

- Date:** Various dates throughout the year, typically early evenings during British Summer time and at weekends throughout the year
- Activity:** Improvers sessions to build fitness, confidence and stamina for new club members.
- Description:** Sessions are held at the club base at Bell Hill by the river Thames in Hampton and usually involve a paddle of typically 1-3 hours, either upstream towards Sunbury lock or downstream to Thames Ditton island.
- The part of the Thames paddled is non-tidal, but can be busy with river traffic, rowing boats and other river users. There are many overhanging trees and a towpath on one side which gives reasonable access along the entire length of the river. There are also numerous boat houses and points where the river can be accessed. There can be a strong flow after heavy rain. See map for access points and main hazards.
- Numbers:** A maximum of 8 people per session leader can be taken on a session; at the discretion of the leader less people may be taken.
- Timings:** The sessions usually start at 6:30pm on Wednesday evenings or 9:30am on Saturday or Sunday mornings.

### **Session organisation**

**Organiser** A number of club members take improvers sessions.

**Required** 2\* paddling qualification or Hampton Kayaker+

or

Experienced paddler who has been cleared by a club coach as competent to run improvers session.

**Recommended** First aid qualification, FSRT

Paddlers attending an improver's session are by definition less experienced and less fit than other club members so special consideration needs to be given to this.

All paddlers are reminded to consider hazards before going afloat, such as fishermen or rowing boats – according to the time of year and time of day.

The improver leader asks paddlers to stay close together and monitor them for signs of fatigue and general well-being. The paddling route stays close to the banks (but avoiding trees and fishermen) except when crossing the river, staying well clear of weirs and other hazards, allowing extra time for paddlers who may not be able to react quickly to any developing situation.

If the weather is inclement, the flow too strong or river traffic too heavy then the improver leader will assess the situation in good time to get paddlers off the water, or to not go afloat in the first place. It is best to cancel in good time especially if the weather or flow is forecast to make the session too difficult to manage safely.

The usual generic paddling risks (summarised below and see generic risks document) must be noted but there are some specific to the running of a club session – also listed below.

**Generic Risks:**

<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Is the risk adequately controlled</b>	<b>What further action is necessary to control the risk</b>
Drowning	Buoyancy aids to be worn. All paddlers can swim 50m	Briefing to remind paddlers to consider hazards which might cause a capsize or fall into the water
Hypothermia	All paddlers to wear appropriate clothing.	Briefing to remind paddlers to consider hazards which might cause a capsize or fall into the water
River hazards	Warn all paddlers of weirs, inflows and outfalls.	Hazards discussed at briefing
Collision with boats, bridge piers etc	Keep a sharp lookout for other boats and river traffic	Hazards discussed at briefing
Medical Conditions	Check with paddlers if they have any medical condition and how that might affect them on the river	First aid kits available at club. All paddlers to complete a registration form.

**Session specific risks:** Paddlers will all be briefed in advance of these specific hazards at a briefing prior to the session.

<b>Hazard</b>	<b>Is the risk adequately controlled</b>	<b>What further action is necessary to control the risk</b>
Fishermen	Paddlers to keep a look out for rods and lines	
Molesey and Sunbury weirs	Point these out and advise to steer well clear of them.	
Outlets and inflows	These are marked on the map in the club house and improvers reminded of these	
River traffic, especially rowing eights	Keep a sharp lookout and warn paddlers of this risk	Check on events on the day.
Strong stream	Monitor warnings from EA	