

# Risk Assessment – Shepperton Triple Challenge Weekend 2026

**Event:** Shepperton Triple Challenge:

- Double Division 3/4 Slalom
- London Open Wild Water Racing Sprint Championships
- The Pan Galactic End Cockpit Canoe Double Championships

**Organiser:** Grant Underwood

**Affiliation:** The Sharks

**Date:** Saturday, 23rd | Sunday, 24th | Monday, 25th May 2026.

**Location:** Shepperton Slalom Canoe Club, Shepperton Lock Island, Ferry Lane, Shepperton, TW17 9LW

**Assessment Completed by:** Grant Underwood

**Assessment Date:** Monday, 14th April 2025

**Assessment Updated:** Wednesday, 15th April 2026

**Safety Officer:** Rick Moore

**First Aid Lead:** Neal Underwood

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## 1. Event Overview

The **Shepperton Triple Challenge Weekend** is a multi-discipline paddling event combining training, racing, and social activity across three days.

The event includes:

- Division 3/4 Slalom (ranking events)
- London Open Wild Water Racing Sprint Championships
- Pan Galactic End Cockpit Canoe Double Championships
- Open practice and coached sessions in both slalom and wild water racing

The weekend is designed to provide a **fun and friendly environment** where paddlers can develop skills, gain race experience, and enjoy time on the water and within the paddling community.

Participants range from beginners to experienced paddlers, with structured coaching and safety support throughout.

### **Event Schedule & Activity Flow**

#### **Saturday (Training & Practice Focus)**

- Check-in: From 09:00
- Slalom Training (coached): 11:00 – 14:00
- Wild Water Racing Training (coached): 15:00 – 16:30
- Open practice throughout the day

#### **Sunday (Competition Day 1)**

- Check-in: From 09:00
- Slalom (Division 3/4): Starts 11:00
- Wild Water Racing Safety Briefing: 15:30
- Wild Water Racing Sprint Championships: ~16:00 (dependent on slalom progress)

#### **Monday (Competition Day 2)**

- Check-in: From 09:00
- Slalom (Division 3/4): Starts 11:00
- Pan Galactic End Cockpit Canoe Double Championships: Afternoon session (scheduled around racing break)

## 2. River Grade and Environment

**Water Type:** River Thames (controlled weir system)

**Grade:** 1–2

The event takes place on the **River Thames at Shepperton Lock**, a natural river environment influenced by a controlled weir system. Under typical late spring conditions, the course operates at approximately **Grade 1–2**, providing a **moderate moving water environment** suitable for a wide range of paddlers, from beginners to experienced competitors.

While generally consistent due to regulation by the Environment Agency, **conditions may change in rare circumstances** (e.g. after heavy rainfall or river level adjustments), potentially increasing flow speed, turbulence, and feature size.

### Understanding Grade 1–2 Water

- **Grade 1:** Slow-moving water with small waves and minimal obstacles. Low risk, suitable for beginners learning boat control and moving water skills.
- **Grade 2:** Faster flow with defined channels, small waves, and stoppers. Requires basic manoeuvring skills and awareness of water movement. Capsizes are possible, but hazards are generally straightforward to manage.

### At Shepperton, this creates an environment that is:

- Progressive and confidence-building
- Suitable for skill development and racing
- Dynamic enough to introduce real moving water challenges

### Course Characteristics

- **Man-made weir system** using sluice gates to control flow
- Creation of waves, stoppers, and eddy lines depending on settings
- **Relatively short, defined course** ideal for slalom and sprint racing
- **Narrow sections**, including areas near concrete blocks, increasing pinning risk
- **Accessible slack water and eddies**, allowing recovery, regrouping, and observation
- **Designated paddling area** slightly offset from main river navigation
- **Low concrete banks** along much of the course, allowing exit at multiple points
- **Slalom poles suspended above water**, requiring helmet use due to impact risk

## Natural River Considerations

As a natural river environment:

- Flow is **not entirely fixed** and may vary slightly throughout the day
- Debris (e.g. small branches) may occasionally be present
- Features are **less uniform** than artificial venues, requiring active reading of water

## Interaction with Main Navigation

The slalom site is located just off the main navigation channel of the River Thames. However:

- Paddlers can easily access the main river if not attentive
- The navigation may include:
  - Rowers (who often have limited forward visibility)
  - Powered craft

This introduces a **low to moderate external risk**, requiring awareness and adherence to designated paddling zones.

## Environmental & Seasonal Considerations (Late May)

- Conditions are typically **mild to warm**, often with sunny weather
- Low risk of cold-water shock or hypothermia, though immersion is still possible
- Increased risk of heat-related issues, including:
  - Dehydration
  - Sunburn
  - Fatigue from prolonged exposure
- **Natural shade** is available from surrounding trees
- Weather can still be variable (rain, wind), impacting comfort and water conditions

### 3. Key Hazards & Controls

Hazard	Risk	Who is at Risk?	Controls / Mitigations
White water (Grade 1-2)	Medium	Paddlers, water users	Mandatory safety briefing; clear explanation of water features; appropriate boat choice encouraged; coached support available; safety cover positioned along course; paddlers advised to operate within their ability level.
Fatigue Leading to Reduced Decision-Making	Medium	Paddlers	Structured rest period; Encouragement to observe between runs; Active monitoring by coaching staff; Authority to restrict further runs if required.
Collision with artificial obstacles (concrete 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, 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	Awareness raised during briefing; appropriate footwear encouraged; designated pathways used where possible; marshals monitor high-traffic areas; extra caution advised in wet conditions.

Heat, sun exposure, and dehydration	Low–Medium	All participants, volunteers	Participants advised to bring water, sun protection, and appropriate clothing; access to shaded areas and shelter; onsite café and welfare facilities available; monitoring for signs of heat-related illness.
Congestion at start / finish areas	Low/Medium	Paddlers	Controlled start system; designated finish area; marshals manage access
Cold water exposure / hypothermia	Medium	Paddlers, water users	Low seasonal risk highlighted in briefing; appropriate clothing encouraged; limited time in water due to short sprint format; safety cover enables rapid recovery; access to shelter and warm facilities; monitoring for early signs of cold exposure.
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
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

Temporary gazebo / event shelter becoming unstable or causing obstruction	Low–Medium	Event staff, volunteers, paddlers, spectators, members of the public	Gazebo erected only by competent event staff or volunteers; Structure secured using appropriate leg weights/ballast on all corners; Gazebo additionally tethered using guide ropes/guy lines where possible; Structure positioned away from primary pedestrian routes to minimise interaction; Guy lines positioned to reduce trip hazards and monitored throughout event; Where ropes cross potential walking routes they will be clearly visible and communicated during briefing; Weather conditions monitored throughout the event; In the event of strong winds or deteriorating weather conditions the gazebo will be lowered or dismantled; Manual handling managed with minimum two-person setup and dismantling; Participants and spectators advised not to lean on or interfere with structure or tethering lines.
Top of weir / sluice gates	High	Paddlers	Strict instruction not to paddle within reaching distance of sluice gates; clearly defined upper boundary; safety briefing emphasising hazard; supervision during sessions.
Overflow channels (strong stoppers)	High	Paddlers	Paddlers instructed to remain at least 1–2 boat lengths away; danger signage in place; hazards highlighted in safety briefing; supervision and coaching guidance to reinforce safe zones.
River traffic – powered craft	Medium	Paddlers, water users	Paddlers advised to remain within designated paddling area; briefing on navigation awareness; if overtaking is necessary, paddlers instructed to pass on the left side of powered craft; vigilance emphasised at all times.
River traffic – rowing boats	Medium	Paddlers, rowers, water users	Paddlers briefed that rowers have limited forward visibility; instruction to keep clear and give way; heightened awareness near main navigation; supervision at access points.
Jetty access (steep entry/exit)	Medium	Paddlers, volunteers, spectators	Use of railings encouraged; assistance encouraged when carrying boats; extra support for less experienced paddlers.
Manual handling (carrying boats)	Low/Medium	Paddlers, particularly U18s	Recommended two-person carry (nose and tail); guidance provided during briefing; assistance encouraged for heavier boats (e.g. C2); avoid rushing when moving equipment

Camping and overnight stay	Low/Medium	Participants staying onsite	Use of designated camping areas; access to toilets and showers; appropriate clothing and shelter; adherence to site rules; safe cooking practices if applicable
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#### 4. Safety Measures

- Mandatory safety briefing for all participants
- Separate operational briefing for safety personnel
- Pre-event course walk-through
- Equipment inspection and visible approval system

##### **Mandatory Equipment:**

- Helmet (EN approved)
- Buoyancy aid (EN approved)
- Airbags (correct size and securely fitted)

The event team reserves the right to restrict participation if safety standards are not met.

##### **Operational Controls:**

- Safety cover at key points
- Controlled starts and finishes
- Maximum 3–4 paddlers on course
- Downstream-only paddling
- Mobile communication across event team (multiple networks)

##### **Coaching & Staffing:**

Participating clubs are encouraged to bring coaches.

All coaches attend a briefing covering:

- Roles and positioning

- Communication
- Rescue and extraction protocols
- Identification of higher-risk sections

This ensures a strong ratio of experienced personnel to paddlers.

### **Infrastructure Transparency:**

A pre-event visual check of course features will be conducted with Shepperton Slalom Canoe Club to establish shared understanding of conditions prior to activity.

## **5. Emergency & Incident Plan**

### **Pinning Incident**

- Immediate stop to racing
- Upstream course held clear
- Safety team deployed
- Manual or rope-based extraction
- Casualty moved to bank
- Full reassessment before restart

### **Infrastructure Contact**

- Immediate notification to Shepperton Slalom Canoe Club
- Activity paused if required
- Incident recorded

### **Medical Emergency**

- Immediate response from safety team

- First aid administered
- Emergency services (999) contacted if required
- Clear access maintained

### **Evacuation**

- Participants directed to designated safe area or shelter

### **Incident Reporting**

All incidents recorded and reported in line with governing body requirements.

### **Overview**

- **Incident Control:** Event organiser
- **Immediate Response:** Safety team
- **Medical:** First Aid Lead / Emergency services
- **Access:** Maintained at all times
- **Evacuation:** Directed to safe areas
- **Reporting:** Formal documentation completed

## **6. 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

## **7. Insurance & Compliance**

- Event covered under club and governing body insurance
- Equipment compliance checks conducted
- Organisers reserve the right to restrict or stop participation if unsafe