

Annual Safety Report

2024

Introduction

Paddle UK has undertaken a vast amount of work in the area of safety over the past few years and significant progress has been achieved throughout 2024. Building upon key safety work carried out so far there have been many positive developments in all areas of strategic work including collaboration with manufacturers and retailers, point of sale safety messaging, the safety campaign, key research and the Safety Conference. Participation across all paddlesport activities seems to have declined slightly over the course of 2024. It is thought that the weather is the main reason for this, with a cooler and wetter Summer. Another prominent factor impacting participation has been a raised awareness of water quality with issues affecting both coastal and inland waters. Paddle UK has seen a wide range of paddlesport activity take place, from Olympic level to new community paddling groups. Overall, safety has become well-established and will continue to be a key cross-cutting theme for the organisation moving forwards. All areas of the organisation have worked well to raise awareness of safety across the entire paddlesport community. This work will continue in line with Paddle UK's strategic plan.

Strategic Work 2024

This year, a substantial amount of strategic safety work has been undertaken to address a variety of safety issues. Paddle UK recognises the value of collaboration in raising awareness of safety amongst the paddlesport community and would like to thank all stakeholders for their contributions and continued support. This annual report will now highlight key safety work undertaken throughout the year.

Industry Representation

- Attendance of Pre Inquest Review Hearing for Kempston Weir Fatalities 10th January
- Attendance of Inquest for Kempston Weir Fatalities 5th - 7th March 2025
- Continued work with the Government Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPPS) including attendance of regular online meetings. Attendance 4 x YouGov online focus group meetings looking at the SUP leash infographic.
- Establishment of Paddle UK Retailer Safety Group
- Member of The British Standards Institution committee SW/136/8
- Chair of the Adventure Smart Strategic Management Panel
- Member of the National Centre Safety Advisory Panel

- Member of cross-sport safety group organised by England Cricket, which also has representation from England Hockey, Swim England, Football, Rowing, Skydiving, and others.
- Attendance of the in-person Port of London meeting Sports and Leisure Association with Harbourmasters" in London
- Contribution of an introduction to [MAIB Safety Digest October 2024](#)
- Contribution to the [Coastal Inquiry Update Report 2024](#) published by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Coastal Communities
- Responded to the Relationships, sex and health education [Consultation](#) by the Department for Education on behalf of Paddle UK and British Canoeing Awarding Body
- Launch of new Aquatic Safety and Incident management technical group
- Joint position statement with the Chartered Institute of Management Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) on the [Standards for Deployment for Stand Up Paddleboarding](#)

Point of Sale

Following on from the work with non-specialist retailers in 2022 and 2023, Paddle UK has now established the Retailer Safety Group which has met online 4 times throughout 2024. The group includes representation from the Office for Product Safety and Standards, retailers, and manufacturers. Good working relationships have been established with several retailers and these will be further developed and maintained throughout 2025. Paddle UK has supported members of the group by providing key safety updates, safety infographics and messages to use at the point of sale. Bringing these retailers together into one group has been received positively.

Safety Campaign

Paddle UK and the RNLI launched the second year of their joint safety campaign on 17th June 2024. This joint campaign aimed to target new and novice paddlers by raising awareness of safety through five key messages. The messages were adjusted slightly this year to improve simplicity and align to messages of other adventurous activities. The safety campaign was shared with key partners to ask for support in sharing these key messages. In addition, we enlisted the support of several influencers to help us share the messages. Over 2,000 safety leaflets were distributed and over 1,500 were taken to various events throughout the Summer.

The Safety Campaign generated a huge amount of media coverage and was covered by ITV, BBC News, and the Guardian between 12th and 26th August, producing over 134 million opportunities to see (OTS)

Safety Communication

Paddle UK worked with working group members to develop infographics for four key areas of safety including offshore winds, leashes, flowing water, and weirs.



Four short videos for social media were also created to complement the infographics. The videos were published on Paddle UK's YouTube page and shared via social media channels:

- [Stand Up Paddleboard leashes](#)
- [Offshore winds](#),
- [Flow](#)
- [Weirs](#)

Paddle UK and Wilton Bradley

Paddle UK also worked with a key manufacturer, Wilton Bradley, and SUP influencers Clair and Ben Connibear, on a short video explaining the different types of leash for different environments: Stand Up Paddle Board Leashes. This was shared by Wilton Bradley and Paddle UK on Instagram. Wilton Bradley are one of the largest distributors of paddleboards in the UK, and supply to various retailers including Tesco and Decathlon. The video can be found [here](#).

Safety Conference

Paddle UK hosted its second Safety Conference on 21st November 2024 at Eastwood Hall. The conference brought together over 70 representatives from a wide variety of strategic organisations, including Government Offices, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the Royal Life Saving Society, Sport England, The Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity, as well as key manufacturers and retailers. The event provided key safety updates including an update from the second phase of the leash research, as well as opportunities for discussion and networking. The conference also facilitated key discussions around engagement with a broader audience and the leash research recommendations.





Safety Guidance

Safety Alerts

Throughout the year Paddle UK publishes safety alerts in response to emerging or immediate issues relating to safety:

- [Equipment Modification](#)
- [Proposed Changes to AALA](#)
- [Paddlesport Helmets](#)
- [Pros and Cons of Different Types of Personal Floatation Device](#)
- [Paddling Overseas: Higher Water Levels](#)
- [Sea Kayaking](#)
- [River Tay: Tragic Incident](#)

Information Sheets

In 2024 the following information sheet was published:

- [Paddlesport Head Injury Guidance](#)

Case studies

One case study was published in 2024:

- [Benjamin Leonard - Prevention of Future Death Report No.2](#) - on the lessons to be learnt from the investigation and coroner's report into the accident at Great Orme, Llandudno, involving the death of 16 year old Benjamin Leonard on a Scout trip.

Product Recalls

Paddle UK continues to work with the Government Agency, the Office for Product Standards and Safety and attends periodic meetings, as well as 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. In 2024 the the product recalls below were shared:

- January, [8th, 22nd](#)
- February: [19th](#)
- April: [8th, 9th, 11th, 12th, 18th](#)
- May: [7th, 8th, 21st](#)
- June [7th](#)
- July: [3rd, 15th](#)
- October: [24th](#)

Training

A range of new training awards were designed to reflect the 2021 safety review developing knowledge and skills required by the paddlesport community:

- Swimmer Safety & Rescue Training
- Advanced White Water Safety Training
- Weather eLearning
- Tides eLearning
- Surf and swell eLearning
- Navigation for Paddlers
- Open crossings

Research

The second phase of the leash research conducted by Dr Loel Collins, Simon Allfree, and Chris Onions focused on flow environments and retentive features has been completed this year and findings presented at the 2024 Safety Conference. The report will be published and available early 2025.

Collaborative Incident Reporting System

The updated collaborative incident reporting system developed by Paddle UK with support from Surfing England and the British Stand Up Paddleboard Association went live in October 2024. This uses the existing online platform and aims to encourage incident reporting from all types of paddlesport activities. This will help us to understand the types of accidents and near misses occurring, and share wider learnings with the paddlesport community.

Reported Incidents

The number of incidents reported through Paddle UK's Incident Reporting Online Form in 2024 has been at a similar level to previous years. These have covered the full range of accidents, injuries and notable events, some minor whilst others more serious. In addition, these reported incidents have involved a variety of craft, disciplines, and environments which highlights a positive attitude to incident reporting is growing throughout all areas of paddlesport. Paddle UK will continue to encourage incident reporting to help develop our understanding of incidents and identify any themes.

In addition to Paddle UK's reported incidents, data is also shared between the HM Coastguard, RNLI and RoSPA who manage the UK wide Water Incident Database (WAID). From this data, we can see that the issues relating to inexperienced paddlers remain the same.

A range of incidents and near misses have been reported to Paddle UK throughout 2024. The three main types of incident reports received in 2024 were for notable events (near misses) and injuries either requiring a visit to A&E or injuries not requiring further medical attention. In this way, the three most frequent types of incident reports received remain the same as those seen in 2023.

There has been a slight increase in the number of notable events (near misses) reported and it is positive to see reports submitted where there has been a safety situation even where no injury or damage resulted, but almost occurred. One of the most significant notable incidents involved an individual paddling over Horseshoe Falls weir on the River Dee in Llangollen, capsizing and becoming stuck in the tow back. A professional raft guide was leading a group nearby during the incident and performed a live bait (tethered) rescue on the casualty who was unconscious and not breathing. Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) was carried out mid river while the emergency services were called. CPR was successful and the casualty recovered in hospital. Emergency services have drawn attention to the vital role and professionalism of the paddlers who undertook the rescue.

Injuries requiring A&E mostly involved shoulder dislocations and these occurred in multiple environments including white water, surf, and pool sessions. Other injuries involved situations where the individual had hit their head and needed checking for concussion.

A few reports were received throughout the year relating to SUP injuries either of the individual falling onto the board while on the water or falling while carrying the paddleboard, however, these were relatively minor injuries.

Similar to previous years, a common theme remains incidents involving collisions between paddlers and rowers or issues between paddlers and powered boats. 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. Fatalities Against UK Paddlesport Participation Figures

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Participation Figures*	2,100	2,340	4,290	7,980	8,320	8,000	8,000*
Fatalities	5	2	6	7	7	7	4
Fatalities per Million Participation	2.38	0.85	1.39	0.87	0.91	0.87	0.5

* An estimated full year figure based on the Watersports Participation Survey 2023

Figure 1. Trend Graph, Fatalities Against UK Paddle Participation Figures

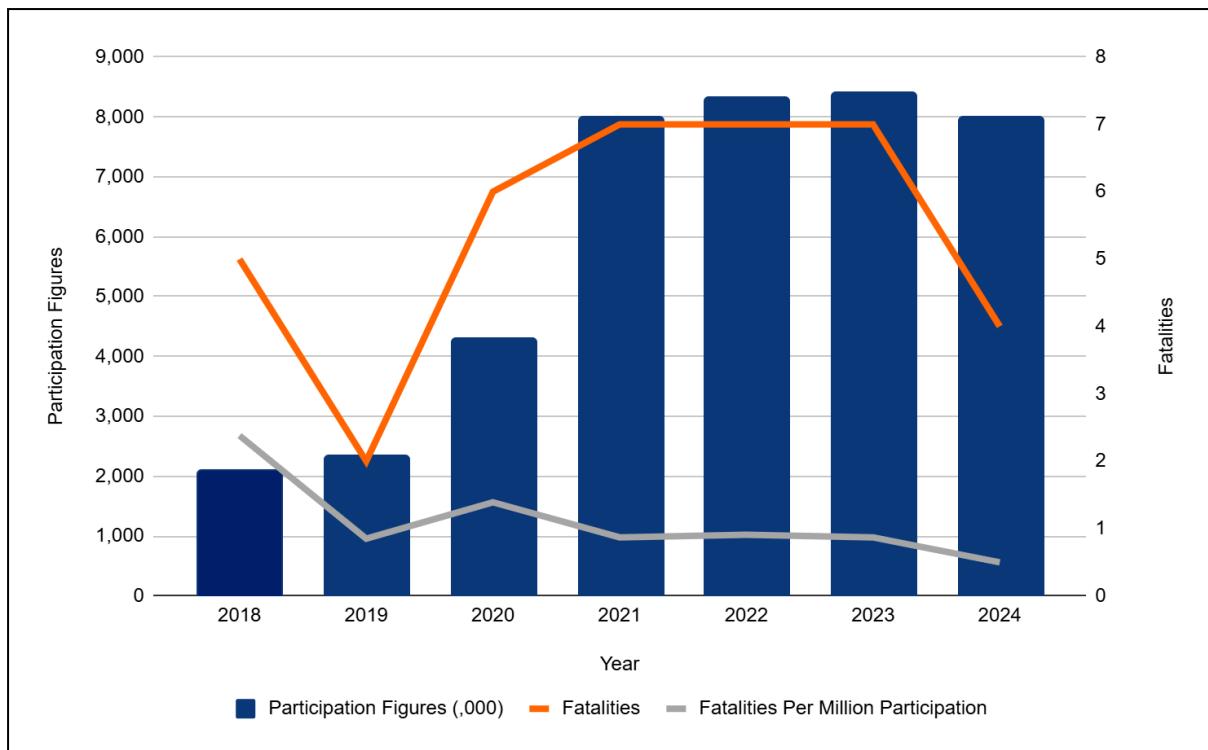
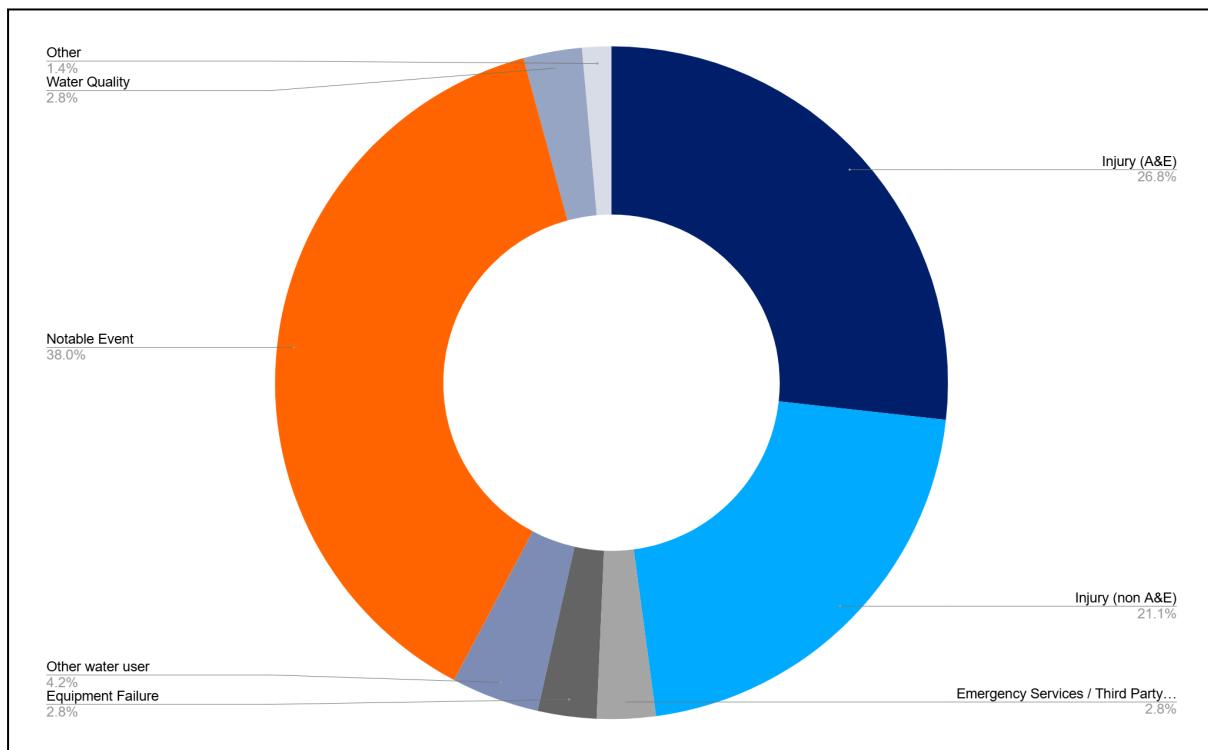


Figure 2. Summary of Classification of 2024 Reported Incidents



National Associations Update



Canoe Wales

The past 12 months have been a dynamic and productive period for Canoe Wales. Following a comprehensive review of the governance of Stand-Up Paddleboarding (SUP), we appointed a new SUP Lead for Wales to drive this growing discipline forward. In collaboration with other national associations, we have been developing a robust strategy for the growth and development of SUP in Wales, focusing on safety messaging, governance structures, and training standards. Emily Evans left us after around 10 months to move back into the rope access industry and was replaced by Emily King.

Canoe Wales has also been actively involved in British Canoeing's Summer Safety Campaign and continues to indirectly and directly support the Safety Conference. We presented on key aspects of SUP safety and contributed to important research on SUP leashes, with some testing conducted at the National White-Water Centre, Canolfan Tryweryn.

Engagement and advocacy have been central to our efforts. We provided a comprehensive update to Sport Wales on our progress in SUP development and submitted a request for the continuation of funding to support this critical work. Additionally, we partnered with the RNLI and Coastguard to deliver Member Roadshows across Wales, focusing on SUP safety and water awareness. These roadshows complemented a well-attended webinar dedicated to SUP participant safety, which saw 255 sign-ups—a testament to the growing interest and need for safety education within the community.

Looking ahead, we are excited to complete our rebrand to Paddle Cymru over the coming weeks, which was agreed at our recent AGM. Safety remains a cornerstone of our work, and we are committed to advancing this priority throughout 2025. We will continue to work closely with other national associations and stakeholders to enhance safety, governance, and the overall development of safe paddling in Wales.



Paddle Scotland

Paddle Scotland remains committed to fostering a culture of safety, inclusivity, and excellence in paddlesports across Scotland. In 2024, we undertook numerous initiatives to enhance water safety awareness, provide tailored training, and support events while maintaining a collaborative approach with key stakeholders. This update outlines the key activities and achievements in our ongoing mission to promote safe practices in kayaking, canoeing, and stand-up paddleboarding (SUP).

- Collaborative Partnerships and Water Safety Messaging

We strengthened our partnerships with key stakeholders, including Water Safety Scotland, to deliver impactful safety campaigns. Notable achievements include:

- Creation of Water Safety Messaging: Developed targeted messaging for kayakers, canoeists, and SUP users focusing on critical topics such as avoiding offshore winds, self-rescue techniques, and recognizing weather hazards.
- Educational Videos: Produced a series of engaging safety videos that have been widely distributed through social media and membership channels, emphasising practical tips to prevent incidents on the water.
- Second Annual Student Safety Conference

Building on the success of the inaugural event, the second Annual Student Safety Conference was held in 2024 in partnership with Sportscotlands National Centre, Glenmore Lodge. Nine out of the eleven affiliated student clubs attended, highlighting a strong commitment to safety within the student paddling community. Participants completed BCAB safety courses in white water kayaking, gaining essential skills in risk management, safety considerations and rescue techniques in moderate and advanced white water environments.

- Bespoke Safety and Leadership Training for Student Clubs

Recognising the unique needs of student paddling groups, Paddle Scotland worked closely with clubs to provide customised safety courses and leadership training, including:

- Tailored Programs: Designed bespoke sessions to address club-specific challenges, ranging from lack of qualified leaders and coaches to setting up safety mechanisms for newcomers to BCAB advanced leadership training for trip organisers.
- Empowering Leaders: These sessions enhanced student leaders' confidence in managing group safety during trips, fostering a culture of responsibility and preparedness, specific to the student club environment.

- Membership Engagement Webinar

To promote proactive safety practices within the paddling community, we hosted a membership engagement webinar. This focused on training members on effective communication techniques when encountering unsafe practices among the public, such as paddling without appropriate gear or in unsuitable conditions. The webinar equipped members with practical tools to approach such situations constructively and respectfully, reinforcing our ethos of community safety advocacy.

- Event Support for Safety Officers

To encourage mass participation in paddlesports events, we provided direct support to event safety officers. In addition, we collaborated with organizers of key events, including the Moriston . Enduro, North Esk Race, Garry Boatercross, and Holy Isle Challenge. We provided tailored support to ensure these events were conducted safely and effectively, increasing both participant numbers and safety standards. This proactive approach contributed to the growth of paddlesports events across Scotland while upholding high safety benchmarks.

In 2024, Paddle Scotland demonstrated its unwavering commitment to water safety through collaboration, education, and direct support. By working with partners, engaging members, and empowering clubs and event organizers, we have taken significant strides toward a safer and more inclusive paddlesport community. These efforts not only mitigate risks but also enhance the enjoyment and accessibility of our beloved activities for all. We look forward to building on these successes in 2025 as we continue to champion safety at every level of paddlesports in Scotland.



Paddle Northern Ireland

Paddle Northern Ireland has consistently championed safe paddling by fostering strong partnerships with key water safety organisations, including the RNLI, Coastguard Northern Ireland, and the British Canoeing Safety Advisory Panel. Through our website, social media channels, and regular newsletters to clubs and members, we have effectively disseminated crucial safety information, addressing key topics such as offshore wind conditions, appropriate equipment and attire, environmental risk awareness, and the importance of having a reliable means of requesting assistance when necessary.

In late 2023, the British Canoeing Awarding Body introduced new safety awards. In response, we recruited and trained new tutors throughout 2024 to deliver these qualifications. The awards include Sea Kayak Safety and Rescue, Introduction to White Water Safety, Inland Open Water Safety and Rescue, and Paddlesport Safety and Rescue.

Our newly adopted strategic plan reinforces Paddle Northern Ireland's firm commitment to safety as a core principle of our operations. Looking ahead, we will continue to advocate for safe paddling through the provision of essential resources, incident reporting systems, safety advisory panels, recognition programs, and specialised training courses designed for paddlers of all skill level



Royal National Lifeboat Institution Update

The RNLI continues to see similar rescue figures compared to previous years for our volunteer lifeboat crews and lifeguards when analysing canoeing, kayaking and paddleboarding rescue data. A key reason for lifeboat callouts to paddlers is due to being blown or swept away from the shore. RNLI Lifeguards and water safety volunteers continue to provide advice and educate people on risks such as offshore winds.

One way the RNLI has trialled sharing safety messages to paddlers in 2024 was through an opportunity to win a waterproof phone case. This focused on the key message of taking a means of calling for help when on the water whilst also promoting other key messages and engaging paddlers through direct emails. Alongside Canoe Wales, a webinar was delivered at the start of the season to stand up paddleboarders and featured a casualty and lifeboat crew sharing their experience. The RNLI collaborated with Paddle UK on the #PaddleSafe campaign. A highlight of this campaign was a media day where a case study shared their story of being caught out by the wind and this was published over 79 times and had national breakfast TV coverage.

The RNLI remains focused on promoting water safety and helping people to enjoy the water safely.