



Membership Manual

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Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Sligo Kayak Club

The Sligo Kayak Club was established in April 2009 by network of paddlers in the North-West. The club was initially founded in co-operation with Sligo Borough Council and with the help of grant aid from the Sligo Sport and Recreation Partnership.

The club is overseen by a democratically elected committee consisting of a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Safety Officer, Training Officer and Children's Officer.

Sligo Kayak Club is a non-profit organisation. Committee members work on a completely voluntary basis.

1.2 - Aims & Objectives

The objectives of Sligo Kayak Club are:

- To promote the sport and recreation of kayaking.
- To facilitate kayaking activities for its members.
- To facilitate relevant education and training in the discipline of Kayaking
- To safeguard the wellbeing of its members

1.3 - Club Activities

The club welcomes new members and provides opportunities for participants of diverse age and ability levels. Sligo Kayak Club has active participants in flat water, river running, freestyle, surf and sea kayaking. The club has an active junior section and runs paddle proficiency courses on a regular basis.

Other activities facilitated by the Club include:

- Proficiency Training and Assessments
- Equipment Rental
- Safety Training
- Rescue Events
- Pool Sessions
- Social Events and Fundraisers
- Sligo Kayak Club Member's Manual



Section 2 – Kayaking Information

2.1 - General Rules

These three golden rules of kayaking apply at all times to all kayaking.

- Never paddle alone (Less than 3 should never be)
- Always wear a Buoyancy Aid and helmet.
- You must be able to swim (with buoyancy aid)

2.2 - Types of Kayaking

There are many different types of kayaking. In Ireland Rivers are classified using a grading system. It is important to note that river grading is not an exact system and is subject to regional or individual interpretations. Below is a brief guideline of the types of kayaking done by Sligo Kayak Club members.

2.2.1 - Flat-water Kayaking

Flat water kayaking includes lakeshore conditions within swimming reach of the bank with no currents and in moderate weather conditions. Even in these comparatively safe conditions utmost care must be taken, as there is always a risk of injury or death on or around water.

2.2.2 - White-water Kayaking

White water kayaking is a high-risk application of kayaking. White Water Rivers are hazardous locations and as such every precaution needs to be taken to ensure people's safety. The first step to safe kayaking on white water is a clear knowledge of the risks involved so people can make their own informed decision whether or not white water is suitable for them.

White water is paddling on a river of turbulent moving waters called rapids. The rapids are formed by gradient changes, width, depth and direction changes, and rocks and other obstructions in the river.

River difficulty danger is broadly categorised into a grading system. This system is known as the International Grading System.

- Grade 1 - Moving water, unobstructed and without technical difficulties. There may be small waves and ripples to challenge the paddler.



- Grade 2 - Waves, weirs, small stoppers and other minor obstructions to avoid. Eddies and cushion waves may be strong.
- Grade 3 - Waves, stoppers and technical difficulties are more severe. There may be drops and powerful constrictions. The main distinguishing factor of Grade 3 water is that the paddler will have to follow a recognisable route to avoid obstacles and hazards.
- Grade 4 - Severe waves, drops, stoppers and other obstructions. The route is not easily recognisable and will usually require careful inspection from the boat or bank.
- Grade 5 - Extremely difficult rapids with precise and technically demanding routes to be followed. Stoppers, currents and waves will be powerful and inspection is essential.
- Grade 6 - All of the above carried to extremes. Grade 6 usually means unrunnable rapids.

2.2.3 - Kayak Surfing

Kayaks can be taken into surf and ride waves in ways similar to other surf-craft. Kayaking in surf is similar to whitewater in many of its hazards. Surf in a kayak receives a grading of Class 3 as standard, although this has less accurate reference than it does on rivers. Until you are knowledgeable enough to grade the danger and difficulty of moving water yourself, always treat surf with caution and care.

There are a few rules that apply to all surfing craft. This is known as Surf Etiquette.

The surfer (no matter what craft) nearest the shoulder has priority and should not be inhibited on their wave. Incoming surfers have right of way. It is up to outgoing surfers to take evasive action, even capsizing if necessary. Do not surf casually within any Surf Competition area. If collision is imminent you should capsize.

2.3 - Paddle Type Structure

2.3.1 - Private Paddle

A private paddle is organised between any individual on a private basis. Sligo Kayak Club has no involvement in these, but recommends paddlers take every care possible while paddling to ensure their own safety and the safety of others. Club equipment cannot be provided for use on private paddling sessions except with express permission from the equipment officer.

All paddles provided under the Sligo Kayak Club banner must be organised over the Sligo Kayak Club forum in public view. This is so there is a clear published record of club events. Anything organised outside of the club forum will be considered a private paddle and treated accordingly.



2.3.2 - Peer Paddle

A peer paddling session is a paddle with one's peers within the club. There are a few simple rules that must be adhered to for a peer paddle. There must be 3 or more people on the water and they must stick together as a group.

For a peer paddle on flat water all members must be of a level 2 standard of paddling or above. For a peer paddle on Grade 2 white water and small surf all paddlers must be of a level 3 or higher standard.

2.3.3 - Led Flat-water Paddle

A led flatwater paddle is a flatwater session where a club leader takes on the responsibility to lead a trip on flat water. U18's must be approved by the leader and their respective parents to attend and the parents must remain on site at all times.

2.3.4 - Led River Paddle

A led river paddle is a session where a club river leader takes on the responsibility to lead a moving water trip. All people attending must be of a level 2 standard or higher and understand the risks of the paddling they are undertaking. U18's must be approved by the Leader and their parents, and their parents must understand the risks and the responsibilities they must undertake for their child to attend a river paddle.

2.3.5 - Multi-day Trip Away

A Multi-day trip away may be organised by members of Sligo Kayak Club. The only aspects which are performed under the heading of the Sligo Kayak Club are those which happen on the water. Everything else is considered of a private nature.



Section 3 - Safety Policy

3.1 - General Safety Policy

All kayak club members are covered by the Canoeing Ireland insurance policy. This does not provide personal accident cover. As injury is commonplace, even for experienced paddlers, we strongly recommend that you take out suitable sports insurance to cover loss of earnings and injury.

“Volenti non fit injuria”

CI Public Liability Insurance Policy only protects a Registered Member from claims for injury or damage arising from a negligent act or omission. It does not provide cover due to injury or damage sustained from situations considered to be within the norms of canoeing. The legal principal Volenti non fit injuria ("to a willing person, no injury is done") means that an adult who knowingly and willingly puts themselves in a potentially dangerous situation will generally be unable to sue for injury or damage should an accident occur. It is sometimes described as "consenting to run a risk".

No one, however, consents to damage or injury brought about through an act of negligence. The principle of Volenti non fit injuria does not protect anyone against being held liable for an act of legal negligence. This is why insurance is required. The CI Public Liability Insurance protects Registered Members from claims for injury and/or damage arising from an act of legal negligence.

Volenti non fit injuria is considered an important principle in the context of sporting/recreational activities that have an inherent risk. An adult, for example, undertaking a canoeing trip or competing in a canoeing competition who is considered to have a level of personal proficiency / experience compatible with the degree of difficulty likely to be encountered is unlikely to succeed in a claim against the individual presumed to be the leader / organiser if damage or injury sustained arises from an incident that would be considered to have a high probability of occurrence because of the conditions or circumstances likely to be encountered through participation in the trip / competition. Children (anyone under 18) are in a very special category in this regard to Volenti non fit injuria. For club policy regarding junior members see the 'Junior Policy' section of this manual.

For more information on kayak safety and insurance, please see the Irish Canoe Union website www.canoe.ie

3.2 - Junior Safety Policy

Sligo Kayak Club welcomes junior members and endeavours to offer the same training and recreational opportunities to juniors as it does to its adult members. Club activities are mixed-age with junior and senior members training together.



Club members must realise that kayaking is a sport with inherent dangers. Each member will undertake any part of a club trip completely at their own risk. Children under 18 however cannot consent to risk, even the normal risks associated with canoeing. Only a child's parent or legal guardian can consent to a child's participation in a canoeing activity. When parental consent is present, the instructor or coach will not be liable to the child in damages for personal injuries unless the instructor or coach was legally negligent. The following guidelines are for parents/guardians, junior members and Sligo Kayak Club members that take juniors on paddling sessions. The Sligo Kayak Club provides junior paddling sessions on the basis that responsibility for juniors is a joint partnership between the child, parent/guardian and the Sligo Kayak Club.

1. ALL participants have to complete a Sligo Kayak Club membership form to register each year which MUST be signed by a parent or guardian before they can be allowed on the water.
2. Junior participation in the sport is subject to the individual's size and physical fitness. The Sligo Kayak Club reserves the right to postpone membership until the child has grown. As a rule the Club does not accept members below the age of 12 years old.
3. Parents/Guardians should be aware that club sessions are not activities where you can drop off your children and come back for them later. To meet both safety and Child Protection* guidelines we can only be responsible for a child while on the water. This means that we cannot come with them if they are cold and want to leave the water and we cannot assist them with drying and dressing themselves. This is the responsibility of the parent/guardian. *Note: The Sligo Kayak Club adheres to the CI Child Protection Policy which is available from the website www.canoe.ie.
4. Disruptive behaviour is not tolerated and participants who do not behave within reason can be asked to leave the water.
5. Sligo Kayak Club is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of its junior members. Club policy reflects current best practice as contained in the Irish Sports Council's and Irish Canoe Union's Child Protection Policy. The club also has designated Sports Council approved Children's Officers trained to deal with enquiries or complaints from parents and juniors (see 'committee section of website').



Section 4 – Code of Conduct & Best Practice

4.1 - General

Sligo Kayak Club is a community-oriented club, not a service provider, and as such requires its members to engage with each other in a spirit of unity. Rules and guidelines are put in place to safeguard this ethos.

Members are asked to not engage in sexist, racist, ageist or other discriminatory behaviour in words or actions.

Bullying, harassment, intimidation, peer-pressure, scaremongering and any other forms of violence or maliciousness cannot be tolerated in Sligo Kayak Club.

Members are expected to take full responsibility for their own actions and wellbeing and seek out suitable information to make responsible judgments.

All communication of an official nature within the club and between its members must be done in a recorded medium such as letters, emails or over the forum.

All equipment and facilities belonging to Sligo Kayak Club or used by the club must be respectfully treated and cared for.

All leaders should be fairly treated and respected for the tasks they are doing, and if you are being led you must behave according to their instructions to ensure your own safety and the safety of others.

Participation in club activities are not an automatic right and can be restricted based on relevant skill, experience, health or other mitigating factors.

4.2 - Parents/ Guardians

If you are the parent/ guardian of a junior member of Sligo Kayak Club you are expected to behave as a de facto member of the club, understand and abide by the codes applicable to you and engage with the club in a manner that is conducive to the ethos of the club. The explicit rights of the parent/guardian are never trumped by any rule or action of the club, and any involvement in a club activity by a junior member is fully at the discretion of the parent/ guardian.

Parents/ guardians are responsible for all their junior members' interactions with the Sligo Kayak Club online, such as on the forums or on social networking sites. Parents/ guardians are expected to seek out and understand the nature of the activities their junior members are participating in and the inherent risks they are taking. Parents/ guardians are valued role-players within Sligo Kayak Club. Parents/ guardians are encouraged to communicate with other parents, club leaders and club committee members and if they have any question or concern to please voice them.



The relevant loco parentis forms must be signed by a parent/ guardian before any junior member can take part in club activities.

The club has designated Sports Council approved Children's Officers trained to deal with enquiries or complaints from parents and juniors. The Sligo Kayak Club adheres to the CI Child Protection Policy which is available from the website www.canoe.ie.

4.3 - Junior Members

Junior participation in the sport is subject to the individual's size and physical fitness. As a rule the Club does not accept members below the age of 12 years old.

Disruptive behaviour is not tolerated and participants who do not behave within reason can be asked to leave the water.

Junior members are expected to behave in as responsible and mature manner as possible to ensure everyone's safety and enjoyment.

Any problems junior members have should be brought to the children's officers. See contacts section of the club website for contact information.

4.4 - Committee Members

Committee members are democratically elected members who accept their role within the committee structure to do the best possible job based upon the role description presented under their title.

Committee members must be willing to operate in an impartial and transparent manner always putting the welfare of the members of the club at the top of their agenda. Committee members must be adequately accessible to members of the club and must attend the relevant club activities to be able to perform their duties properly.

4.5 - Voluntary Club Leaders

Club leaders are recruited from suitably skilled members of the club. Club leaders must abide by the agreed leader duties and recommendations as agreed by becoming a Club leader (see relevant literature).

Club leaders must respect the core principal of all leadership in Sligo Kayak Club is to lead by example, and to always put the welfare of everyone involved first and foremost above all else. Prospective club leaders are encouraged to view the material relevant to the leaders' roles on the website. Sligo Kayak Club always needs new people willing and able to help out.



4.6 - Freelance CI/BCU Instructors

CI/BCU qualified instructors are still required to perform official CI/BCU training and assessments. These roles are provided as freelance employees of Sligo kayak club and must follow the rules laid out by their qualification providers.

Where official CI/BCU instructors are hired, the instructors must provide copies of all their relevant qualifications pertaining to service provided. This includes a valid instructor cert, child protection cert and first aid cert.

Section 5 - Training

One of the key aims of the club is to progress the skills of its members through proactive training & development. This training can be provided within the club setting or by leveraging outside resources. SKC encourages members to be proactive in their own development by seeking opportunities for additional development outside of the club.

5.1 – In-Club Training

Training within the club setting is provided by SKC Instructors, leaders and senior members on a volunteer basis. This is a commitment made by active members to give back to the club where possible.

5.2 – External Training

SKC is also committed to providing training using external resources where those skills are not available within the club setting. SKC will endeavour to identify training needs for all active member and arrange courses the Training Office or Committee feels would benefit the club. Where feasible, external training may be subsidised in part or in whole depending on the cost/benefit of such training.

5.3 – Access to Training

Training within the club setting will be provided on a volunteer basis for all active registered members. Members are encouraged to discuss training needs with the Training Officer or any Club Leader and every effort will be made to accommodate any training needs identified. Members are also encouraged to “give back” to the club by supporting training of fellow members.

Any external funded training will be available to all active registered members. As such training can be limited, priority will always be given to active members, particularly those who support club activities and provide their own time to support fellow members.



Section 6 - Complaints Procedure

For the protection and fair treatment of all members, Sligo Kayak Club endeavours to provide a robust and transparent system of processing issues of complaints and grievances within and involving Sligo Kayak Club and its members. Sligo Kayak Club's complaints policy is available from the 'Contacts' section of the website.

Section 7 - Disclaimer

Canoeing/ kayaking is an adventurous sport, which by its very nature involves a degree of risk of personal injury or even death. Sligo Kayak Club (the Club), a voluntary organisation, cannot ensure your complete safety at all times.

Members must accept these risks and agree to be responsible for their own actions and involvement. Members must accept that the Club cannot be held liable for any injuries caused to them or caused to others or their property by them, due to their participation or involvement in this sport howsoever arising. Members must understand that they are advised to take out Personal Accident Insurance to cover any activities as a member of the Sligo Kayak Club.

This applies to all members of Sligo Kayak Club as they confirm that upon becoming a member they will not hold Sligo Kayak Club, its members, its staff, its trustees, its affiliates or any person so connected to be liable for any accident caused while participating in any activity connected with the club. Members should note that they remain personally responsible from their own actions and the Sligo Kayak Club is indemnified entirely for any damage, loss, claim, injury, accident or any other matter caused by their participation in these activities howsoever arising.