



The Alde & Ore Estuary Trust Fundraising Flotilla 2024: Health & Safety Procedures

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1. Background

The Alde & Ore Estuary Trust (AOET) flotilla will comprise of swimmers and paddlers (kayakers, rowers, paddle boarders and canoeists) making their way down the river Alde from Aldeburgh Yacht Club to Orford Sailing Club along a five-mile route. The event is intended to be an enjoyable, challenging, sponsored event run by volunteers - aimed to raise funds for the AOET that will contribute towards rebuilding the Alde and Ore river walls. See www.aoetrust.org for more information.

Whilst the AOET cannot eliminate all risk, and as individuals will be participating as amateurs, we cannot guarantee that all participants will have the required experience and fitness to protect themselves during a lengthy open water swim (please see disclaimer attached to the registration documentation). However, we will endeavour to take reasonable care for the safety of participants with use of water testing, risk assessments, medical volunteers, safety boats and a pre-event briefing. We also include consideration for the health and safety of event volunteers and spectators in our assessments and procedures.

Health and Safety procedures have been adhered to in the production of this event, the main components of which are:

1. Risk assessments have been undertaken to determine the event structure.
2. The appointment of a Health and Safety Officer (HSO).
3. The appointment of a lead medical volunteer.
4. The provision of information for participants detailing health and safety risk.
5. The event rules have been constructed based on updated risk assessments.
6. An event briefing will be held for volunteers and participants by the event director.
7. An event debriefing will be held for the event officials to ensure that any issues are addressed.



2. Referenced Documents

This policy has been drafted with reference to:

- The Charity Commission
- The Government Good Safety Guide
- The Outdoor Swimming Society's Health and Safety advice
- The National Council for Volunteering Organisations

The practices and procedures which are promulgated in this policy have been adapted to take into account the nature of this specific event, local conditions and the profile of participants.

We intend the words used within this policy to represent the same meaning as in standard sport health and safety policies:

Hazard - a cause of harm.

Risk - the likelihood of harm.

3. Participants

All participants who meet the following provision are welcome to join:

- Paddling participants are aged 12 years or over.
- Swimming participants are aged 16 years or over.
- Those aged between 12 and 17 are accompanied by a participating adult.
- Those over the age of 75 are welcome to participate if they are experienced and believe themselves to be medically fit to participate with consideration for the challenging conditions of the event.
- Those swimming are proficient swimmers.
- The self-propelled craft participants are competent users of their chosen craft.
- The provided advice on health and safety risks must be read and understood, but are not to replace the advice of professional health care practitioners.
- Those with disabilities are welcome to participate if they feel able to, but are encouraged to contact us to communicate any specific risks or needs they may have relating to their participation so that we can make reasonable arrangements to ensure their safety on a case-by-case basis. Please email operations@aoetrust.org.

4. Route Design

Health and Safety is a major consideration in our route design, which remains the same as the past two flotillas successfully held by the AOET. Although swimmers and paddlers will take the same route, the elite swimmers, recreational swimmers and paddlers will be released at different times so as to minimise cross overs. There will also be safety boats and safety kayaks along the route to guide participants away from hazards, to communicate location, the distance left to cover and provide medical support if necessary.



5. The Health and Safety Officer

The Health and Safety Officer (HSO) will be responsible for overseeing and signing off on the following documentation and practices:

Documentation:

- Signing off the health and safety procedures.
- Signing off the risk assessments.
- Signing off and communicating the emergency action plan with the medical volunteer team.
- In providing health and safety information to participants ahead of the event and on the day - In providing and completing incident report forms.

Personnel:

- The event marshals and two spotters per safety boat in addition to the helm and crewman.
- The team of three medical volunteers (registered doctors).

The Coastguard, RNLI Inshore rescue boat and local emergency services will be alerted to the event prior to the date of the event.

Equipment:

- Safety boats
- Torpedo buoys
- Throw lines
- Numbered high vis baseball caps for paddlers
- Numbered high vis swimming caps for swimmers
- Towable swimming floats for swimmers
- Standard first response medical equipment

Communication:

- VHF Marine Radios and/or mobile phones (the HSO will check reception along the route and at AYC and OSC before the event).

Emergency Action Plan:

The HSO will approve the emergency action plan and ensure it is communicated to the relevant personnel.

The key elements are as follows:

- There must be adequate medical personnel, equipment and facilities accessible within a reasonable time from the route.
- There must be clear communication between the HSO, marshals and medical personnel with the use of radios/mobile phones to ensure that the medical support can be alerted and respond quickly.
- There must be rescue boats to transport casualties to the medical facilities from any



point along the route.

- Marshalls and medical personnel must have discretion to call 999 immediately in the event of a major incident.
- All accidents or incidents are to be recorded in the pre-arranged format and records will be held by the Health and Safety Officer.

Pre event checks for the HSO:

- The weather must be checked to ensure conditions are suitable to undertake the event, in particular that the water is not too rough and the wind is not too strong. Limitations will be decided by the HSO ahead of these checks. Participants will be advised no later than 24 hours in advance if the event is to be cancelled.
- The shore areas to be used by participants will be checked they are free of dangerous objects such as broken glass or fishing tackle. Participants will be encouraged to wear appropriate footwear at the water's edge to minimise risk of harm.
- To check that the safety kayaks, safety boats and medical volunteers are prepared and in position.
- To check all safety equipment are present and in position.
- To check that all participants are wearing the provided high visibility, numbered headwear.
- To check that all recreational swimming participants have their provided towable float securely attached.
- To check that all communication equipment is working.

Event monitoring:

The HSO will ensure that the team of volunteers accurately account for participants at the start and finish of the event, including those who do not finish the route.

Incident response:

The HSO is responsible for coordinating the response to incidents with the lead medical volunteer and implement the emergency action plan if appropriate.

6. Event Briefings

The Event Director will hold a briefing for officials and participants before the event. They will communicate any health and safety issues and highlight any particularly high or unusual risks of which the director has been made aware.

7. Advance Notifications

The following services will be made aware of the event ahead of time:

- Lowestoft Police Constabulary
- Ipswich Hospital Accident and Emergency Department
- East Suffolk ambulance services
- The Coastguard
- RNLI Inshore rescue service





8. Swimmers

General Risk Assessment highlights:

The Alde and Ore estuary has been deemed safe for regular use by AYC and OSC for a variety of water-based activities, including training programmes for beginners and children. However, weather dependent conditions such as strong winds can make it an uncomfortable, choppy experience in the water, particularly for swimmers. The river is tidal, and although there are strong tides, the course has been designed with the direction of the tide so as to be an advantage to participants.

There are occasional invasions of jelly fish, and while a jelly fish sting is usually an irritation, not a health risk to most people, a small minority may be vulnerable to a severe reaction. The safety boats and medical team can provide assistance if a participant experiences a severe reaction. Participants are encouraged to communicate any allergies in the registration form for the information of medical volunteers should medical attention be required.

Seals are present in and around the estuary, and while they may be curious about swimmers and respond to hearing the noise of the swim, they do not usually pose a threat. If you spot a seal while swimming, continue as normal and the seal will likely swim away. If you are particularly concerned, make a safety kayak or safety boat aware and they can provide assistance for you to leave the water.

The water temperature in July is usually 16.5C, but the water may feel cooler when the air temperature falls. As you enter the water, do so slowly to allow your body to acclimatise to the temperature change.

The river bed is muddy, there are stretches where the river flows over very shallow mudflats and there are intertidal mudflats between the water and the shore. Swimming in the mudflats can cause individuals to panic, but there will be route indicators to avoid these areas.

General risks which apply to cold water swimming:

- Exhaustion (this is a challenging, five-mile swim).
- Drowning.
- Hypothermia arising from prolonged immersion in cold water.
- Individual medical conditions that can be aggravated by the cold, such as myocardial infarction (heart attack).
- A slowing of the heart rate if the face enters the water before the body (activating the diving reflex)
- Cramp.
- Injury from collision with boats, boat propellers or paddlers.
- Injury when entering and exiting the river (slips, falls, stepping on sharp objects without appropriate footwear etc.).





Rules for participation in the swim

Swimming participants must not swim unless:

- The HSO determines that conditions for swimming are safe.
- The participants are proficient swimmers.
- Participants have read the provided disclaimer, risk sheet and health and safety procedure sheet.
- Participants are wearing the numbered high vis swimming cap provided.
- All recreational swimming participants use the towable floats provided.

We strongly advise that all swimming participants buddy up to swim with another participant so that they can look out for each other in the water. However, we understand that this may prove difficult at times, which is why volunteer safety kayaks and boats will accompany the swimmers along the route.

9. Sculls, Kayaks, Paddle Boards

General Risk Assessment Highlights:

The AOET welcomes the use of paddle boards, rowing boats, canoes and kayaks (dinghies will not be permitted), all of which are regularly used on the estuary. Although the route will follow the direction of the tide, the tidal water flow can be choppy, and so proficiency in your chosen craft is essential. You must provide all of your own equipment, including buoyancy aids, and you must wear the numbered baseball cap for the entire route.

Rules for paddling participants:

- Participants must not set out unless the HSO has determined it is safe for them to do so.
- Participants must not set out until instructed to do so by a designated official.
- Participants must be proficient users of their chosen craft and must know the procedures to follow to ensure safety if they capsize.
- Participants must wear buoyancy aids - these will not be provided by the event.
- Participants must wear the numbered high vis baseball cap provided.
- Participants must be able to swim sufficiently proficiently to reach the shore without their vessel.

