

CARDINGTON WAVEHOPPER RACE | THE FIRST EVER EVENT

Hosted by The Sharks in partnership with Viking Kayak Club

Date: Saturday 20th June 2026 | **Location:** Viking Kayak Club, Priory Country Park, Cardington, Bedford (MK44 3JZ) | **Distance:** ~120m (Approx. 60+ seconds racing time) | **Format:** Sprint – multiple runs, fastest time wins | **Entry Fee:** £5-7 (Juniors & Seniors) | www.thesharks.org.uk



Why Cardington? Why Now?

Cardington White Water Course represents a unique opportunity to grow paddlesport in an accessible, central location.

Set within the beautiful Priory Country Park and fed by the River Great Ouse, this venue combines safe, consistent white water with a welcoming environment – making it ideal for introducing new paddlers to moving water and racing.

This event is more than a race. It's a step towards:

- Expanding Wild Water Racing opportunities in the Eastern Region
- Creating accessible competition pathways for developing paddlers
- Strengthening collaboration between clubs
- Building momentum towards future Wavehopper events and Championships

With strong links to nearby paddling communities — London, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Cambridge, Oxford, Nottingham, and Birmingham — Cardington is perfectly placed to become a key hub for development.

What is Wavehopper Racing?

Wavehopper Racing is where white water meets pure racing excitement. Designed as an entry point into Wild Water Racing (WWR), it removes barriers and focuses on what matters: skill, decision-making, and the experience of racing moving water. It's simple: **you against the clock.**

Choose your line.
Play it safe — or take risks that could win seconds.
Every run is a chance to learn, improve, and push further.

At the centre of it all is the Wavehopper kayak — a durable, stable, and surprisingly fast 4-metre plastic boat built to handle everything from gentle flow to dynamic rapids.

What to Expect

Wild Water / Wavehopper Racing includes two formats:

Sprint Racing

Short, intense efforts (~1–2 minutes) requiring power, precision, and commitment.

Classic Racing

Longer races (10–25 minutes) testing endurance, pacing, and river reading. This event focuses on the Sprint format.

Why Give It a Go?

Wavehopper Racing is one of the most accessible and rewarding ways to get into competitive paddlesport:

Start where you are

No specialist kit required. Use your own boat — whether that's a Wavehopper, slalom kayak, or general purpose boat — or borrow one on the day, with a range of boats available to use.

A level playing field

Often, paddlers race similar boats — making skill and decision-making the difference.

Built for progression

A natural pathway: *General Purpose* → *Slalom* → *Wavehopper* → *Composite WWR*

Fun, social, competitive

Race hard, learn loads, and share the experience with paddlers of all ages and abilities.

Who is This Event For?

If you paddle, you belong here.

This event has been designed to be welcoming, supportive, and confidence-building for:

- Paddlers new to white water
- Those curious about Wild Water Racing
- Flatwater paddlers ready to progress
- Slalom paddlers developing river skills
- Experienced racers seeking a fun sprint format
- Juniors, seniors, masters, families, and clubs

Whether it's your first race or your fiftieth — this is your space to step in and give it a go.

Venue & Facilities

Priory Country Park offers a scenic and well-equipped setting for a full day of paddling:

- Artificial white water course with consistent flow
- Access to the River Great Ouse for warm-ups and paddling
- Free parking adjacent to the venue
- Camping and caravanning available
- Food tent with hot/cold drinks (often including vegetarian/vegan options)
- Portaloo facilities onsite

The venue is just 2.5km from Bedford town centre, with easy access to shops, cafes, and restaurants.

Wildlife is a highlight of the park — expect to spot deer, foxes, and a variety of birdlife throughout the day.

Safety equipment (helmet & buoyancy aid) is mandatory on the white water course.

Event Schedule (Provisional)

10:00 – 16:30 | Division 2, 3 & 4 Slalom

Hosted by Viking Kayak Club

A supportive and well-run ranking event, ideal for:

- Developing paddlers
- Building confidence on moving water
- Learning lines, eddies, and flow
- Preparing for the Wavehopper race

Expect a friendly atmosphere, encouragement from the bank, and plenty of support.

Lunch Break & Community Time

A chance to connect, refuel, and share paddling experiences.

17:00 – 18:30 | Wavehopper Wild Water Sprint

Organised by The Sharks

- Multiple runs where possible
 - Fastest time wins
 - Continuous racing format
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Wavehopper Race Format

Starting from the pool, paddlers accelerate into **Grade 2 water**, dropping onto the course and navigating downstream through waves and the Rapid Bloc features.

The course encourages good decision-making — choosing lines, maintaining speed, and staying in control throughout the run.

It finishes with the **1.7 metre drop**, followed by a short sprint to the finish line.



Sprint Format – multiple runs encouraged!

Your **best two times** submitted to the WWR Committee

Distance: ~120m | **Race time:** ~60+ seconds racing time

Check-in: 13:00 | Safety Briefing: 16:45 | Race Start: 17:00 | Prize Giving: ~19:45 (TBC)

Race Categories

- **Wavehopper (K1)** – Men / Women / Non-binary
 - **Slalom Kayak (K1)** – Men / Women / Non-binary
 - **Non-Composite (General Purpose)** – Men / Women / Non-binary
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Age Categories

Junior 8 | J10 | J12 | J16 | J18 | U23
Senior | Masters 35 | M40 | M45 | M50 | M55 | M60
Veterans 70 | V80 | V90 | V100+

Ages based on 1st January of the competition year.

Prizes & Awards



Medals for fastest paddlers in each age category



Certificates for all finishers, including recorded race times

Entry & Payment

Entries via the Wild Water Racing website

Entry Fee: £7 per paddler.

A discounted entry of **£5** is available for those who have pre-entered the Cardington Division 2, 3, or 4 Slalom.

- On-the-day payment accepted (cash or card)
- Early entry encouraged to support event planning
- **Please note:** this entry is for the Wavehopper Wild Water Race only. *Entries for the Cardington Slalom event must be made separately via the Canoe Slalom website:*
www.canoeslalom.co.uk

Contact: canoeing@thesharks.org.uk

The Sharks are a not-for-profit community club — your participation directly supports the growth of paddlesport. **Donations are warmly welcomed.**

Bank Details

Account Name: The Sharks Sports Group CIC

Account Number: 67417911

Sort Code: 08-92-99

Looking Ahead – The Wavehopper Series Begins

This is just the beginning.

The Cardington Wavehopper Race launches a new opportunity for paddlers across the region — creating accessible, regular racing that supports development from grassroots through to national level.

Plans are already in motion for a follow-up event in September, building towards a stronger Wavehopper competition pathway and future Championships.

By taking part, you're helping to:

- Grow Wild Water Racing in accessible locations
- Create more opportunities for paddlers of all levels
- Build a stronger, more connected paddling community

Be Part of It

Whether you're racing, learning, supporting, or simply watching from the bank — **This is your moment.**

Be bold.

Build confidence.

Shape the future of UK paddlesports.

www.thesharks.org.uk