the wearing of adequate clothing is, therefore, imperative. Particular attention should be paid to adequate protection for the hands, feet and head, to reduce heat loss

As with all water sports activities, participants shall acquaint themselves with the perceived dangers, that they are exposing themselves to. With windsurfers this must be hypothermia and the consequences. Relative to dinghy sailing the activity will always be colder, even in summer.

#### FLOA T COATS OR BUOYANCY AIDS

## ARE MANDATORY

In addition the following points needs to be addressed.

1. Beginners should stay within sight of the clubhouse.
2. Alert a responsible person on shore before going out.
3. If you start to feel cold or tired come in immediately. 4. Stay with your equipment.
5. Know how to signal for help.
6. Be aware of other water users. Windsurfers are fast, take extra care when changing course.
7. Windsurfers have the same rights, and obligations under the "Collision Regulations" as any other water user. Study them and follow them. Racing dinghies do not have 'automatic rights of Way'.
8. windsurfers converting to short boards must ensure that they are competent at upwind sailing, water starting and up hauling.
9. know how to self-rescue.
10. Never sail unless your equipment is safe and sound.

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