

## DCC Boat and Trailer Usage Policy 2023

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### Intent

This policy sets the rules for the use of club-owned equipment including boats and club trailers. Acceptance of these rules is a condition for using or helping others to use club equipment.

The intent of this policy is to describe sensible controls to ensure club equipment is used safely and appropriately by competent people to minimise personal risk and damage to club equipment. This policy supports the Club's Safety & Operating Policy, the Club Codes of Conduct and Club Risk Assessments.

### Use of Club Boats

Membership of DCC entitles any club member under instruction, or unsupervised when assessed as a 'competent user', to use club boats and associated equipment.

During organised club sessions a qualified coach or paddlesport leader will assess the conditions and make decisions about the session conduct and content, but whether in a group session or unsupervised, members decide whether to paddle, or not, at their own risk.

DCC uses Club boats to introduce new paddlers to the sport, enable paddlers to become familiar with paddling and identify the equipment most suitable for their longer-term needs.

The club's policy in common with most, if not all, sport clubs reliant on expensive equipment (such as cycling) is that all members should aim to buy their own equipment as soon as possible and should not expect to rely on club kit.

We know it is not practical for every junior parent to own and regularly upgrade boats as their paddlers grow and develop, so we do intend to supply boats suitable for junior paddlers. The club maintains a small number of development K1s suitable for juniors but will not buy more 'advanced' K1s, so, if your junior intends to take racing seriously, you should plan to acquire a suitable K1 as soon as possible. We also encourage every parent to buy their own paddles and buoyancy aids.

For juniors, suitable crew boats are available to borrow for racing and may be loaned (for a fee and damage deposit) for the DW.

For adult members we do not supply boats for DW or for racing. Our club boats are intended to help you progress to a point where you can buy a suitable boat, although we will allow prospective crews (on a case-by-case basis) to borrow crew boats until Christmas, so they can make plans to acquire a suitable boat for the race based on their training progress.

### **Competent User**

On induction club members will complete a competence check and must be approved by a qualified club coach as a competent user before being able to use club equipment unsupervised at club sessions or outside supervised sessions.

The Head of the Coaching Group and Club Secretary hold a list of qualified club coaches able to carry out the competence check and sign off member as a competent user. The competency assessment includes storage access, launch drill, capsize drill away from the club, safe emptying, carrying the boat and setting up the boat correctly as well as knowledge of relevant club rules and incident procedures.

### **Use of boats during supervised club nights and courses**

Competent novice members are encouraged to use club boats during supervised and unsupervised sessions and to avoid paddling alone, so that support and advice is readily available.

We need to ensure suitable stable boats are available for novice paddlers taking part in supervised sessions, organised group activities and courses. Therefore, club boats are not to be removed from club premises prior to supervised sessions so they can be allocated and do not become unavailable. When courses are planned boats will be identified as 'reserved' by the coach and will not be available for general use for the duration of the course.

Any dispute as to who is to use what club boat will be resolved by the coach at the start of each supervised session.

### **Use by family members**

Competence is approved for named individuals and does not extend to other family members or guests who have not completed the club's competence check.

### **Unsupervised Use**

Once approved as competent by a club coach, adult members use a club boat outside of supervised club sessions.

Club boats are only to be used on DCC home waters and should not be removed from the club overnight, unless permission has been granted to use the boat for a specific event.

If you are a competent user planning to use club equipment and prefer stable craft, please avoid doing so at peak times when novice courses are running or if a boat is tagged to indicate it is reserved for a course.

When paddling unsupervised safety is the paddlers' sole responsibility. All members using club boats are to wear buoyancy aids, suitable footwear and never paddle alone. In addition, when winter rules are in place, paddlers are to ensure boats are carrying approved lights.

## Competition Use

If you are permitted to borrow a Club boat to enter a competition, you must race under the Devizes Canoe Club name and colours.

If you intend to use a crew boat with a paddler who is not a member of DCC, permission must be sought in advance from the lead coach.

All damage incurred when racing or travelling to and from racing if not transported on the DCC club trailer, will be the responsibility of the user.

## Use of Club Trailer

The Club Trailer may be used with permission to move private and/or club boats to organised events. Permission should be sought to remove the trailer from the club in every case so we can ensure it is fit for use and has not been booked for another purpose. Drivers will be responsible for the safety and security of the club trailer when removed from the club.

The club cannot provide definitive advice about towing. Drivers will need to make their own decisions to ensure their legality and the safety of themselves and other road users when towing. There is guidance on the GOV.UK website for towing of trailers:

- [Towing with a car](#) this is also covered in the [DVLA booklet INF30](#)
- [Trailer Weights and Width Limits](#)
- [Trailers, Caravans and Towing Equipment](#)

The Club has a duty of care to ensure drivers are appropriately licenced, insured and experienced when towing the club trailer. All volunteers intending to tow the club trailer should, before first use, present their driving licence and insurance to the Club Safety Officer and if inexperienced, should arrange for a briefing with the Safety Officer to ensure they are competent to use and tow the trailer.

Volunteers towing the club trailer must:

- Check the trailer's general condition, safety and serviceability before departure. This should include a check to ensure all lights function as intended and all fittings are secure.
- Have presented their documentation to the Club Safety Officer before first towing the trailer.
  - Must be legally compliant in respect of licence, insurance and use.
  - Be aware whether any breakdown/recovery insurance covers the trailer.
  - Ensure that the trailer and vehicle are suitably matched.
  - Ensure they are fully responsible for loading and handing the trailer.
  - Check the trailer has the correct (matching) number plate and a trailer weight plate.

The club recognises that additional costs are incurred by drivers when towing. The Club enables drivers to claim a towing fee for towing the club boat trailer to representative events. This is a fuel cost-plus fee arrangement. The club will pay fuel costs at £0.45/mile plus a towing fee for journeys over 100 miles at a flat £50. Expenses may be reclaimed through the Club Treasurer.

Drivers must ensure that boats are tied down securely and not likely to move during transportation. Failure to do so could endanger the lives of other road users, damage craft, and leave the volunteer liable to prosecution:

- Use padding to reduce slippage and protect the craft from damage.
- Check straps for wear/fraying and that buckles are working correctly.
- Do not use self-tightening ratchet straps.

Width and length, further notes:

- The maximum trailer width for any towing vehicle is 2.55 metres.
- The maximum length for a trailer towed by a vehicle weighing up to 3,500kg is 7 metres.

This length does not include the A-frame. As our club trailer is constructed for carrying racing boats (these fall within the definition of an 'indivisible load of exceptional length'), the overall length of the towing vehicle must not exceed 9.2m, and the overall length of the vehicle and trailer combination must not exceed 25.9m including any projection of the load; if it does, then the Police must be warned in advance and an assistant must be carried.

Drivers are reminded that DCC's affiliated clubs' insurance cover includes trailers when being used for organised activity, when being stored and when being loaded and unloaded. The trailer is NOT covered for towing, as this must form part of an individual's vehicle insurance policy. This means, inevitably, that any accidental damage incurred must be claimed on the driver or responsible party's individual insurance policy.

### **Care of Club Boats and Equipment**

Members are asked to return all equipment to its allotted storage space.

Ensure buoyancy aids and spray decks are hung up to dry. They go mouldy if left in boats or unable to dry, then they must be written off as unserviceable.

All boats must have some form of buoyancy fitted before use. Inflatable buoyancy bags are often fitted and must be checked before use to ensure they are inflated to about 90% of capacity. Over-inflation causes them to leak when the weather gets hot.

Rigid buoyancy must be securely fixed in the boat.

Club buoyancy aids and paddles are intended for use by beginners. Once competent, members racing and/or paddling at a higher level should obtain their own equipment.

Club boats must be treated with care. They are not to be placed on the ground. Racks and stands or rubber matting is provided and must be used.

If you are using club boats regularly, bring a measured stick or tape measure to determine your preferred seat and footrest positions.

Do not change the seat(s) of any boat without permission from a Club Coach.

Boats must not be dragged along the ground or up the canal side when launching or getting out of the water.

Boats must be returned to the shed in a clean condition, with any water fully bailed out, and put back in their allocated space.

You must check all nuts and fittings are secure before taking the boat out on the water and return the boat with all these fittings in place.

When transporting a club boat, you must never use straps which are tightened using a mechanical ratchet because of the risk of damage caused by over tightening.

### **Reporting of and responsibility for damage to club equipment**

You are responsible for any damage that may occur to a club boat or trailer whilst in your care. You will be expected to pay for repairs to be done to a professional standard or, in extreme cases, to replace a club boat damaged beyond repair through carelessness or negligence.

Any damage to a club boat or missing parts must be reported to a club coach, session supervisor or the club's captain of boats as soon as possible. This includes issues like missing pins, seats, rudders or buoyancy whether noticed before or after your use.

We accept a degree of wear and tear and budget for parts that can easily be lost. A failure to report loss or damage is a disciplinary issue because it potentially puts other paddlers at risk.

### **Extended loan of club boats**

Occasionally members may require access to a club boat for extended periods (for example preparing for the DW race or crew boats for use in competitive regattas and events). Any loan of club equipment for competitive use must be arranged in advance with the club secretary and captain of boats. The club has a boat loan agreement which will be used and may require a hire charge and damage deposit.