

Bewl Valley Sailing Club

Safety Policy

Contents

(A) Safety Guidance and Safety Rules

(1) Safety Guidance

(2) Safety Rules

Safety Guidance and General Instructions

1. SAFETY GUIDANCE

Personal Safety

Although the waters at Bewl are non-tidal and generally more protected than on the coast, the sudden wind changes and the temperature of the fresh water can present additional hazards to those unfamiliar with them. The two most common causes of death in boating are drowning and hypothermia. The conditions in which you are safe to sail at Bewl will depend on your experience and ability.

Through experience and training you will:

- Be aware of weather and water conditions and the limitations these impose on your ability to cope.
- Build up your technical competence in boat and equipment handling.
- Recognise and avoid potentially dangerous situations.

Bewl is an excellent location to build up that experience but it is for you to decide whether or not to sail and when to stop sailing, subject to your also complying with the safety rules, which are an extra safety constraint.

Water Temperature

Being more than 30 metres deep in places, the water temperature at Bewl is surprisingly cool especially in the spring and early summer. It will normally be much cooler on the water than at the Clubhouse particularly when you are out of its shelter from the wind and your clothes are wet. You should recognise that cold and tiredness make you much more likely to get into difficulties. It is important that you and your crew wear adequate clothing and personal buoyancy whilst sailing.

Buoyancy

In the event of a capsize you will be dependent on the buoyancy of your boat to provide you with a temporary refuge, to help upright the boat and either to sail to the shore or to bail out. You should undertake a buoyancy test at least once a year. You should not rely on the availability of a Support Boat to recover from a capsize.

The Water

Being fresh water you are a little less buoyant at Bewl than on the sea, and it is more harmful if it enters your lungs.

The water is pumped up from the Medway untreated. Naturally, algae grow in it. The Environment Agency provides a leaflet on "Blue-green Algae" and the Department of Health has stated:

"There have been no reports of long term effects or deaths in humans (through algal scum), but in some cases illnesses were severe. Although algal scum is not always harmful, it is a sensible precaution to avoid contact with the scum and water close to it."

Similarly, Wealden District Council publishes a leaflet on Weil's disease for all those involved in outdoor water sports. The symptoms do not appear until 3 -19 days after exposure. They start like "Flu" with a temperature and aches and pains in the limbs; other symptoms may include irritation of the eye, or jaundice. It is not spread from person to person. Southern Water knows of no case having been contracted from sailing at Bewl. However sensible precautions include:

- Cover all scratches, cuts, and sores or skin affected by eczema with waterproof plasters.
- Wash your hands or eat food from a wrapper. Always wash or shower after sailing.
- Avoid unnecessary capsizing and if you do capsize, try to avoid swallowing the water.
- If you feel unwell in the days following sailing see your doctor and tell him you have been sailing in fresh water. (An Elisa blood test provides quick results).

2. SAFETY RULES

1. All sailing at any time is at the individual's own risk

2. Session Times

Saturdays 10.00 hrs until 18.00*

Sundays 10.00 hrs until 18.00*

Bank Holiday Mondays 10.00 until 18.00*

Wednesday

(1 May to 31 August) 18.30 hrs until 21.00*

* or 30 minutes before sunset if earlier

(a) During session times members may sail when at least one Support Boat is in attendance and sailing is authorised by the Officer of the Day; this is signified by the raising of the Red Ensign on the gaff of the flagpole on the Clubhouse. The flags shown in the diagram on the below are flown when sailing is restricted during session times.

WARNING FLAG

Warning - the sailing risk is higher than normal



NO SAILING FLAG



No sailing is permitted at all

(b) Outside Sailing Sessions only members on the Club's Competent Helm Register may sail subject to the following restrictions:

1. only sail between 09.00 and no later than 30 minutes before sunset;
2. they must comply with the Club's requirements/recommendations:-
 - o The individual must make their own decision to sail depending on the weather conditions on the day, their physical capability on the day, their competence level & the condition & suitability of their boat
 - o they should sail with a buddy in another boat/windsurfer
 - o they must enter their details in the register held in the Club Office; all Competent Helms should obtain an access card so they can obtain entry to the clubhouse when closed.
 - o they must notify the club of a contact and their telephone number; that contact should know of their plans.
 - o they must sign off in the register once they have finished sailing
 - o they must notify their contact that they are " off the water" by the time they have previously agreed. If the telephone contact has not been notified that the sailor is "off the water" it is the responsibility of that contact to ascertain their whereabouts. If they wish they can contact the club duty manager on an emergency number 07596 453271 and arrange to meet him/her at the club.
 - o If a member persistently does not sign on or off the club register the Club reserves the right to remove that member from the Competent Helm Register

(c) The restrictions in (b) above shall not apply to members participating in authorised Club events.

(d) The BVSC Officer of the Day or the Club Manager is the final arbiter of the acceptability of conditions for sailing at Bewl.

3. Competent Helm Register

Members may be added to the Competent Helm Register if they are over 16 years of age and provide written evidence of the required level of competency to the Club Office. Such evidence may comprise a RYA Level 2 certificate plus Seamanship module or a valid test certificate resulting from a Club Competent Helm Test. For Windsurfers the requirement is RYA Level 2.

Such tests, for which a small fee is charged, may be arranged through the Club Professional.

4. Boat Buoyancy

All boats must have full and efficient buoyancy. Each boat shall have its designed buoyancy maintained in satisfactory working order.

5. Personal Buoyancy

All dinghy sailors & boat users shall wear adequate personal buoyancy at all times afloat

The harness or nappy-type buoyancy aid is considered a minimum requirement for Competent Board Sailors in view of the availability of the sailboard as a float.

Otherwise board sailors shall comply with the dinghy sailing requirement above.

6. Adequate Clothing

appropriate clothing for the weather conditions must be worn whilst afloat.

Dry suits or wet suits must be worn at all times afloat between 1 November and 30 April. Even when the air temperature is warm the water is still cold

7. Insurance

All craft shall be insured against third party liability to the extent of at least £2m or such sum as the Main Committee may from time to time prescribe.

8. Restricted areas

Sailing is prohibited at any time:

- in the nature reserve;
- within 50 metres of the draw-off and overflow towers; and
- within 50 metres of the dam wall.

Sailing is prohibited in Hook Straight west of a line drawn between the points where Hook Lane meets the waters edge on either side of the reservoir between 1st April and 31st October.

No craft shall approach within 50m of any dive vessel flying flag A (blue and white) indicating that it has divers down.

Members' craft not engaged in racing shall keep clear of craft engaged in racing. Otherwise the conflict and collision avoidance regulations shall be observed by all members at all times.

Craft which are not intending to race must keep clear of the starting and finishing lines being used by racing craft and must not come ashore in front of the race box

9. Safety on the Shore

This includes the shore, the water whilst not in a boat, the pontoons, slipways and access roads

- no swimming is allowed

- no children or young people under 16 are allowed unaccompanied on the pontoons
- young children should not be allowed to play on the approach roads or the road behind the club house
- motor vehicles may be used to tow or carry boats or windsurfers to the shore but no person should ride in a boat that is being towed
- we recommend extreme caution when towing a boat without a tow bar
- cars & other vehicles should observe a maximum speed limit of 15mph at all times
- no vehicle should be parked on any approach road, slipway, beach or road in front of the club
- particular care should be taken on the approach roads and slipways when manoeuvring
- when the car park and the spaces on the road behind the club are full members must park in their boat space
- the road behind the clubhouse is restricted to staff, sailing club members and sailing club visitors

10. The BVSC Officer of the Day & Beachmaster have the authority for safety issues whilst on duty. Their responsibilities cover safety both on the water and on all areas of land designated by the brown line in the following diagram. All water users come under the overall supervision of the BVSC Officer of the Day and Beachmaster. **The ultimate authority for safety is the Club Manager when on duty or in his absence the Club Professional.**

The Rule is People before Boats- Always

