



Axe Vale Canoe Club (AVCC)

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Affiliated to Paddle UK



AVCC Safety Review - January 2026

This is a review of safety from the last year.

It is an opportunity to review, reflect and learn from any incidents at AVCC and in the wider paddling community.

River Axe Race 23 March 2025

This event was really well attended and the weather was good!

A new addition this year was our **launching platform** which we installed temporarily tethered to the River Axe bank. However, the river level was so low that it wasn't really needed! Despite this when the event runs again in 2026 the platform is likely to make launching much safer for participants and those helping if the river level is higher.

BAs and Helmets: I'm glad to report that this year, all race competitors were happy to wear BAs and the under 18s all wore helmets. No reports of them being removed as in previous years.

There were a few capsizes but no injuries. A really successful event!

Equipment Safety

Annual safety check took place 22nd Feb and 1st March. This allowed for both essential equipment check as well as building maintenance.

Some helmets and BAs were removed from service in March and later in the summer season, I arranged an **autumn check on helmet safety** and found one more that had a perished inner cradle. I think this is something that's worth doing regularly at the end of the summer season as helmets have a lot of wear in the sea and sun and it means they can be checked before being used on moving water when failure could be significant for a paddler and the group.

Kayak Bulkheads have needed to be re-glued and sealed in several Stratos SKs. Bulkheads need to be checked by paddlers regularly by paddlers.

Incidents

Launching and landing with fast outgoing River Axe, tidal flow, through swell and surf and around a shingle bank has caused several capsizes requiring rescues in the last year. Some sea paddlers have struggled with deep water rescues.

Learning from this year's incidents, my advice is:

- Having a clear plan on navigating the mouth, explained by trip leader. Plan to be explained to all members of the group, at briefing or, if necessary, on the water.
- Having and discussing a plan in the event of capsize(s).
- Being prepared to stop, before the mouth is entered and if needed, landing or launching at alternative locations e.g. off the beach. This could avoid conditions that may be beyond some of the group members abilities.

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- Kayak paddlers should wear helmets when entering or leaving the river mouth as explained in club safety policy. The dangers of flow, swell, shingle bar and other traffic are not always obvious to paddlers. Coaches and leaders should remind paddlers of this.
- For people to paddle on the Sea, it is important for them to be able to be rescued and help with rescue, swiftly, safely and comfortably. We need to encourage Sea paddlers to attend rescue training to ensure this before venturing out on the sea.

One canoe being pinned incident on the R Barle resulted in some damage to canoe but no injuries.

Injuries (taken from Accident Book 4/1/26)

One grazed toe after capsize with a lost shoe. East of river mouth there are lots more rocks in this environment due to a change in the sea. One sprained ankle after a capsize in surf zone.

Happily, both paddlers have made a full recovery and continue to enjoy paddling with AVCC.

Two canoe paddlers have had slips and falls when exiting the boat solo, on the AVCC slipway. Both sustained minor injury to lower limb.

Please ask for and accept help exiting your craft if you or others feel it's needed!

Accident and injury reporting

Any club paddler who sustains an injury during club activity must please ensure the club's accident book is completed. This can be done by any coach or leader and is essential for the club's safety monitoring and insurance cover.

Learning from this:

Good secure footwear is essential if paddling on the sea or in moving water. It's important that this stays on when capsize occurs (we all swim!)

Safety Training

This takes place in courses, at safety training sessions run by the club, as well as in pool sessions throughout the season.

Paddle Safer Award is offered to paddlers who are doing our beginners courses.

PUK Update on Safety

Regular updates from PUK on safety have included guidance on:

Head Injury Guidance that includes the Sport Concussion Assessment Tool (SCAT) Tool as well as the Paddlesport Helmets. <https://paddleuk.org.uk/paddlesport-head-injury-guidance/>

Shoulder dislocations <https://paddleuk.org.uk/shoulder-dislocation-and-injury/>

Night paddling: use navigation lights!

RD 05/02/2026