

Risk Assessment – Lee Valley Legacy Project

Event: Lee Valley Legacy Project – *White Water Experience + Wild Water Race*

Organiser: Grant Underwood

Affiliation: The Sharks

Date: Saturday, 14th March 2026

Location: Lee Valley White Water Centre, Station Road, Waltham Cross, EN9 1AB

Assessment Completed by: Grant Underwood

Assessment Date: Wednesday, 4th February 2026

Safety Officer: Giles Brunning

First Aid Lead: Neal Underwood

Contact Email: canoeing@thesharks.org.uk

Contact Number: 07951 770241

1. Event Overview

This event is a combined **white water development and Wild Water Racing (WWR) day**, aimed at **grassroots paddlers and clubs**. The focus is on **confidence-building, skills development on moving water**, and providing an **accessible introduction to Wild Water Racing and slalom racing** within a controlled, artificial environment.

The event will consist of:

- **13:45:** A compulsory safety briefing for all participants
- **14:30-16:30:** A coached white water development and confidence-building session
- **16:30-17:30:** A scheduled break period
- **17:30-19:30:** Two blocks of timed racing runs

The event is open to **mixed abilities and boat types**, including GP kayaks, slalom boats, Wavehoppers, and Wild Water Racing boats. Safety cover, marshals, and experienced coaches will be present throughout to support all water users.

The event will be run on the **Lee Valley Legacy Course**, an artificial white water course offering **consistent conditions** and **established safety infrastructure**, making it well suited to development activity and first experiences of white water racing.

Available facilities include:

- Artificial white water course (Legacy Course)
- Heated building providing warm shelter
- Changing rooms and hot showers
- Toilets
- Café and vending machines (hot and cold drinks)
- On-site parking

These facilities provide essential **welfare support, warmth, and shelter**, particularly important in the event of cold exposure or adverse weather conditions.

2. River Grade and Environment

The **Lee Valley Legacy Course** is an **artificial white water course operating at approximately Grade 2–3**. As an artificial course, water levels and features are consistent and predictable, providing a controlled environment compared with natural rivers.

Course characteristics

- Artificial block systems designed to create rapids, stoppers, waves, and eddy lines
- Limited slack water for eddying in and out
- Narrow channel in places, increasing the likelihood of paddlers catching one another
- High, domed concrete banks preventing climbing out except at designated exit points

Hydro pump system

Water is circulated via **hydro pumps**, which draw water from the holding pond and pump it to the top of the course to generate flow.

These systems are:

- Fully shielded behind mesh fencing
- Clearly signed
- Inaccessible during normal operation

Seasonal environmental considerations

- **March conditions** are typically cold and may be wet
- The venue is elevated and exposed, meaning **wind chill** may be present
- Increased risk of cold exposure and hypothermia for water users and safety personnel

3. Key Hazards & Controls

| Hazard | Risk Level | Who is at Risk? | Controls / Mitigations |
|--|------------|--|---|
| Artificial white water (Grade 2–3) | Medium | Paddlers, water users | Mandatory safety briefing; appropriate boat choice encouraged; coached support available; safety cover positioned along course |
| Collision with artificial obstacles (blocks, features) | Medium | Paddlers, water users | Water levels assessed before event; Safety Officer to monitor conditions; helmets and buoyancy aids compulsory; safety cover on water and bank; controlled start intervals; briefing on reading water and line choice |
| Collision between paddlers | Medium | Paddlers | Staggered starts managed by marshals; course marshals monitoring flow; briefing covers overtaking and stopping procedures |
| Capsize and swim | Medium | Water users | Self-rescue techniques explained; safety cover present on course; compulsory buoyancy aids, helmets, spraydecks, and airbags |
| Entrapment in boat or equipment failure | Low/Medium | Paddlers, water users | Airbags compulsory; boat checks conducted; safety team trained in white water rescue; paddlers briefed on emergency exits |
| Stoppers (risk of recirculation) | Medium | Inexperienced / fatigued paddlers, water users | Coaches available to advise; safety positioned near key features; briefing on how to negotiate stoppers |
| Towpath slips, trips, falls | Low/Medium | All participants | Suitable footwear compulsory (sole thicker than top); equipment kept clear of paths; signage and marshal supervision |
| Grass areas (wet weather slips) | Low/Medium | All participants | Participants discouraged from using grass areas for access; used only for boat storage where necessary |

| | | | |
|---|------------|--------------------------|--|
| Congestion at start / finish areas | Low/Medium | Paddlers | Controlled start system; designated finish holding area; marshals manage escalator access |
| Escalator malfunction or loss of traction | Low | Paddlers | Marshal-controlled spacing; clear instructions; risk explained in briefing |
| High course walls preventing exit | Medium | Water users | Designated exit points only; safety marshals assist exits; briefing covers exit procedures |
| Cold water exposure / hypothermia | Medium | Paddlers, water users | Advice on suitable clothing; warm shelter, showers, and blankets available; event paused if conditions deteriorate |
| Inexperienced paddlers | Medium | Water users | Mandatory briefing; coached support; organiser reserves right to restrict participation if unsafe |
| Equipment failure (boats, paddles, airbags) | Low/Medium | Paddlers | Competitor responsibility for checks; random checks by officials; limited spares available |
| Sunken or submerged boats | Low | Paddlers, water users | Airbags compulsory; boats inspected before being allowed on course |
| Hydro pumps and mechanical systems | Low | All participants | Pumps shielded and signed; participants instructed to stay clear; marshals monitor area |
| Road traffic within site | Low | All participants | Adherence to site speed limits; safe carrying of equipment; awareness raised during briefing |
| Parking congestion | Low/Medium | All participants, public | Designated parking areas; clear signage; unloading encouraged with care |
| Weather changes | Medium | All participants | Weather monitored; clothing guidance provided; event delayed or cancelled if unsafe |
| Weil's Disease (Leptospirosis) | Low | All water users | Advice given in briefing; hygiene guidance provided; symptoms explained and medical advice encouraged |

4. Safety Measures

- Mandatory **safety briefing** for all participants
- Compulsory equipment: helmet, buoyancy aid, spraydeck, and **appropriate-sized airbags in all boats**
- Event team reserves the right to restrict or stop participation if unsafe
- Safety cover positioned at key points along the course
- Controlled starts and finishes managed by marshals
- Warm shelter, hot showers, and blankets available throughout the day
- Event management and marshals will have access to **mobile phone communication and WhatsApp groups**
- Multiple mobile devices using different network providers available
- Lee Valley White Water Centre has access to an **emergency landline phone**

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Event Organiser:** Overall responsibility for event safety and decision-making
- **Safety Lead:** Oversees safety operations and emergency response
- **On-Water Safety:** Responds to capsizes, swimmers, and rescues
- **First Aider:** Provides first aid and coordinates medical response
- **Start & Finish Officer (Timing):** Manages starts, finishes, and timing operations
- **Marshals:** Control flow at key points (start, finish, escalator, towpath)
- **Coaches:** Support paddlers during development sessions and racing
- **Photographer:** Operates only from designated safe areas

6. Emergency Plan

- **Incident Control:** Event organiser assumes overall control in an emergency
- **Immediate Response:** Safety team initiates rescue using white water rescue techniques

- **Medical Emergency:** Lee Valley White Water Centre staff alerted immediately; emergency services contacted via 999 if required
- **Access for Emergency Services:** Clear access routes maintained at all times
- **Evacuation:** Participants directed to warm shelter or designated safe areas
- **Incident Reporting:** All incidents recorded and reported to relevant governing bodies