

The Environment Factsheet

for Guides, Leaders and Coaches

One of the pleasures of canoeing whether it's fast running white water, lowland canal/river/lake systems or the open waters of the coast for the canoeist is the sheer pleasure of being out amongst our beautiful natural and historic industrial environments both inland and coastal.

As coaches you are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that newcomers and experienced paddlers are trained to a sufficient level to ensure they have the skills to enjoy the sport safely and responsibly. However, ask yourself this – does this extend to teaching folks about being environmentally sustainable?

With paddling now becoming more popular, the need for a better understanding of our natural waterways and coastlines has never been greater. With a more environmentally awareness and knowledgeable coaching team, we can inform others of the fantastic world we paddle through and ensure that they have a responsibility to protect and enjoy the environment.

Not only do we have a responsibility to protect the natural environment and save it for the future for others to enjoy but we also need to demonstrate to other users that canoeing is an environmentally benign sport when carried out responsibly. Our leaflet The Paddler Code, along with useful factsheets highlights the British Canoeing position for environmentally sustainable paddling.

Their environmental role can be divided into two categories:

- Protecting and respecting the environment whilst paddling in the natural environment
- Greening canoe club – making canoe clubs think about how they run their clubs in an energy efficient manner.

This can be further broken down in to

- inland
- coastal waters



British Canoeing (indeed paddling in general) has been challenged from a number of different areas in that canoeing can damage the environment – whether it's through seal launching or paddling down a river when water levels have been too low. To defend sustainable paddling it is important that everyone associated with paddling including our coaches has a good understanding of potential environmental issues as it could well impact on where and when you can canoe!

Seal launching is an age old activity however recently we have come to realise that seal launching can potentially do huge damage to banks, vegetation and lichen on rocks. Why not build your own seal launching point as has been done in partnership with British Canoeing, North Pennine AONB and Natural England (see below).



Alien species, also known as non-native species, are becoming more and more of an issue as the water in and around many other countries/continents can contain a number of non-native, or alien, species of plants and animals. Some of these can cause problems due to their ability to out compete our native species and importantly for us, prevent the use of some waters for recreational purposes as they literally clog up and block the waterway. This costs navigation several million pounds every year to remove and dispose of such plants as Floating Pennywort.

British Canoeing has been actively involved in the “stop the spread” campaign in partnership with a number of environmental and boating organisations. The campaign aims to counter the threat to Britain's economy and wildlife posed by the spread of invasive non-native species such as the ‘Killer Shrimp’ and the American Signal Crayfish which have been introduced into the UK from other parts of the world.

As coaches you can help pass this message on by promoting the following information.

All recreational water users can take some SIMPLE STEPS to help prevent the colonisation of these harmful organisms into our healthy waterways:

- Check equipment and clothing for live organisms - particularly in areas that are damp or hard to inspect.
- Clean and wash all equipment, footwear and clothing thoroughly. If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them.
- Dry all equipment and clothing - some species can live for many days in moist conditions. Make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere.

To summarise

British Canoeing has material which can help you in your role as coaches and we are happy to send you posters and leaflets to assist you.

Information that you, as a Leader, Guide or Coach, can pass on in your interactions with canoeists is vital to spread the environmental message.

Caring for the environment.... Inland and estuaries

By following the simple steps below you can ensure your presence is not detrimental to the freshwater environment, minimise and avoid accidentally disturbing wildlife and their habitats.

- Find out about the area before you go, noting its sensitive places, species and breeding seasons.
- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home with you.
- When clearing litter left by others, handle it with care.
- Leave the environment as you find it
- Keep noise to a minimum.
- Do not “seal” launch or drag boats to avoid wearing away natural banks. Float your canoe for launching, lift out when landing and carry it to and from the water.
- Do not damage bank side vegetation when launching or landing.
- Where possible keep to any designated paths or launching points.
- On rivers, avoid paddling over gravel banks in low water conditions – they may contain fish spawn.
- Constantly assess wildlife. If you see signs of disturbance move away quietly.
- Check clean and dry all your equipment when paddling on different water courses to stop the spread of alien species.