

Risk Assessment – Thamesmead Wild Water Race

Event: Thamesmead – Wild Water Race (WWR)

Date: Saturday 13th December 2025

Location: Southmere Watersports Centre, Bazalgette Way, Thamesmead, SE2 9AN

Organised by: The Sharks Canoe Club

Assessment Completed by: Grant Underwood

Assessment Date: Tuesday 23rd September 2025

Safety Officer: Aaron Nolan

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1. Event Overview

The Thamesmead Wild Water Race is a flatwater sprint event held on Southmere Lake, Thamesmead. The course is approximately 500m, and loops anti-clockwise around the Southmere Water Fountain, starting at Cygnet Square and finishing at Southmere Watersports Centre. The event welcomes paddlers of all ages and abilities, across multiple craft types. The course will be clearly marked, with safety personnel positioned on the water and bank-side for the duration of all race activities.

2. River Grade and Hazards

- **Water Classification:** Flatwater (Grade 0) – Southmere Lake is a stillwater body with no current.
- **Primary Feature:** A large decorative fountain in the centre of the lake. Paddlers must race around it as part of the course but should avoid getting too close or holding onto it.
- **Additional Hazards:**
 - Floating debris or aquatic vegetation (to be cleared pre-race)
 - Slippery bank edges – marshals will direct paddlers to safe launch points
 - Wind and spray may affect balance, particularly for SUP paddlers

3. Key Hazards & Controls

Hazard	Risk Level	Who is at Risk?	Controls / Mitigations
Collision with fountain	Low	Paddlers	Paddlers instructed to navigate around the fountain without holding onto it; safety briefings stress caution near the
Collision between paddlers	Low	Paddlers	Course design provides ample space; marshals monitor and manage start intervals; competitor briefing includes collision avoidance guidance.
Capsizing	Collision, injury	Paddlers	Self-rescue techniques explained during briefing; competitors must assist capsized paddlers when safe to do so; safety boats patrol the course and two remain at the finish line for rapid response.
Cold water exposure	hypothermia	Paddlers	Warm blankets available at finish; showers and changing facilities provided onsite to prevent and treat cold exposure.
Slips/trips on bank	Minor injury	Paddlers, volunteers, spectators	Event area kept clear; access points monitored; signage where needed
Congestion at start/finish	Collision, confusion	Paddlers	Controlled starts, clear spacing instructions, designated finish area
Entrapment or injury	Low	Paddlers	No underwater hazards present; lake bottom free of obstructions; safety team trained in rescue procedures.
Inexperienced paddlers	Misjudged navigation, panic in water	Paddlers	Safety briefings mandatory; coaches on site; encouragement to self-assess capability
Equipment failure	Loss of control	Paddlers	Paddlers responsible for checking equipment; random checks by officials possible
Weather changes	Low - Moderate	Everyone	Forecasts monitored; activities paused or modified as required.
Access & egress	Low	Paddler	Multiple safe launch and exit points with good access; clear pathways maintained for emergency and participant

4. Safety Measures

- Dedicated safety team briefed and equipped with radios and rescue equipment, including throw lines and rescue boats.
- PaddleUK-qualified first aiders and event medics on site throughout the event.
- Pre-race competitor briefing covering course layout, hazards, safety protocols, and emergency procedures.
- Competency guidelines communicated pre-event; event team reserves the right to restrict participation based on skill and safety considerations.
- Marshals and signage guide paddlers and spectators safely around the venue and course area.
- Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) and Helmets mandatory for all participants.

5. Emergency Plan

- **In-Water Incident:** On-water safety personnel will assist and rescue paddlers as needed; bankside marshals coordinate additional support and medical response if required.
- **Serious Injury or Medical Emergency:** Immediate first aid administered by qualified personnel; emergency services contacted without delay via event communication channels.
- **Evacuation Routes:** Clear, unobstructed access maintained to all key points on the lake and event site for emergency vehicles and personnel.