



Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race

Risk Assessment Update – 3 March 2020

The Directors of the DW Canoe Race are working with the relevant organisations responsible for safety on the Kennet & Avon Canal and the River Thames to review the event's risk assessment and operational procedures to gain permission for this year's competition to proceed as normal at Easter.

These organisations include the Canal & River Trust, the Environment Agency, and the Port of London Authority (PLA), which is responsible for safety on the Tideway.

A [recent statement](#) by the PLA following a fatal incident during the final moments of last year's event has made a number of recommendations for paddlers who use the Tideway. The DW Directors are not able to comment on the specific circumstances surrounding last year's incident as the Coroner's inquest has not yet taken place. However, the Directors welcome the PLA's note as a useful contribution to the ongoing discussion over Tideway safety.

As part of the preparations for this year's race, the Directors have conducted a full review of the event's risk assessment and put a number of additional measures in place to further reinforce the already comprehensive approach to race-time safety, as follows:

- **Full Review of Risk Assessment:** a complete review of DW's risk assessment has been undertaken. A hazard assessment has been drafted to identify additional hazards to safe navigation, and mitigating actions to be actioned. On the Tideway this includes extra DW Safety rigid inflatable boats (RIBs) at key locations, such as the Thames Tideway Tunnel works, to direct paddlers away from areas of potential risk. The review has been carried out in conjunction with the PLA, who now require all Tideway event organisers to provide additional marshal boats.
- **Thames Tideway Tunnel Engagement:** we are in direct contact with the project's transportation and operational management team to establish the pattern of their barge movements and what, if any, impact this will have on DW paddlers. On the basis of information received, we do not believe there will be any impact given the planned movements of their barges on ebb and flood tide times.
- **Other Vessel Users:** although barges operated by Thames Tideway Tunnel clearly present the greatest potential hazard given the project's proximity to the race finish, there are other vessel operators on the Tideway. We are working to establish the same dialogue with these operators.
- **Communications:** The PLA Code of Practice for paddling on the Tideway is already part of the DW rules, which all participants are required to acknowledge having read as a condition of entry.
- **Paddler fatigue:** We carry out visual inspections on all competitors at fixed points along the course, as well as further checks by mobile race umpires. Specifically ahead of the Tideway section, this includes the checkpoint at Teddington Lock for Senior Doubles paddlers, and on Monday morning an inspection of all Stages Race competitors and their boats at Thames Young Mariners before they are allowed to take to the water. Any competitor who appears unduly fatigued is automatically assessed by our Safety Team and may be required to retire. Race officials also stop a number of crews every year if they fail to make sufficient headway within the time windows set out in the rules.
- **PLA/British Canoeing Safety Alerts:** will be published on the DW website and social media channels whenever we are notified of major works taking place on the Tideway.

The DW Organisation is committed to the highest standards of race organisation and the safety of competitors is always the single greatest priority of the entire organising team. Competitors, supporters or spectators with further, specific DW safety questions should contact the Race Directors by email for further information: info@dwrace.co.uk