

## **Paddlers for Life Windermere**

To relieve sickness and protect and preserve good health for persons facing cancer, in particular, but not exclusively breast cancer, or persons in need of rehabilitation as a result of such illness within Cumbria and Lancashire by providing or assisting in the provision for physical activity and recreation, notably Dragon Boating.



### **Health and Safety Policy (November 2025)**

See <http://paddlersforlife.co.uk/documents/> for the latest version of all documents mentioned

#### **Introduction**

The Trustees of Paddlers for Life Windermere aim to ensure the health, safety, and safeguarding of all members whilst engaged in PflW activities, on and off the water. However, members also have responsibility for their own health, safety, and welfare. If at any time a member feels unsafe or notices an aspect of health or safety that needs addressing, they should inform one of the trustees as soon as possible (and/or other members in case of emergency).

There is a standing Health & Safety notice on the Agenda at all PflW General Meetings.

#### **Pfl Members' Personal Information**

Anyone who wishes to be a member of Pfl Windermere (either as a Survivor or as a Supporter) must complete the online Membership Form each year (April – March). This provides the Charity with personal information including details of the member's emergency contact person plus details of any relevant, significant medical conditions that the trustees or helms may need to know about. Completion of the yearly Membership Form also signifies that the member has read and agreed to the conditions of the Indemnity Form. The link to both the Membership Form and the Indemnity Form can be found on the website.

#### **Visitors**

Day visitors must complete the relevant sections of the online Visitors Form and confirm they have read and agreed to the conditions on the Indemnity Form. Adults will complete these forms on behalf of children aged 14-17. Children under the age of 14 are not usually\* permitted in any of the boats including the Support Boat.

\*Children under 14 will only be allowed on the boats due to exceptional circumstances approved by at least 2 trustees. They must wear an age-appropriate buoyancy aid.

**Groups** must have a nominated leader who is responsible for members of their group having completed the relevant forms and understood the safety information given by PflW helms prior to paddling.

#### **COVID-19 safety**

COVID has not disappeared and we still need to be careful, considering the extra vulnerability of some of our members. Anyone with COVID or cold symptoms should not turn up to paddle. Anyone who has paddled and subsequently discovers they had COVID at the time should inform the trustees who can alert other members. Be aware of current government guidance: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/how-to-avoid-catching-and-spreading-coronavirus-covid-19/>

## New Paddlers

The health benefits of dragon-boat paddling for breast cancer survivors are generally well-known. More details and medical articles can be found here: <https://www.ibcpc.com/resources-page-2/> (scroll down for medical publications.)

All paddlers should feel comfortable when paddling but if, at any time, anyone feels excessive pain or discomfort they should listen to their body and stop. Ultimately, all members are responsible for their own health. If in doubt, a member should seek advice from their own cancer specialist consultant, lymphoedema nurse, or GP etc.

All new paddlers receive a Safety Talk before going in the boat for the first time, given by a helm or another trained member. This includes paddling techniques, capsizing drill and what to wear, or not wear e.g., **no** heavy shoes, jeans, or absorbent fleeces etc. All new paddlers are given an information sheet which includes all relevant information.

## New season training and safety sessions

Every year before the start of the on-water season, ALL paddlers are strongly recommended to remind themselves of key health and safety information. This is shared at three main sessions:

- **Water Safety** at Kendal Leisure Centre. Even if unable or unwilling to go in the water, members are advised to watch the session from the side of the pool. If a previous year's session was missed it is very important to try to make the following year's session.
- **Down & Ready** session run each year by helm and outdoor education specialist, Roz Collier. This is usually held at the Ambleside Parish Centre.
- **All Hands on Deck** session at Low Wood Marina to prepare the boats and ourselves prior to going on the water

## Year-round health and fitness

Health, fitness, and well-being are of course important all year round, not just whilst we are on the water (April – October).

PfL Windermere aims to provide a series of sessions to supplement members' own off the water activities. The intention is for these to support members' well-being in addition to their physical fitness levels.

## Communication of safety instructions and health & fitness activities

It is important that all PfL Windermere health and safety messages are communicated to all members especially as many members join us mid-year so may miss out on introductory sessions. **Communication examples:**

- \*Regular emails to the membership throughout the year and via minutes from General Meetings.
- \*On site Safety Briefing to ALL new paddlers including capsizing procedures.
- \*Reminder to always listen to and follow instructions from the helms, who are in charge of safety on their boat
- \*Helms to regularly communicate with each other (and with trustees) about the nature of paddling sessions e.g. easier/more challenging?
- \* Helms' (may include Support Boat Drivers), meeting each year especially when new helms have started
- \*Other ways e.g. meetings via Zoom. On our website <http://paddlersforlife.co.uk> .

## Training and Qualifications Helm Training

PfL Windermere has its own structured Helm training programme. The current trained and experienced helms are: Chris Pryor, John Leigh, Roz Collier, Jane Cogley, Peter Cogley and Daniella Martin. Two new helms joined us this year - Emma Brunning and Caroline Chick

A new Helm Training session is planned for each Season. Once trained, helms usually need many hours practice/experience before being allowed sole responsibility of a dragon-boat and its crew.

## **RYA Level 2 powerboat training**

Training is provided by the staff at the Watersports Centre - three new drivers qualified during 2024 – 2025: Brigid Letheren, Peter Johnson, and Michael Bullivant. The following members also hold valid, recent certificates: Stephen Carter, Lynne Carter, Simon Watson, Chris Pryor, Howard Feather. These drivers are also responsible for overseeing the maintenance and safety of the boat. There should usually be at least 2 people in the Support Boat up to a maximum of 3 (but see separate Support Boat Policy for details.) At least one should be a qualified driver.

## **V6 training/safety**

A steer is responsible for the V6 and crew. Currently some of our helms are also taking on the role of V6 steer. They had training from Cam and Siobhan (GBOCA) in 2021 and have since built up experience steering the boat. The V6 can only go out with an experienced steer/helm on board.

## **On Site Safety**

The Low Wood Marina is run by ELH staff. Their instructions and the Marina rules should be obeyed at all times.

The metal steps must be in place by the pontoon at the beginning of every session and stored in the garage at the end.

### **In/around the garage:**

- don't work alone in the garage (e.g. out of season when there are no marina staff around.)
- be aware of potential trip hazards e.g. boat security bolt/chains and other equipment (tidy up if appropriate)
- use ladders to reach high equipment.
- inform the trustees of any missing or damaged safety equipment e.g., ladders etc.
- beware of the tractor's movements when it is collecting/delivering our Support Boat from/to the garage

### **On the jetties/floating pontoon:**

- don't overcrowd
- leave jetty asap when unloading the boats (unless helping next person off the boat)
- use a wrist to wrist grip when helping another paddler off the boat (i.e. not just hands)
- wear a buoyancy aid when assisting with the boats.
- watch out for green algae which can make the jetties especially slippery.
- watch out for trapped fingers / splinters

## **Boats and Paddling Safety**

All new paddlers receive a Safety Talk, given by a helm or another trained member, before going in any of the boats for the first time (dragon-boat, OC6 or Support Boat).

Capsize procedures are shared at least once a year with all paddlers (e.g. at the Down & Ready) and with all new paddlers.

- The helm is in charge at all times. Paddlers must listen and respond to the helm's instructions and commands. If on board, the drummer will also communicate instructions from the helm.
- If anything happens to the helm e.g. they fall into the water, instructions should be taken from the drummer, or another experienced paddler. Avoid everyone talking at once. 'Notes on drumming' are available from Barbara. The drummer (or other) will keep an eye on the exact location of the helm, if in the water.
- The helms decide if, and when, it is safe to paddle. E.g. paddling will not take place if base winds are stronger than 15mph (or 24mph gusts), but wind direction and gusting may also affect the decision. If in doubt, they will take advice from the Marina staff. A final decision might not be made until after paddlers arrive at the Marina or even once paddling has commenced.
- Helms might ask people to sit in specific places in the boat to aid balance.
- Paddlers must get into and out of the boats one at a time under the direction of the helm.

- Unless asked by the helm, paddlers must not stand up in the boats or raise their paddles as this can unbalance the boat.
- Helms (or those first to arrive at the garage) must ensure radios are charged during the week (as there is no longer an electricity supply to the garage) and ready for use and taken into the boat every time so that communication with the Marina is maintained.
- Other safety equipment e.g., throwlines, first aid kits, foil blanket and bailers must also be taken onto the boats.
- Support Boat drivers must hold RYA Powerboat L2 qualifications. Current Certificates must be shared with the trustees and the Marina staff.

### **Boats and equipment checks and maintenance**

Trustees oversee the various maintenance teams to ensure that all boats and equipment are checked at the beginning of the year and regularly throughout the season i.e.

- 2 Dragon Boats, Support Boat, OC6/V6
- Buoyancy Aids, First Aid equipment and Radios

### **Risk Assessments, Accidents and Emergencies, and First Aid**

First Aid training/certificate copies are to be shared electronically with the trustees. Our current first-aider is Roz Collier.

All accidents and incidents should immediately be recorded in the accident book, on the shelf, in the garage, and any on-site Trustees informed. If no Trustees are present, The Chair of Trustees should be informed (e.g. by text) as soon as possible. All actions arising from any incident or accident should be shared with all helms initially, and with the membership via the standing Health & Safety agenda item for all General Meetings. The Incident Report book in the garage needs to be checked monthly during the on-water season.

Trustees to ensure there is a current First Aider in charge of the 1<sup>st</sup> Aid kits (contents and where each is held.)

### **Risk Assessments**

Helms use dynamic risk assessments on an ongoing basis throughout sessions regarding changes to crew, weather, water state, other lake users, etc. Making safety decisions/intentions and communicating these with other PFL boats on the Lake, the Water Sports Centre if applicable and PFL representatives onshore.

An extensive PflW Health and Safety Policy/RA is now in place. This encompasses the risk assessments made by helms each time we paddle. It can also be used as a template for any new activities involving the boats.

Risk assessments are to be conducted before commencing any new activity, considering the group, prevailing conditions and any new hazards.

Risk Assessments should be site/situation specific.

Trustees must approve any new Risk Assessment and activity before it takes place.

### **Public liability**

PfL Windermere hold Public Liability insurance.

Reviewed/updated: 3.11.25 by Rowena Pryor, Chair PflW

Adopted: 7.12.25

Next review date: November 2026