

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.



Information for New Members (AKA Newbies!) (November 2025)

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

Hello, and welcome to Pfl Windermere

We hope you decide to come along and see what we're all about or, even better, to join our wonderful group.

Weather

We paddle every Sunday from the middle of April to the end of October, weather permitting! We paddle in light rain, but not downpours, and in a light to moderate breeze, but not gusty winds. Emails and WhatsApp messages are sent out to members if the session is to be cancelled, so always check before travelling through. We sometimes meet for coffee if the session is cancelled so, again, look out for details.

Where to find us

We are based at Low Wood Bay Water Sports Centre, Ambleside (LA23 1LP), opposite the Low Wood Hotel.

We have a storage garage, first entry on the left as you drive through the barrier. You can't miss it. There is a large dragon head on our garage door and two long dragon boats directly outside.

Times

We meet by 9.30 at the garage to prepare the boats, collect our paddles and buoyancy aids etc. We aim to be on the water by 10.15. We usually paddle for about 1 - 1 1/2 hours in the morning and about an hour in the afternoon. Some people stay all day, some just morning or afternoon. Some people come every week, some just now and again depending on other commitments. There are no rules or regulations about this!

An online form is sent out mid-week so you can sign up to paddle on the coming Sunday. This allows some preparation beforehand if we know how many paddlers to expect.

Parking

Parking is round the back of the Water Sports Centre (drive through the entrance barrier and follow the road round – past the buildings – and into the car park). Pfl have been requested to park in the top car park on the gravel area further round, not on the tarmac.

There is a parking ticket machine near the car park entrance. Either pay here or, if you become a member, there is an annual fee of £25 which can be used any day all year round. **You will be fined if you forget to pay!**

What to Bring

Clothing As the Lake District weather is very unpredictable, it is better to be prepared for all conditions. Layered clothing is best ie T-shirt and/or top, waterproof jacket, trousers/shorts/leggings etc for on the water. It is advisable to wear something made from material which will dry quickly so you don't get cold. Bring warm clothing for when you return to shore in case you feel chilled. Some people also like to wear a hat or cap for protection from the sun or to keep warm.

Medical Conditions

If you have a medical condition which may require you to take medication while paddling, please make the helm on your boat aware of this and take your medication in the boat with you.

PLEASE DO NOT WEAR heavy clothing or something that is super-absorbent, such as a fleece, padded jacket or woollen top etc. in the boat. In the very unlikely event you should fall in the water, it will be much more difficult to get you back into the boat if you are wearing something that will weigh you down.

Footwear designed for water sports is recommended, but not compulsory. Some people wear trainers or crocs. Be prepared for footwear to get wet, too!

PLEASE DO NOT WEAR walking boots or heavy shoes for the same reason as above.

Always bring a change of clothes, including undies! Sometimes you can get pretty soaked if you get splashed.

Water should always be taken onto the boat, especially if the weather is hot, as it is very easy to get dehydrated.

Lunch. We usually bring a packed lunch and gather by the lake to eat after the morning session. This is a good time to catch up with everyone and get to know other paddlers. If there are enough paddlers and helms, we go out again in the afternoon.

Bring a hot drink if the weather is cold.

We occasionally go for a coffee or ice cream, so bring some cash or a bank card.

The onsite shop has a drinks machine.

Suntan lotion is recommended if it is sunny.

When you arrive, park your car and then make your way to the garage where, if we know you're coming for the first time, someone will be looking out for you to 'meet and greet'!

You will be introduced to other members and given a name badge.

You'll be fitted with a buoyancy aid and given an appropriate sized paddle (not oar! We PADDLE, we don't row!!)

There is a signing-in form, which needs to be completed by everyone each week when they arrive.

You will be introduced to the helm, and a fellow paddler, who will guide you through the day.

The Helm is in-charge of the boat. ALL INSTRUCTIONS MUST COME FROM THE HELM AND EVERYBODY, FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY, MUST ABIDE BY THESE INSTRUCTIONS. ON THE BOAT, **ALWAYS LISTEN TO THE HELM!!**

The helm will give you instructions on how to paddle. If you haven't paddled before, you won't get the hang of it for a few sessions so, **DON'T WORRY, JUST HAVE FUN!!** Your technique will improve with practice and you'll be guided in the boat by the paddler assigned to you on the day.

Communication

Emails – Always be on the lookout for emails as important information and approaching events are always published this way. Please read all emails through to the end as often multiple messages are sent at the one time.

WhatsApp - we have two Members WhatsApp groups, but only those who join the register will have access to these. Messages, events and photographs are often posted on the Paddlers for Life WhatsApp, but the Pfl Information group is for those who just want to receive relevant messages pertaining to events, etc. Anyone wishing to join either or both of these groups will have to forward their mobile number to Judy Lewis or Rowena Pryor, and state which they wish to join.

Becoming a Member

Anyone wishing to come along and go out in our boats MUST SIGN THE ONLINE MEMBERSHIP FORM FIRST. There is an INDEMNITY FORM included in this which must be read and understood before you will be allowed to paddle. (Anyone who needs help to do this needs to just ask one of the Trustees)

There is an annual membership fee of £45. It is preferred that fees are paid at the time of signing up, if possible. Anyone wanting to come in the boat just to give it a try is exempt **for the first session only**, although you still need to fill in the online form. A donation on the day (£5 is the suggested amount) would be greatly appreciated. After that, the fee will apply to ALL members, Survivors and Supporters. (Any survivor who has difficulty with payment can discuss this, in confidence, with the Treasurer or Chair. No survivor will be turned away).

A donation by all visitors is also greatly appreciated.

Bank details for BACS are: Paddlers for Life Windermere 30-14-60 00098923
Please state what the payment is for so the Treasurer can record it.

There are a number of General Meetings during the year. It is hoped that **ALL MEMBERS** will participate in these. Pfl is not just about going out in the dragon boats, that is only part of what we do. All members are encouraged to be pro-active in the group, although we understand that sometimes this will be limited due to work, family commitments etc.

We have two or three ceremonies during the year, one being the **Dotting the Eye Ceremony** when the dragons awaken. **Supporters Day** is held at the same time to thank our wonderful support team for helping to 'keep us afloat!' We also have a couple of **Flower Ceremonies** when pink flowers are scattered on the lake in memory of people we have loved and lost. These are very poignant ceremonies and should be as much a part of Paddlers for Life as dragon boating.

We have a Winter Programme to cover the time we are not able to be on the water. This includes a number of guided walks and a water-safety session at Kendal Leisure Centre. This all helps to keep us connected.

It is not a requirement to be able to swim, especially as everyone must wear a buoyancy aid, but it is important to feel reasonably confident in the water in case of mishaps! This is what the water safety session aims to do.

We have a Down and Ready Day just before the start of the new season, which everyone is encouraged to attend. This is held indoors, and is a fun and informative day, preparing paddlers for getting back on to the water.

We also have 'All Hands on Deck' day at the Marina, when we prepare the dragon boats for getting back on the water, and remind ourselves of how to dress the boats and what jobs need doing. We aim to hold this the week before we have our first paddle.

Please visit our website (<http://www.paddlersforlife.co.uk>) and Facebook page, and feel free to ask questions at any time. Our aim is that you come along and have fun, feel supported and get some exercise into the bargain!

Paddles Up!!

Judy Lewis (Newbie Coordinator)

Reviewed/Updated: 2.11.25 by Judy Lewis, Newbie Coordinator, PflW

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Next review date: November 2026