

# ***Club Trips\ Paddling Policy***

***December 2008***

## **Introduction**

The club membership has ballooned in recent times, but unfortunately the number of coaches and trip organisers has not increased in proportion. Recreational trips in the calendar tend to be arranged by experienced paddlers but not necessarily coaches. It's also true that on some recreational trips, particularly the flat water trips, coaches don't attend. It's fair to say that some organisers are feeling a little under pressure and concerned with respect to any liability and risk, should something go wrong.

## **Trip Types**

The club advertises two types of trip in the calendar, **Recreational** and **Development**. Recreational Trips are also arranged on an ad hoc basis either at club social meetings, by telephone/e-mail or on the club's web site.

## **Recreational Trips**

Recreational trips are organised by Club Members either outside the calendar or through the calendar. Their aim is to provide paddlers of a suitable standard with an enjoyable and satisfying trip. All paddlers taking part bear an individual responsibility for satisfying themselves that they are competent and equipped to take on the challenge that is part and parcel of day to day recreational paddling, whether on Flat Water, Sea, White Water, Surf or any other paddling environment.

On Recreational Trips all participants are individually responsible for their own actions and decisions

The questions an individual needs to ask themselves include :-

1. Have I paddled much this year (type of water, distance, who with - that kind of thing)?
2. What qualifications have I got (not a pre-requisite but a useful guide, 1star-novice, 2 star-improver, 3star-intermediate, 4-star-competent)?
3. How confident am I that I will be able to complete this trip without endangering myself and others?

If in any doubt at all, these questions and any others should be discussed with the trip organiser/contact.

**If you are the trip organiser**, don't compromise. If you have any doubts concerning an individual's ability, either seek support from one of the club coaches or politely but firmly refuse to allow them on the trip. If you are a prospective participant please be honest when explaining what you are capable of and accept the decision of the organiser. And remember that what could appear to be a suitable trip for you in advance of the trip, may, for many reasons, be deemed unsuitable on arrival at the site of the trip or even during the trip. Such reasons can include the weather, the water level, the number of coaches/experienced paddlers partaking, news of obstacles on the water or access difficulties from land owners or other water users or any other problem which may arise.

### **Development Trips** (as identified on the calendar)

Development trips will be supported by a qualified coach, who will take leadership of the trip. The coach may be supported by other competent paddlers and/or other coaches dependent upon numbers and venue.

The aim of Development trips is to promote/give opportunity for development of an individual's skills. This will involve trips on a variety of water types and at different venues. The opportunity to be pushed will be there but the development is at the individual's own pace.

Please remember that this is a recreational canoe club made up of volunteers who paddle and teach because they enjoy it. Not all trips can cater for all levels. By differentiating Recreational Trips from Development Trips we are setting clear criteria for a safer learning environment whilst recognising the need for people just to get out there and have fun.

### **Ribble CC Coaching Policy**

After a lengthy discussion at a recent coach forum meeting it was felt that it was impractical to set absolute criteria that could be used to ascertain the ability of an individual to undertake a specific trip.

The question of rolling ability was raised but again it was not deemed practical to insist a person could roll before they were allowed on certain trips.

It was also agreed that the nature of white water paddling makes it impossible to predict exactly what level a river will be, until you arrive at the river and assess the situation. On flat water, especially lakes, the wind can make an otherwise gentle paddle into a struggle for survival against wind and waves.

It was agreed that the methods currently employed by the club are sound and practical.

These are;

The trip leader or contact person should determine by prior knowledge (when possible) an individual's ability, and use this to assess the suitability of the trip being undertaken, and must be allowed to veto any individual's inclusion on a trip at any point of the trip.

The leader or contact person should use the ~~river~~-leader cards to record contact details of those people in his / her group and should give a briefing before getting on the water to make everyone aware of the nature and risks of the planned trip. All people taking part in a trip should also ensure that their kit is fit for purpose. As a rough guide the 3 levels of trip already identified by the coach forum are intended to be suitable for the following abilities.

1<sup>st</sup> moving water experience; Aimed at 2 star standard paddlers as an introduction to moving water.

Possible venues to include Burrs, Halton, Brathay pool, Devils Bridge (Kirkby Lonsdale) or similar sites.

Novice moving water trip; Aimed at 2 Star standard paddlers with some experience of moving water as the next step onto more committing trips.

Possible venues would include all the above & Rothay, Wenning, Calder, Ribble, Kent from Kendal to scroggs weir only, or similar.

Intermediate white water trip; These trips are more serious in nature and are aimed at 3 star standard paddlers, and the ability to roll is preferable  
Possible venues to include Leven, Crake, Keswick Greta.

In all cases river conditions on the day must be taken into account when undertaking a trip. A normally benign section of river at summer levels can change significantly in winter flood conditions.