



CLUB HANDBOOK

**CLUB MEMBERS HAVE AGREED TO ALL OF THE POLICES AND DETAILS SET OUT IN THIS HANDBOOK. CLUB MEMBERS ARE ALSO MEMBERS OF THOMASTOWN PADDLERS CLG
(Company Limited by Guarantee)**

Reviewed August 2026

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1. Club History

TPCC is recognised as one of the largest and most successful rural based canoe clubs in Ireland. Founded in 1996, Thomastown Paddlers is situated on the banks of the River Nore. The club is well equipped with up to thirty canoes and kayaks. In addition, the club has a small gym room allowing members to train during winter months. The aims of the club are to promote kayaking for fitness and to encourage participation in racing competitions. The club has had nine members represent Ireland in the disciplines of marathon and wild-water racing.

The club welcomes people of all ages from 10 years upward. It encourages them to participate in kayaking for fitness and well-being and to take part in the many racing events that occur throughout the summer at different locations. The club supplies beginners with basic training, equipment and boats, which allows them to decide whether or not they want to pursue the sport.

Based in Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny on the River Nore, the club consists of a large catchment of local paddlers. The River Nore provides an excellent training ground for our members, as it contains stretches of both flat-water and numerous rapids and weirs. This makes it ideal for both beginners and experienced paddlers alike. Thomastown Paddlers Canoe Club prides itself on promoting safe paddling and introducing its members to the field of competitive canoeing. Our members compete in Marathon, Sprint and Wild Water Racing along with occasional polo, freestyle, white-water and sea-kayaking. Check out our social media links for all the latest news and events on Facebook and Instagram.

2. TPCC Safety Policy Statement

Canoeing is a water adventure sport, which by its very nature involves a degree of risk of personal injury or even death. This safety statement identifies hazards and outlines policies and procedures which minimise risks. However the primary safety responsibility lies with individual members, who in addition to following guidelines and instruction from experienced members, must know their own limits and comfort zone and adopt a proactive safety approach to allow them identify and deal appropriately with risks as they occur.

Responsibilities

The chairperson along with the committee is responsible for ensuring that the club has a safety policy and statement in place and is reviewed as necessary and is communicated appropriately to club members.

The primary responsibility for day to day safety is with club members who are responsible for implementing safe practices, including those outlined in this statement. Members are responsible for notifying club officials of any safety deficiencies in equipment or practices. Members are responsible for notifying the club of any medical conditions that might affect their ability to participate or that might affect emergency first aid treatment.

Kayaking: Hazards and risks.

The principal hazards are:

- Drowning / Ingestion of water
- Hypothermia.
- Head injuries associated with capsize
- Limb injuries, particularly shoulder injuries.
- Carrying boats and equipment
- Other including cuts/ abrasions and infections

The hazards and risks depend on:

- The level of skill/ability of the kayaker
- The equipment being used
- The type of water body and the water conditions on the day of paddling.

The skill / ability of the paddler will impact on risk and consequently whether they are safe to paddle in particular situations and/ or what level of supervision if any is required in particular situations. Skill/ability can be indicated by the level of formal training undertaken or by an individual's experience as judged by instructor level paddlers in the club. All paddlers must be capable and confident swimmers.

The equipment used also has impact on safety.

- All paddlers **must** wear effective buoyancy aids with a minimum buoyancy of 50N on the water
- All paddlers should wear a helmet at all times with the exception of k-boat paddlers who are not required to wear helmets currently and experienced GP paddlers on flat water training/races.

- The type of boat used has an impact on the level and type of risk, and all members should make themselves aware of the specific risks associated with the type of boats they use.
- Paddlers using spraydecks should have appropriate training in their use
- All equipment worn and used must be checked for safety by the user before entering the water
- All paddlers should exercise caution when lifting boats to avoid strain or injury

The type of water body can have a major impact on risk and most water bodies are likely to change rapidly depending on current or recent weather events.

River hazards include:

- Fast running water including currents and eddy's on bends.
- Rapids and weirs with associated features such as 'stopper' waves
- Overhanging trees / vegetation above fast moving water
- Rocks.
- Bridge arches.
- Debris with a potential for snagging a kayaker.
- Sieves caused by debris.
- Poorly accessible banks for egress or emptying kayak and re-entry

Wide rivers / lakes

- In windy conditions, swell and choppy water can present challenges.
- In tidal areas muddy banks can cause difficulties in re-entering a boat after a capsize
- A capsize a distance from a bank can make it challenging to reach the bank with boat and paddle

Changing weather conditions and water levels

- Heavy rains can have a huge impact on river levels and can increase the safety risks. A river that is considered safe to paddle could become unsafe in a relatively short amount of time due to changing weather conditions. The effect that the weather has on the risks associated with kayaking should never be underestimated.

Minimising Risks

- The risks in any particular situation must be considered in advance of any club paddle whether an instruction session, training session or just a paddling trip.
- All paddlers must take into account the risk considering all of the factors listed above: the individual; equipment and most particularly water conditions.
- Experienced or instructor level paddlers should lead the risk assessment, aiming to make the individual largely responsible for their own safety, but making clear decisions for less experienced paddlers if necessary.
- Kayakers who paddle on their own, do so at their own risk.
- A first aid kit should be brought by a designated instructor on all trips

Mix of experienced and inexperienced paddlers.

- Where paddlers considered to be inexperienced for a particular trip or situation are involved, an appropriate number of experienced paddlers and/or instructors should accompany the group.
- As conditions and risk vary widely, there is no single ratio figure which applies, however two

experienced paddlers should make the decision on the day based on risks.

- The following guidelines in relation to ratios should form the basis of ensuring safety. However these are only guidelines; the experienced paddlers / instructors will make the final decision given the current situation and conditions.

Water type / conditions	Paddler category	No of instructors on trip	No of experienced Paddlers on trip	Ratio of instructors to paddlers	Ratio of experienced paddler to paddlers
Grade 1 /2	Racers	Due to the safe nature of racing K-boats, groups in these craft are ok to be accompanied by experienced paddlers.			
Thomastown Outdoor Swimming Pool	Level 1/2	1	1	12:1	6:1
Home river (1.5km up/down stream from clubhouse)	Level 1/2	1	1	6:1 (Due to local knowledge of the river)	4:1
Grade 1	Level 1/Level 2	1	1	6:1	6:1
Grade 2	Level 2/Level 3	1	1	4:1	4:1
Grade 3	TPCC Club does not paddle at this level	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Off-water risks

Club members should also be aware of off-water hazards, and exercise caution at all times:

- Debris and broken glass on riverbanks
- Trip hazards on river banks
- Cars and trailers maneuvering in car parks
- Lifting boats to and from roof-racks and trailers

Child Protection Policy

Issues relating to child protection are outlined in the club's Child Protection Policy

Categories of paddlers within Thomastown Paddlers Canoe Club

- **Level 1** – Has completed a Beginners course with TPCC or other provider.
- **Level 2** – Has passed their Level 2 Skills assessment.
- **Level 3** - Has passed their Level 3 Skills assessment.
- **Experienced Paddler:** Competed in a minimum 6 Canoe Union accredited down river races including weirs and deemed experienced by instructors.
- **Level 2 instructor** – Has completed Level 2 Instructor Training with Canoe Ireland at some point.
- **Level 3 instructor** - Has completed Level 3 Instructor Training with Canoe Ireland at some point.

3. Code of Conduct



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- A. Safety
- B. Transport
- C. Equipment
- D. Club Gym and Store
- E. Club Fees
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A. Safety

Safety of all members is of paramount importance. It must be priority over everything else. The club abides by its own Safety Statement and takes guidance from Canoe Ireland (NGB) guidelines. The following are a list of some club safety requirements:

- All members must wear the appropriate safety gear; IE: PDFs (Personal Floatation Devices), helmets etc. This applies to every club members regardless of ability. It is the members own responsibility to ensure that he/she has all the required safety gear with them before entering the water.
- As Thomastown Paddlers is a club and not an Adventure Centre, it is expected that all regular paddlers will assemble their own safety gear. The club does provide safety gear to casual members for club events. (€5 to hire). All paddlers should have suitable footwear such as old runners or preferably neoprene booties. Paddlers hoping to paddle outside of the summer months should provide their own suitable clothing for the weather conditions (IE: Wetsuit, drysuit, Cag etc)
- Helmets must be worn when paddling any boat, with the exception being a racing K Boat. The only time helmets may not be worn in enclosed boats is when paddling on deep, flat-water. (E.g.: Celbridge Paddlers race on the Grand Canal)
- Every club member is able to swim 50metres unaided.
- As tradition within the club and in association with Canoe Ireland recommendations "less than three, should never be". Basically a minimum of three paddlers should be present at any session. However, exceptions are made for paddlers of an adequate standard, who wish to train in racing boats.
- On club outings, the club instructors in accordance with the TPCC Safety Statement will access and decide on the appropriate arrangements in terms of location and group size. All members are expected to abide by the club instructors and leaders instructions. Failure to do so will be seen as a breach of club policy.
- Members should never place themselves or others in dangerous situations and must be aware of others capabilities.
- Failure to render assistance to any person in serious difficulty will lead to immediate expulsion from the club.

B. Transport

If members intend to own a boat and they also own a car, then the car should have a means of carrying the boat. (IE a roof rack or hitch). Every effort should be made to transport your own gear and boat to/from where ever it is being used. If you do not have a means of transport (Often the case for casual members and those in the early months), then members are responsible for the loading and unloading of their gear and should assist club leaders as much as possible. ***"Many hands make light work"***. On away trips it would be expected that all paddlers return to the club store afterwards to unload their own boat and gear.

C. Equipment

- Every member of the club should ensure that the equipment they are using is fit for purpose. Care should be taken that equipment does not fall into a state that it is unsafe for use.
- A member who loses breaks or damages any piece of equipment, be it belonging to the club or another individual must repair or replace it ASAP.

- Thomastown Paddlers has a wide fleet of racing boats K1, K2, K3 and K4. The club offers these boats to perspective racers to learn the skills of racing. Members are expected to treat these boats with great respect as they are often very fragile and expensive. K-Boats should never be left of concrete to avoid damage.

D. Club Gym and Store at Grennan Mill

TPCC operate out of two locations. In 2004 extensive work was carried out by TPCC at our gym building on Marshes Street, Thomastown. The gym was designed and populated for those seriously into Canoe Racing, allowing them to train all year round. All of the club's boats and most of its equipment is stored at our shed at Grennan Mill. This is an ideal location, given its close proximity to the river. At both locations members should:

- Keep the area in a clean and litter free condition that is presentable to visitors and members alike.
- Both the store at Grennan Mill and the TPCC Gym must only be used for the purpose for which they were obtained.
- Vigilance from all members is expected to deter any vandalism or anti-social behaviour at TPCC locations. Any noticed should be reported to the club committee or Gardai.

E. Club Fees & Membership

- The club membership and equipment hire fees will be assessed and finalised at the club AGM each year. Currently these are as follows (Memberships include Canoe Ireland fee):
 - **Tuesday Boat Hire** €5
 - **Senior Member** €95
 - **Junior/Student Member** €55
 - **Associate/land-based member:** €20
 - ***** Long term K-Boat or Wing Paddle Usage fee: €50** (To be paid at the conclusion of the domestic racing season). This fee is to encourage paddlers to source their own personal equipment eventually and to fund the upkeep and repair of any damaged equipment) ***
- MEMBERSHIP IS COLLECTED THROUGH WWW.CANOE.IE ONLY (CALENDER YEAR)
- It is expected that all renewal memberships are paid in a timely manner each year and ideally before the end of April.
- The treasurer will provide a breakdown of the clubs finances for previous year at each AGM and answer any questions members may have.

F. Behaviour

- At all times members should present themselves, our club and our sport in the best possible fashion.
- Every member must be treated with respect. Bullying or intimidation of any sort will not be tolerated.
- Members should never use vulgar or rude language.
- The club has a "Leave it as you found it" policy. It is expected that all members pick up litter and do not disrupt the many beautiful environments that we visit.
- Drivers: Particularly at Grennan Mill, cars as far as possible should park or drop off from Mill Street, beside the Ollie Walsh Statue. The laneway to the river is extremely narrow and parking is very limited and should be reserved only for those taking their own boats to the river or with limited mobility

G. Committee/Meetings

- The committee should try to meet no less than four times per year. It is recommended that at least four attend meetings, but less than this is allowed for meetings of a minor nature involving the day to day running of the club. Minutes should be kept and read at the opening of each meeting. These should be agreed, proposed, seconded and signed off by the Chair.
- The committee of Thomastown Paddlers to date is comprised of:
 1. Chairperson
 2. Secretary
 3. Treasurer
 4. P.R.O
 5. Equipment Officer
 6. Member
 7. Member
 8. Member
 9. Parents Rep
 10. Junior Rep



4. Thomastown Paddlers Canoe Club (TPCC) Child Protection Policy

Contents:

- Policy Statement
- Principles
- The Children's Officer
- Appendix

Policy Statement

TPCC is fully committed to safeguarding the well being of its members. Every individual in the club should at all times, show respect and understanding for the rights, safety and welfare of members, and conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the principles of the club and the guidelines contained in "The Code of Ethics and Good Practice for children's sport in Ireland".

Copies of the Code of Ethics Good Practice for Children's sport in Ireland are available online from Irish Sports Council website www.irishsportsCouncil.ie

Principles

TPCC has adopted “the code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport in Ireland” and endeavours to promote good practice by everyone involved in the club, and to provide a safe, healthy, enjoyable environment for young members.

Adults interacting with children in Canoeing/Kayaking(CK) are in a position of trust and influence. They should always ensure that they treat children with integrity and respect and that the self-esteem of children is enhanced. The trust implicit in adult-child relationships in CK places a duty of care on all adults. Voluntary or professional, to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the child while engaged in their CK activity. All adult actions in CK will be guided by what is best for the child and carried out in the context of respectful and open relationships.

The following principles apply within the club:

- Children’s involvement in CK should be an enjoyable experience
- The safety of children should always be the paramount concern of those adults responsible for providing CK opportunities at whatever level an individual adult is involved.
- All adults have a responsibility to be aware of child protection as an issue.
- Instructors will be assisted in gaining the relevant training and qualifications in CK.
- Verbal, physical, emotional, sexual or online abuse of any kind or threat of such abuse is totally unacceptable.

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

The DLP acts as a first point of contact and resource for all members of TPCC with regard to children's issues.

Details of DLP:

Name: Donnacha Brennan

Tel: 087-9261663 **E-mail:** donnachabrennan@gmail.com

Deputy DLP (DDL)

Name: Cathal Treacy

The role of the DLP at TPCC is to:

- Promote awareness of the “Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport in Ireland” within the club and particularly among children and their parents/guardians.
- Ensure that children have a voice in the running of their club and can talk freely about their experiences in their CK activities.
- See that children know how to make their concerns known to instructors/volunteers or members, adults or agencies.
- Encourage the involvement of parents/guardians in the club activities.
- Report as required to the main TPCC committee, TUSLA, Gardaí etc.

The DLP does not have a responsibility of investigating or validating child protection concerns within the club and have no counselling or therapeutic role. These roles are filled by the Statutory Authorities, The Department of Health and Children, TUSLA and the Gardaí, as outlined in “Children First”. It is, however, possible that child protection concerns will be brought to the attention of the DLP within TPCC, whose responsibility it is, to refer on such allegations or complaints to the statutory Authorities. (See Appendix 1)

Appendix 1

Responsibility to Report

Any person, who suspects that a child is being abused, has a responsibility to report their concerns to TUSLA. This responsibility is particularly relevant to professionals such as teachers, child care workers and health professionals who have regular contact with children in the course of their work. It is also an important responsibility for staff and volunteers involved in sports clubs, parish activities, youth clubs and other organisations catering for children.

Recording Allegations or suspicions

The following is a list of what should be recorded:

- Details of the child
- Details of concerns, allegations, incidents, dates, times, who was present, injuries, parents views, child views (If known)
- Details of person(s) allegedly causing concern in relation to child.
- Name and address of other personnel or agencies involved with this child.
- Are parents/guardians aware of this referral to the Social Services (TUSLA ec).
- Details of person reporting concerns
- Details of person compiling the complaint

Child Protection and/or Welfare Concerns should be reported to:

[Tusla Children and Family Services local social work duty service:](#)

**Child and Family Agency , Yellow House, Wester Road, Clonmel, Co Tipperary.
E91 PR83 PHONE NUMBER: 052 6177302**

***In case of Emergency or outside Health Service Executive (HSE) hours contact
should be made with An Garda Síochana***

5. Child Safeguarding Statement

Thomastown Paddler's provides "Canoe/Kayak" activities and opportunities for young people through participation in clubs, regional/provincial and international events.

Thomastown Paddler's is committed to safeguarding children. By working under the guidance of our Safeguarding Policies our volunteers, working with our young people throughout the organisation, seek to create a safe environment for young people to grow and develop.

Thomastown Paddler's written Risk Assessment document indicates the areas of potential risk of harm, the likelihood of the risk occurring, and gives the required policy, guidance or process documents require to alleviate these risks. The list of risks identified are contained in the following categories: Club and Coaching Practices; Complaints & Discipline; Reporting Procedures; Use of Facilities; Communications; and General Risk of Harm.

The Risk Assessment was undertaken on August 14th 2026.

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, the National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Tusla's Child Safeguarding Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice. In addition to our Risk Assessment document described above, there are further procedures that support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our activities.

Thomastown Paddler's has the following procedures in place as part of our Safeguarding Policies:

- Procedure for reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to Statutory Authorities
- Access for all volunteers to avail of relevant training and Garda Vetting.
- Procedures for access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm

The DLP for **Thomastown Paddler's** is **Donnacha Brennan**. The DDLP is **Cathal Treacy**.

We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. **Thomastown Paddler's** is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our activities.

This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed in August 2030

Signed:

Date:

(On behalf of **Thomastown Paddlers**)

Name:

Phone no:

For queries on this Child Safeguarding Statement, please contact **Donnacha Brennan** – donnachabrennan@gmail.com or 087-9261663

6. INDEMNITY SECTION:

Ihereby apply to participate in programmes or activities organised by Thomastown Paddlers Ltd. I have given my personal details which I understand will form the basis of this agreement between Thomastown Paddlers Ltd and me. I do hereby accept the following:

1. All sporting activities have an element of danger and canoeing/kayaking/fitness classes are no exception.
2. That while every care will be taken, I / my child may suffer serious personal injury as well as loss of property as a result of exposure to the risks and hazards associated with canoeing/kayaking/fitness classes as a sport and do voluntarily assume all of the aforesaid risks and hazards.
3. I hereby agree to abide by all the rules and regulations laid down by Thomastown Paddlers Ltd as amended from time to time and, in particular, I hereby agree that: **(i)** I/my child will wear a life-jacket, helmet, footwear and suitable clothing **(ii)** I/my child will follow all instructions meticulously. I understand, clearly, that by accepting Thomastown Paddlers Ltd terms and signing this agreement, I/my child will be precluded from suing or otherwise claiming against Thomastown Paddlers Ltd, its property or owners, for any loss or damage, howsoever, sustained.

7. TPCC Club Coaches Framework

Thomastown Paddlers encourages and supports any members (16 years +) to consider getting involved with race coaching at the club. This would involve monitoring and organising small groups of racers and issuing instructions to them to develop their paddling technique, race tactics and fitness. Such paddlers will need to complete the following:

1. Be a fully paid member with TPCC
2. Have up to date Garda Vetting
3. Have completed a Level 1 Child Protection course (or higher)
4. Have sat in on coaching sessions led by the lead coaches in TPCC or ideally from some of Irelands top race coaches namely Neil Fleming (Celbridge Paddlers) or Jon Simmons (Salmon Leap Canoe Club)
5. Have completed basic first aid, ensuring drowning, hypothermia and dealing with dislocations and other cuts and bruises are explicitly covered.

8. Useful Websites

Club

- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/thomastownpaddlerscanoecub/>
- **Instagram:** <http://instagram.com/thomastownpaddlers>
- **Flickr:** <https://www.flickr.com/photos/thomastownpaddlerscanoecub/>

Shopping

- **Roofracks (Car):** <https://www.micksgarage.com/>
- **Gear:** <http://www.i-canoe.com/>
- **Gear:** <http://www.padmores-barnes.com/>
- **Gear:** <http://shop.reglisse-kayak.com/>
- **Racing Gear:** Google to find out more about the following:
 - **Paddles:** Jantex, Braca, Gara
 - **K-Boats:** Nelo, Kayak Craft, Knysna Racing, Zastera, Roarace, Astor
 - **Bouyancy Aids/Hydration:** Starsky

National Body

- **Canoe Ireland:** www.canoe.ie
- **Marathon Ireland:** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/278017270919/>
- <https://canoemarathonireland.com/>