

Annual Safety Report 2022

Introduction

Safety has been an even greater priority for British Canoeing throughout 2022 and has been at the heart of all of its work. It is estimated¹ that over 7.9 million people participated in paddlesport in 2021 and we expect to see a similar level for 2022. The pandemic has led to a huge increase in the amount of new and novice paddlers taking to the water and purchasing their own paddle craft. And so, our desire to help people to enjoy paddlesport safely can be seen throughout our strategic work, communication, guidance, and new training awards. In the past year the entire organisation has contributed to making considerable progress in the area of safety. Guided by our new strategic plan, [Stronger Together 2022-26](#), British Canoeing will build on the work and progress of the last five years, and will use this to increase awareness and knowledge of safety over the next few years.

Strategic Work

A wide range of strategic work, both proactive and reactive, has been carried out in 2022. Throughout the year, British Canoeing has engaged in high level strategic work with the National Associations, key industry stakeholders, and non-specialist retailers to address a variety of safety issues within paddlesport. Further demonstrating its commitment to safety, in May, 2022 British Canoeing established a new full-time permanent post of Safety Lead to support organisational safety within British Canoeing as well as across the wider sport and our partner organisations.

Industry Representation

- March 2022: attendance of Parliamentary reception for raising SUP safety awareness.
- Attendance of the Stand Up Paddle Board Industry Summit, RNLI Headquarters, Poole.
 - British Canoeing gathered along with manufacturers, retailers and other industry experts to continue momentum towards promoting safe practice.
- Attendance of the National Outdoor Expo, NEC, Birmingham
 - Lee Pooley, Director of Coaching and Qualifications, presented on safety elements to be considered when going paddling.
- Working with the Government Agency the [Office for Product Safety and Standards](#) to ensure appropriate reach and targeted audience to paddlesport activity recalls.

¹ Source [British Marine Watersports Survey 2021](#)

Point of Sale - Non-Specialist Retailers

In light of an increase in incidents and rescues involving those new to paddlesports British Canoeing has worked with the RNLI to help support non-specialist paddlesport retailers to provide safety information to customers at the point of sale.

Decathlon

- Half-day training was given to in-store staff at 20 stores to provide them with the resources to advise customers on purchasing the right equipment, where to paddle, and where to get safety training. Decathlon also provide leaflets within all SUPs.

Lidl

- Lidl directed consumers to the BC & RNLI safety messaging on Go Paddling website at the point of sale of various watercraft, both on their product website and in one of their magazine issues.

Safety Communication

As the industry expert for paddlesport safety British Canoeing has communicated safety messaging using a variety of methods over the past year via its own website, [GoPaddling website](#), and social media channels. This communication has been seasonal, reflected certain safety issues, or provided an update to best practice. Clear, concise, and consistent messaging is key to raising awareness of the importance of safety. British Canoeing has gained a high level of interaction with its safety communications over the past year.

Safety Communication Highlights

Popular Social Media Posts

Facebook



Reach: 81,000

Instagram Reels



Reach: 5,000

Twitter



Reach: 4,321

Top 3 GO Paddling! Articles



Rank	Article	Reach
1	Stay Safe On The Water	41,845
2	First time stand up paddle boarding? Here's some things you'll want to know!	6,877
3	7 useful paddling apps to download to your phone NOW!	5,456

British Canoeing Social Media Channels [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#)
 Go Paddling Social Media Channels: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Pinterest](#)

Guidance

Safety Alerts

Throughout the year British Canoeing publishes [safety alerts](#) on its website in response to emerging or immediate issues relating to safety.

- [Shallow Water Injuries - Stand Up Paddleboard](#)

Four incidents where broken ankles and legs had been sustained as a direct result of falling off a board from a standing position whilst either setting off or in shallow water.

- [Solo Paddling - Sea Kayaking](#)

Over the year three serious incidents occurred whilst solo sea paddling, one resulted in a dramatic rescue whilst two tragically resulted in fatalities.

- [New Rules for the Disposal of Unwanted Marine Flares](#)

Government introduced new rules for safely and legally disposing of marine flares

Case Studies

Case studies provide the opportunity to share others' experience and key learnings with the wider paddlesport community. With the permission and support of those involved, identifying details are removed and incidents are able to be developed into case studies. These case studies usually are created from incident reports received through our [Incident Reporting Online Form](#) and aim to highlight good practice. If you would be interested in providing a case study please contact safety@britishcanoeing.org.uk.

- [Sea Kayaking Incident - "Freak" Wave](#)
- [Snagging Incident - Town Falls, River Dee, Llangollen](#)

Product recalls

British Canoeing is working with the Government Agency, the Office for Product Standards and Safety panel and receives alerts of product recalls. This increases our awareness of recalls of paddlesport related products. These recalls are then shared on our Safety Alerts page and via social media platforms. Last year, product recalls were issued relating to certain stand up paddleboards and PFDs. These gained a high amount of interaction on social media:

- **Safety Recall Notice** - 18th July 2022 - [PFDs](#)
 - Reach: 31,407, 100 shares
- **Safety Recall Notice** - 3rd August 2022 - [Stand Up Paddleboard](#)
 - Reach: 81,000, 444 shares
- **Safety Recall Notice** 11th August 2022 - [Stand Up Paddleboard](#)
 - Reach: 56,446, 261 shares

Webinars

- **“Including the Buzz of Weirs”**
 - A popular series of six webinars were held over the year focussing on the risks, safety management and safe use of weirs for training and recreation.
- **“Introduction to Safety at British Canoeing”**
 - A short webinar outlining the role of the Safety Advisory Panel, highlighting safety work, and encouraging incident reporting was hosted by the Safety Lead for clubs.

Awards

- Two new training awards were designed to raise awareness for those new to paddlesport:
 - [Paddle Safer](#) May 2022
 - [SUP Safer](#) – July 2022
- Two supporting videos were created to inform [participants](#) and [providers](#) of the scope of the award.

These short courses encourage individuals to consider where they paddle, the equipment they use, planning their trips and providing practical solutions if they get into difficulty on the water.

Training

- **Stadium Safety and Rescue Training**
 - Provider requirements were [updated](#). This enabled more coaches and leaders to deliver the training and for individuals wanting to provide safety cover at artificial white-water courses.

Other work

Club Newsletter

- Every month, British Canoeing's club newsletter now contains a safety update.

Safety Video - Be AdventureSmart UK

- Supported with a [video](#) on sit on top kayak safety.

Notable Events (Near Misses)

- Throughout 2022 British Canoeing shared reminders on the importance of reporting [notable events](#) (near misses) and will continue to do so to help our understanding of themes.

Activity Qualifications matrices

- British Canoeing Awarding Body, Mountain Training, British Cycling and the British Caving Association undertook a collaborative project to provide up to date [qualifications matrices](#) for each respective adventure sport.

Surf England

- Granted [Surf England](#) permission to use British Canoeing's safety guidance on stand up paddleboard leashes.

Marine Accident Investigation Branch Report - Commercial Stand Up Paddleboarding Accident on River Weir with Loss of 4 Lives

- Tragically, at the end of 2021 an incident on a weir in Haverfordwest resulted in the deaths of four stand up paddleboarders. This incident has been the subject of several investigations which were supported by British Canoeing and the National Associations throughout the year. The Marine Accident Investigation Branch published the report on the 8th December 2022 and British Canoeing has since created a [case study](#) to raise awareness of some of the lessons learnt.

National Trust Podcast

- The National Trust carried out a [podcast](#) about the opportunity to stand up paddleboard to some of their sites and shared British Canoeing's safety guidance.

Reported Incidents

The number of incidents reported through British Canoeing's Incident Reporting Online Form has increased considerably over the past few years. There was a 35% increase in the number of incidents reported through [British Canoeing's Incident Reporting Online Form](#). This does not necessarily mean that more incidents have occurred but instead indicates that the online incident reporting system is working and that a healthy approach towards incident reporting is developing. British Canoeing will continue to encourage incident reporting to help develop our understanding of incidents and identify any themes.

In addition to British Canoeing's reported incidents, data is also shared between the HM Coastguard, RNLI and RoSPA who keep the UK wide Water Incident Database (WAID). The incidents submitted are used to identify any patterns or clusters of accidents or injury that could indicate wider problems within the sport.

A range of incidents have been reported to British Canoeing throughout 2022. Injuries not requiring a visit to A&E have been the most frequent type of incident reported this year. Injuries not requiring a visit to A&E often include minor cuts or bruises where the individual is able to manage their own treatment. Whereas injuries requiring a visit to A&E most often reported involve shoulder dislocation, head injuries even where a helmet has been worn, or broken bones. There have been reported several cases in which shoulder dislocations were not obvious at first. Notable events (near misses) are also reported quite frequently and include entrapment, entanglement and pinning. Other commonly reported incidents related to "near miss" collisions with other water users and illness after paddling possibly due to water quality*.

The following data illustrates the incident information submitted directly to British Canoeing through the incident report system. The fatality figures are obtained through various reporting systems.

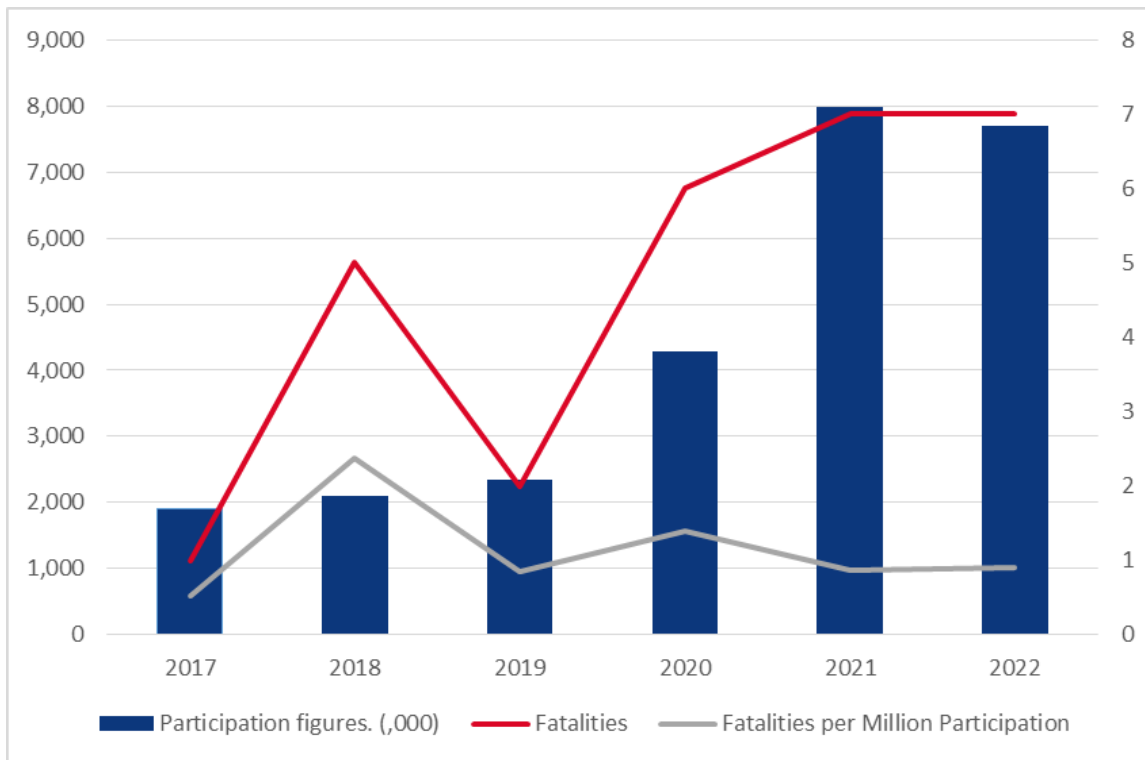
Table 1. Incident Rates Against UK Paddlesport Participation Growth

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Participation figures. (,000)*					Estimate
1,900	2,100	2,340	4,290	7,980	Est. 7,700
Fatalities					
1	5	2	6	11	7
Fatalities per million participation					
0.526	2.38	0.85	1.39	1.38** 0.87**	0.91

* Source [British Marine Water sports Survey 2021](#)

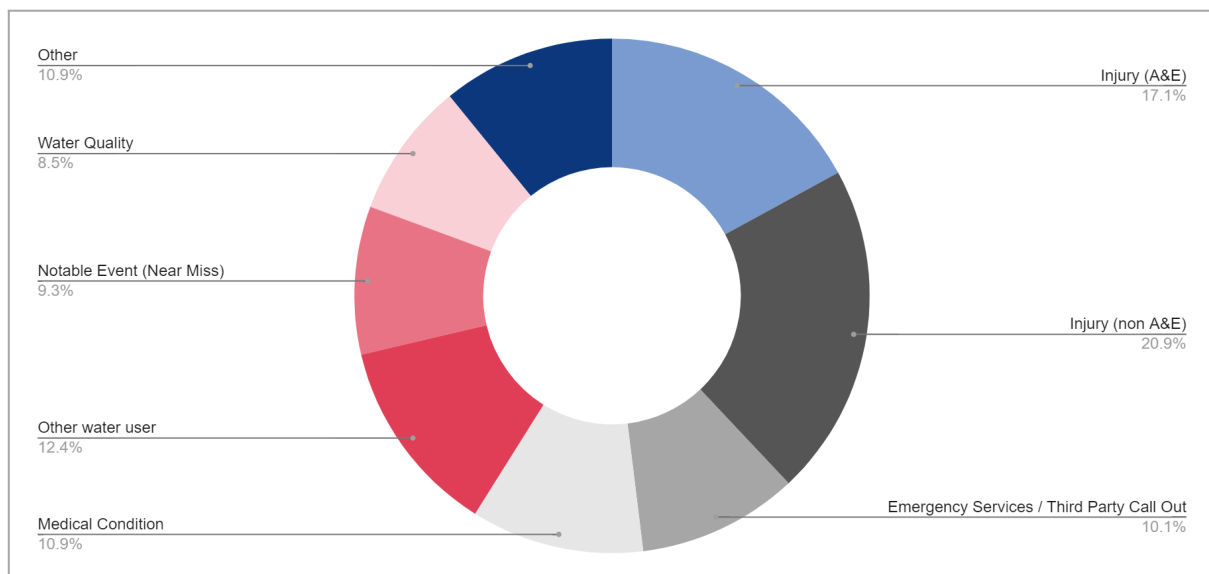
**1.38 including four fatalities at Haverfordwest, 0.87 excluding these.

Figure 1. Trend graph, Incident rates against UK paddlesport participation growth



*2021 Haverfordwest incident involving four fatalities is not included in any statistics.

Figure 2. Summary of Classification of 2022 Reported Incidents



National Associations Update

Each of the National Associations have also carried out a range of safety work over the past year:



Canoe Wales

With the Haverfordwest incident alongside other safety related incidents taking place in Wales, safety has been a top focus for Canoe Wales over the last 12 months. We have been working collaboratively with the other national associations to improve and develop safety related communications and messaging. Education of novice paddlers has also been a key focus and we have been developing a number of blogs and articles which have been focused on new paddlers and educating about safety related considerations such as offshore winds. We have been also educating our more experienced paddlers and members through a Member Safety Engagement initiative. This aims to provide experienced paddlers with the skills and tactics required to engage with inexperienced paddlers at the beach or paddle point to check they understand the risks and have thought about safety related considerations such as how to call for help, what to do in an emergency and where to go should they need assistance. With the increase in novice paddlers participating in paddlesport in Wales, we see safety as a continuing focus through 2023 and onward into our next 2024-28 strategy period.

Alistair Dickson, Chief Executive Officer, Canoe Wales



Scottish Canoe Association

It has been a very busy 12 months for the SCA safety panel and we have been working closely with other National Associations and third party organisations to highlight and broadcast safety campaigns and safety messaging. We recognise that there has been a disproportionate increase in the number of cases of paddlers getting into difficulty in and around the coast of Scotland and as such we have been working closely with the RNLI and the Coastguard to highlight the dangers associated with paddling alone and have contributed to the paddling press with written articles, blogs and infographics about what to do if incidents occur on the sea. Similarly, for inland paddlers we have experienced a few occurrences where pinpointing location on a river has been difficult at times, so we embarked on a campaign to highlight suitable equipment to carry to locate position and the correct protocol to use when pinpointing location and amplifying the information. Time has also been spent feeding into Water Safety Scotland's Water Safety Code and their Drowning Prevention Strategy. This work is seen as crucial to help educate novice paddlers and the general public alike and the SCA will continue to contribute to help achieve this end.

Calum McNicol, Development Officer, Scottish Canoe Association



The Canoe Association of Northern Ireland

With the Haverfordwest incident alongside local incidents in Northern Ireland, a key focus for CANI is safety. With this in mind, CANI has entered into strategic partnerships in conjunction with Sport NI (SNI), Swim Ulster, RNLI and the Coastguard. As a result of this partnership, SNI have set up a campaign offering Safety Awareness workshops for sit on top kayaks, stand up paddleboards, and Open Water Swimming throughout all the council areas and hot spots within Northern Ireland. This programme started in 2022 and will be delivered throughout 2023 with the aim of helping and educating hundreds of paddlers with the best practices and skills, resulting in them becoming safer on the water. CANI have shared British Canoeing safety alerts and developed several articles on safety for new people engaging in paddlesport. This information has been shared through the CANI website and social media outlets.

Rodger Hamilton, Head of Operations, Canoe Association of Northern Ireland



RNLI

The RNLI has seen an increase in our lifeboats and beach lifeguards going to the aid of people in trouble while kayaking, canoeing and stand-up paddleboarding over the past few years. People are often caught out by offshore winds and currents making it difficult for them to return to shore or find themselves in the water struggling to get back onboard their craft. Our public water safety work is targeted towards new and novice paddlers to promote the use of a suitable and well-fitted personal floatation device, taking a means of calling for help attached to them, checking the weather forecast and tide times and knowing how to contact the Coastguard in an emergency. The RNLI continues to work with partners and key influencers to promote safe use of the water for all.

Samantha Hughes, National Water Safety Partner, RNLI

Looking Ahead

Safety remains a high priority for British Canoeing for 2023 and beyond. Looking ahead, a wide range of safety work will be taking place throughout the year. Restarting the point of sale project in further developing resources and information for both manufacturers, suppliers and retailers will be key to raising awareness of safety among new and novice paddlers. Raising the profile and importance of reporting incidents and notable events will help to develop our understanding of incidents, identify any themes and provide support and guidance to the paddling community. Further developing a range of safety resources and educational packages will aim to support both recreational and competition paddlers. Another key focus for safety will be to commission research projects to gain insight and provide safety advice that is evidence based.