

2024

Wicklow Swimming Club Safety Statement



## Table of Contents

Section	Subject	Page Number
	Cover	1
	Table of Contents	2
1	Policy statement	3
2	Event Organisation	4
2.1	Notification to other facility users	4
2.2	Pre-season preparation-Access and exit points	4
2.3	Pre-season preparation-Emergency evacuation plan	5
2.4	Pre-season preparation-Risk Assessment	5
2.5	Pre-season preparation-Swimmer Competency	5
2.6	Pre-season preparation-Medical fitness of Swimmers	5
3	Day of Swim Procedures	6
3.1	The decision to proceed with the event	6
3.2	Preparation for the race	7
3.3	Registration of swimmers	7
3.4	Testing of communication equipment	7
3.5	Announcement to swimmers	7
3.6	Boat coverage	8
3.7	Emergency cancellation of race	8
3.8	Swimmers in distress	8
3.9	Accounting for all swimmers at race end	8
3.10	Swimmer etiquette	9
4	Specific Policies	9
4.1	Drugs and Alcohol Policy	9
4.2	Bullying and Harassment Policy	9
4.3	Fire Prevention Policy	10
5	Individual Responsibilities	10
5.1	Chairperson-Role and responsibilities	10
5.2	Vice Chairperson-Role and responsibilities	11
5.3	Safety Officer-Role and responsibilities	11
5.4	Shore Observers-Role and responsibilities	11
5.5	Handicapper-Role and responsibilities	12
5.6	Club members-Responsibilities	13
5.7	Children's Officers-Role and responsibilities	13
6	Safety Boats and Boat Attendants	14
6.1	Boat cover and crews	14
6.2	Safety boat equipment	14
7	Pool Activities	15
8	End of season review	15

## **Section 1 Policy Statement:**

Wicklow Swimming Club (herein after referred to as WSC) is fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of all of its members. WSC will, in so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure the safety and welfare of all of its members and all other persons affected by the activities of the club. This safety statement aims to comply with;

- The Safety , Health , and Welfare at Work Act, 2005, and all of its associated general application regulations
- The Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sports , and The Child Welfare Guidelines of Swim Ireland

WSC is dedicated to the development and promotion of the sport of swimming at all age levels. The club’s activities will provide means of participation for swimmers at Junior, Intermediate, Youths, and Senior level.

As with all documents dealing with Health and Safety there will always be room for further improvement and development. To this end WSC commits to carrying out a formal evaluation of its operational and safety procedures prior to the commencement of each swimming season.

As part of our commitment to health and safety WSC will, in so far as is reasonably practicable, provide;

- A safe system of sports activities
- Safe activity areas
- Safe equipment-including boat equipment as laid out in this statement
- Safe means of transporting club equipment, articles , substances and people
- Adequate training, instruction, information, and supervision
- Safe access and egress for all activities
- A safe and healthy environment for swimmers, organisers, spectators, and public
- Adequate welfare facilities
- Consultation with all relevant parties on all aspects of safety, health, and welfare
- The means of effective rescue and evacuation in the case of an emergency
- Appropriate insurance cover at all times

## 2 **Event Organisation:**

### 2.1 Pre-season preparation-notification to other facility users

WSC sea swimming events generally take place in the months of June, July, and August, and are mainly confined to the following areas

- Wicklow Harbour
- The River Vartry, and
- Wicklow Bay

All three areas are regularly used by other recreational and sporting bodies together with commercial operations. WSC will formally write to each of the following bodies prior to the commencement of each season informing them of our swimming timetable and our safety signage (section 3.2);

- Wicklow Rowing Club
- Wicklow Sailing Club
- Wicklow Sub-Aqua Club
- Conway Shipping
- Wicklow Harbour Commissioners
- Coast Guard
- RNLi

WSC will request the ongoing co-operation of all bodies in assisting us to fulfil our health and safety obligations.

### 2.2 Pre-season preparation-Access and Exit points

Prior to the commencement of each season the Race Committee will inspect the entire swimming facility and nominate suitably safe access and exit points for;

- Races confined to the harbour and pier area
- The Club Vartry
- The Black Castle , and
- Races commencing on The Murrough

The Race Committee will select access and exit areas which are

- Adequate to accommodate the number of swimmers
- Free of trip hazards
- Free of objects that could cause potential injury
- Free of slippery substances , seaweed etc

Once the access and exit points have been selected they will be documented in WSC risk assessment.

On each swim day an inspection will be carried out by the Safety Officer of the designated access and exit points to ensure that the safe conditions still prevail.

### 2.3 Pre-Season preparation –Emergency evacuation plan

Prior to the commencement of each season the Race Committee will inspect the entire swimming facility and nominate suitably safe emergency exit points for;

- Races confined to the harbour and pier area
- The Club Vartry
- The Black Castle , and
- Races commencing on The Murrough

The Race Committee will design emergency exit strategies incorporating the use of safety boats, and will select suitably safe exit areas which are;

- Adequate to accommodate the number of swimmers
- Free of trip hazards
- Free of objects that could cause potential injury
- Free of slippery substances , seaweed etc

Once the emergency exit points have been selected they will be documented in WSC risk assessment.

On each swim day an inspection will be carried out by the Safety Officer of the designated emergency exit points to ensure that the safe conditions still prevail.

### 2.4 Pre-season preparation-Risk Assessment

Prior to the commencement of each season the Race Committee will inspect the entire swimming facility to carry out a risk assessment; The Race Committee will;

- Identify and document any potential hazards and risks
- Assess and document the likelihood of such events actually happening
- Assess and document the severity of the consequences should such events happen , and
- Ensure that processes and procedures are in place to eliminate or minimize the risk and document these processes and procedures

### Pre-season preparation-Swimmer competency

To ensure that all swimmers are competent and able to complete the set courses all new Senior, Youth and Intermediate swimmers must pass a swim trial as set down by WSC. Furthermore, swimmers should make every effort to acclimatise themselves to sea conditions prior to the commencement of each season.

### Pre-season preparation-Medical fitness of swimmers

As part of the annual membership form all Swimmers must make a declaration as to any medical conditions from which they suffer. This would include, but is not limited to;

- Asthma
- Epilepsy
- Allergy to jellyfish stings
- Diabetes
- Heart condition

Where necessary the committee may request a medical certificate of 'fitness to participate' from any swimmer.

### **Section 3- Day of swim procedures:**

#### **3.1 –The decision to proceed with the event**

The decision as to whether a race should proceed on any given day rests solely with the Race Committee. The Race Committee shall consist of;

- The Chairperson
- The Handicapper, and
- The Safety Officer

All other members of WSC are requested not to attempt to influence the decision of the Race Committee in any way.

In deciding as to whether a race should proceed the Race Committee will initially be guided by the flag displayed by the beach lifeguard. If a red flag is displayed on the lifeguard hut the Race Committee must cancel all swimming on the day. However, if the red flag on the Lifeguard hut is displayed due to pollution/water quality in the Harbour, the Race Committee may allow the race to proceed in an alternative area of the swim facility provided that safe conditions apply in that area.

Senior members of WSC are requested to refrain from entering the water on days when a red flag is displayed, thereby giving good example to youth, intermediate and junior members . Members of WSC are requested not to attempt to influence any decision taken by the lifeguard on duty.

The Race Committee will take the following factors in to consideration when deciding to run/cancel any race;

- Adequate Boat cover as set out at section 6.1 of this statement
- Adequate number of Boat Attendants as set out at section 6.1 of this statement
- Availability of suitably safe access and exit points
- Availability of suitably safe emergency exit points
- Availability of First Aid equipment
- Wind Strength, if the meteorological service has issued a small craft warning the race should, in most cases, be cancelled. However if the Race Committee deems that local conditions are adequately safe the race may be allowed to proceed.
- Wave Height, where the wave height is such that it is likely that swimmers will only be visible for 50% , or less , of the time , the race should be cancelled
- Visibility –Where visibility is less than the distance of the course the race should be cancelled

The Race committee should endeavour to notify all swimmers of the cancellation of any race at the earliest possible opportunity. This will be done through the club secretary and text messages, posts on social media and personal notification when swimmers arrive at the harbour area.

### 3.2 Preparation for race:

The Safety Officer will instruct the Senior Boat Attendant to examine the courses for the junior, intermediate, youth, and senior races. The inspection of the courses will be carried out as part of the buoy laying process. The Senior Boat Attendant must report any unusual or hazardous obstacles or substances to the Safety Officer. If necessary the Race Committee may decide to alter the course /cancel the race.

The Safety Officer will inspect the access, exit, and emergency exit areas to ensure that safe conditions still prevail. If necessary the Race Committee may decide to alter the course /cancel the race.

Once the courses have been marked out the Safety Officer will appoint a member of WSC to monitor the platform area for the duration of the swims to ensure that other users of the area do not impede the progress of races.

The Safety Officer may also, if he so chooses, appoint one or more shore observers to provide additional safety cover for races. All appointed shore observers must be fully paid up members of WSC.

The Safety Officer will ensure that all of the necessary safety equipment outlined at section 6.1 of this statement are available.

The Safety Officer will brief all Boat Crews, Shore Observers, the designated Beach Lifeguard, and the First Aider as to the course, access points, exit points, emergency exit points, and the emergency action plan.

### 3.3 Registration of Swimmers

All senior swimmers should endeavour to be in attendance at least 15 minutes before the stated commencement time of all races. . Upon paying their race fee, and obtaining their handicap, swimmers are registered in the race. Any swimmer who subsequently decides not to participate in the race must give timely notice to the Race Registrar. Swimmers cannot, under any circumstances, allocate their place in a race to another swimmer. Swimmers cannot register other swimmers.

Once the registration process is complete the Race Registrar will notify the Safety Officer, the Handicapper, and the Race Recorder, as to the exact number of swimmers participating on the day.

### 3.4 Testing of Communication equipment

Prior to the commencement of the race the Safety Officer will make a number of test radio voice messages to ensure that the following are connected by VHF radio;

- The Safety Officer
- The Handicapper
- Any appointed Shore Observers including the Observer designated to monitor the platform area
- All Boat Attendants

### 3.5 Announcement to swimmers

The Handicapper, the Youths Handicapper, and the Intermediate Handicapper will announce the following prior to all races;

- The course for the day
- The agreed designated entry point

- The position of buoys
- The agreed designated exit point
- The emergency exit points and emergency exit procedures for the race
- The emergency race cancellation signal
- The swimmer in distress procedures
- The importance of 'fair play' throughout the race and in particular when rounding the buoys

### 3.6 Boat Coverage

The Safety Officer will allocate the sequence in which the safety boats will follow the race

### 3.7 Emergency Cancellation of Race

Once a race has commenced the Boat Attendants and the Shore Observers must report any unusual circumstances or changes in conditions in any area of the course to the Safety Officer by VHF radio. The Safety Officer has the sole discretion in deciding if a race should be cancelled while in progress. He/she will signal the cancellation of a race by a series of 2 short followed by one elongated blows of a klaxon horn.

In the event of a race being cancelled all Boat Attendants and Shore Observers should attempt to marshal all swimmers to the nearest and easiest agreed emergency exit point. All swimmers must obey the warning signal from the Safety Officer and exit the water at the earliest possible opportunity.

### 3.8 Swimmers in distress

It is the responsibility of all swimmers to assist any swimmer in their immediate vicinity who comes under distress. The distressed swimmer or another swimmer who has provided assistance should raise an arm vertically in the air with the fist clenched. The nearest boat should provide immediate assistance. Where possible swimmers should be removed from the water by the crew in one of WSC's RIB's. While awaiting the arrival of the RIB the yawl boats should provide buoyancy for the distressed swimmer. However, if circumstances demand it, the yawl crew should remove the distressed swimmer. Once removed from the water distressed swimmers should be brought to at the entrance to the new pier.

### 3.9 Accounting for all Swimmers at race end

Upon completion of the race all swimmers are recorded by the Handicapper and Race Recorder as part of the results process. Any swimmers who become distressed during a race and are removed from the water must, similarly, report to the Safety Officer. The Handicapper and the Safety Officer will ensure that all swimmers are accounted.

Swimmers who decide not to complete the course set out for the day, who are not distressed, and decide to exit the water at any point other than the designated ending point must report to, and notify, the Safety Officer accordingly.

If a swimmer is unaccounted for a call should be immediately made to his/her mobile phone by the Safety Officer. To this end WSC will compile a list of contact numbers for all swimmers. If an immediate reply is not received a search of the swimming area should be carried out. The Safety Officer will designate a search area to each of the boat crews. A thorough search of the shore areas should also be carried out. Persons assisting in the search will be designated search areas by the Safety Officer. The RNLI, Coast Guard, and the Gardai should also be immediately notified by the Safety Officer. Control of the situation should be deferred to the on-scene commander if the Emergency Services attend.



### 3.10 Swimmer etiquette

On the day of races swimmers should;

- Attend on time
- Ensure that they are clear as to the course for the day
- Not attempt to place undue influence on any club officer to obtain participation in a race for which they have attended after the cut off time
- Not attempt to place any undue influence on the beach lifeguard in relation to any decision the lifeguard has taken.
- Avoid making physical contact , in so far as is possible, with other swimmers during the race
- Not swim over other swimmers
- Not 'block' other swimmers
- Observe the principles of fair play

Furthermore when congestion is occurring weaker swimmers are advised to swim wide of all buoys and turning points.

## **Section 4 Specific policies:**

### 4.1 Drugs and Alcohol Policy

WSC recognises and accepts that the use of alcohol, drugs, and other substances by individuals can have an adverse impact on their ability to function and behave in a safe manner. Accordingly any member of WSC deemed to be under the influence of prohibited drugs or alcohol may be disallowed from engaging in any of the Club's activities. The Club reserves the right to suspend or dismiss any member, who, by their activities, place other members of the club in danger. The distribution or sale of illegal drugs by any member of WSC, whether at organised club activities or associated functions, may lead to disciplinary action being taken against that member.

### 4.1 Bullying and Harassment policy

WSC defines bullying and harassment as 'the repeated inappropriate behaviour , direct and indirect, whether verbal , physical, or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at any club activities , which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity'.

WSC accepts that the important feature of bullying and harassment cases is the impact which such activity has on the victim, rather than the intentions of the alleged perpetrator.

WSC will not tolerate bullying and harassment of any nature, and any member/s found to have participated in such activity may have disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, taken against them.

Adult members of the club should report any instances of bullying or inappropriate behaviour to the Club Chairperson. Complaints should be, in most cases, requested in writing. The Chairperson should bring all such correspondence to the attention of the committee. If the allegations are of a very serious nature the Chairperson should convene an emergency committee meeting to deal with the issue. Having reviewed the issue the Committee should deal with the matter as follows;

Appoint a member of the committee to speak with the alleged perpetrator to inform him/her that a complaint has been made and to request him/her to desist from the alleged activity. This approach should be utilised where the committee deems the allegations to be of a non-serious nature. The complainant should be informed of this course of action.

Where the allegations are deemed to be of a serious nature the committee must;

- Report the matter to the Gardai or other appropriate authority
- Suspend the alleged perpetrator from all WSC activities on a without prejudice basis
- Provide any necessary advise and counselling for the victim
- Set up an investigation committee to compile an internal report on the matter

If, arising from a complaint by one member of WSC against another, a member of WSC is brought before the courts and found guilty of an offence, the Committee will decide on the appropriate disciplinary action to be taken.

If charges are not brought against the perpetrator the report of the investigation committee will be reviewed by the Committee and a decision on any necessary disciplinary action will be taken.

WSC may take disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, against any member found to have made false or malicious allegations of bullying and harassment.

The parents of Junior members of the club (under the age of 18), and the junior members, should be informed that bullying is not acceptable within WSC. The parents of Junior members, and Junior members will be advised to report any instances of bullying to either of the club's Children's Officers. The Children's Officers, in turn, should report all such matters to the Designated Person. In dealing with all instances of bullying and harassment pertaining to Junior members, the Children's Officers and WSC will be guided by;

- The Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sports , and The Child Welfare Guidelines of Swim Ireland

#### 4.3 Fire prevention policy

WSC will undertake the following to reduce the risk of fire at its activity areas;

- Smoking will not be permitted in any of the safety boats
- Appropriate fire extinguishers will be provided in each of the safety boats-such extinguishers to be replaced at appropriate intervals.

### **Section 5 Individual responsibilities:**

#### 5.1 Chairperson-Role and Responsibilities

The Chairperson will ensure that;

- A re-evaluation of this safety statement is carried out prior to the commencement of each swimming season.
- The health, safety, and welfare of all members is established as an absolute priority and not compromised in any manner.

- All accidents, incidents , and near misses are reported and pursued to ensure that the cause/s of the accident is/are removed
- The Safety Statement is made available to all members of WSC
- All Senior and Junior members of WSC are aware of the reporting process for instances of bullying and harassment
- The Safety Statement is adhered to

The Chairperson will be a member of the Race Committee, and in conjunction with the Race Committee will make all decisions regarding all organised races.

#### 5.2 Vice Chairperson – Role and Responsibilities

- In the event of the Chairperson being unable to attend the vice-chairperson will carry out the duties of the Chairperson as outlined above.

#### 5.3 Safety Officer-Role and Responsibilities

The safety officer shall;

- Be a member of the Race Committee, and in conjunction with the Race Committee will make all decisions regarding all organised races.
- Ensure that race day safety procedures are adhered to
- Ensure that access, exit , and emergency exit areas are safe and appropriate for use for each race
- Obtain a report from the Senior Boat Attendant that the proposed course is free of obstruction or dangerous materials , and that the water is free of any hazardous substances
- Appoint Shore Observers to assist with the overall safety of races
- Appoint a fully paid up member of WSC to monitor the platform area throughout races
- Brief all Boat Crews, and Shore Observers, as to the course, access points, exit points, and emergency exit points.
- Ensure that the Boat Crews, Shore Observers, Handicapper, and Safety Officer are all connected by VHF radio
- Arrange safety boat cover
- Arrange First Aid cover and ensure that all First Aid equipment is to hand
- Ensure that all swimmers are recorded prior to each race and certify that the equivalent number of swimmers have been recorded at race end

The Safety Officer may delegate responsibility for tasks to fully paid up members of WSC but must ensure that such tasks are carried out in accordance with his/her instruction. The Safety Officer may not be a participant in races. Furthermore persons to whom the Safety Officer has delegated tasks may, similarly, not participate in races.

#### 5.4 Shore Observers-Role and responsibilities

Where possible Shore Observers should be appointed by the Safety Officer to patrol designated areas of the course. Shore Observers should be trained in the use of VHF radio. The Shore Observers appointed on the day should be informed that the Safety Officer is in command of the safety of the race, and should be briefed by the Safety Officer as follows;

- The course layout
- The position of access, exit , and emergency exit areas designated for the day
- The rescue plan for the day, and
- The emergency action plan

In order to keep the briefing short all details could be clearly laid out on a laminated sheet and issued to each person being briefed.

#### 5.5 Handicapper-Role and responsibilities

The handicapper will;

- Determine the course and distance to be swam or agree an alternative course with the Race Committee if the selected course cannot be swam due to health and safety reasons
- Examine the feasibility of alternative/new courses and make him/herself open and available to suggestions from members pertaining to course design.
- Brief the swimmers prior to the race as outlined at section 3.5 of this statement
- Endeavour to have the buoys located in positions which will minimize tight turns thereby reducing the incidence of contact between swimmers during races

## 5.6 Club Members - responsibilities

Club members have a duty to comply with the following;

- Members should read and understand the safety statement policies thereby enabling each member to undertake his/her activities in accordance with the requirements of the statement.
- Members should not use, attempt to repair or maintain, any club equipment for which they have not received full and appropriate training to a safe level of competency.
- Members should report any defects in equipment or safety apparatus to a committee member. Members must not attempt to use unsafe equipment as this could expose them, and others, to potential injuries.
- Members must ensure that they are familiar with the evacuation procedures of any activity area in the event of an emergency of any type. Members who are unsure of the evacuation procedure should consult a club official.
- Members should report any health and safety issues to the Safety Officer.
- Members should ensure that all pathways, access/egress areas are kept free from obstruction at all times. Members who encounter any obstruction or potential trip hazard should remove the item to a safe location and inform a member of the Committee.
- Members should not attempt to lift, carry, or move any item that appears too heavy as this is likely to cause injury.
- Members are encouraged to put forward any suggestions to improve health and safety or to reduce the risk of hazards to any Committee member.
- Members are forbidden to interfere with or misuse any item of safety equipment, signage, or personal protective equipment provided by WSC for their benefit while participating in club activities.
- Members have a duty to take care of their own health and safety, and to not, by act or omission, endanger the health and safety of others in the activity area.
- Members are forbidden in indulging in horseplay in the activity area. This is particularly important during swim races especially where seas are rough, or slippery or rocky terrains are nearby.

Members will be given access to all safeguarding policies on the club website.

## 5.7 Children's Officer (herein after referred to as CCO)-Role and responsibilities

It will be the policy of WSC to have at least 2 CCO's. The role and responsibilities of the CCO's is set out in the club constitution. The CCO's will be the link between the children and the adults of WSC. The CCO's will committee members, and one will have voting rights. The CCO's should be introduced to the Children in an appropriate forum.

The role of the CCO's includes the following ;

- To promote awareness of the code of ethics within the club
- Prioritise children's needs within the club
- Liaise with the National Children's Officer of Swim Ireland
- Inform Children as to how to make their concerns known to appropriate adults
- Encourage appropriate involvement of parents/guardians within WSC
- Advise Club Officers on best practice
- Report regularly to the Committee of WSC

- Monitor changes in membership and unusual trends
- Ensure that children have a voice in the running of the club
- Keep accurate details of junior members on file
- Ensure that each member signs an annual membership form which includes the code of conduct
- Ensure that WSC rules include ;
  - A Complaints, disciplinary, and appeals process
  - An Anti-bullying policy
  - Rules in relation to travelling with children
  - Supervision and recruitment of leaders

## **Section 6 Safety Boats and Boat Attendants:**

### 6.1 Boat cover and crews

There should be a minimum of 3 safety boats in attendance for each race, at least one of which must be a club RIB. There should be a minimum of two persons in each boat including the helmsman. All helmsmen and Boat Attendants must wear a lifejacket.

Helmsmen must be accomplished in the control of their boats in confined areas in close proximity to swimmers. All boats must have adequate insurance cover.

Boat attendants must be able bodied and capable of removing a distressed swimmer from the water. They must also be accomplished in operating VHF radio, and in the treatment of Jelly fish stings.

### 6.1 Safety Boat equipment

Each safety boat should carry the following equipment;

- Oars or paddles
- Boat Hook
- Fire extinguisher
- Kill cord
- Life jacket for helm and crew
- Spare Lifejacket for persons brought on board
- Bailer or bucket
- VHF radio
- Rescue throw line
- First aid kit
- Emergency water/fruit juice
- Knife
- Towels
- Gloves
- Hats
- Cold Packs for Jelly fish stings
- Foil blankets

## **Section 7 -Pool activities**

While participating in events organised by WSC at Wicklow Swimming Pool all members of WSC are requested to observe and comply with the safety procedures and statement of Wicklow Coral Leisure Centre.

## **Section 8-End of Season review**

The organised swimming activities of WSC normally come to a conclusion at the end of August each year. A full nine months then elapses until the next organised event. WSC, as part of its commitment to continually improve health and safety measures, believes that the end of season is an appropriate time to review the clubs activities, processes, and procedures, as the events of the season are clear in everyone's mind at that stage.

As part of the end of season review the Race Committee will convene and analyse the following;

- The adequacy of the access and exit points
- The adequacy of the emergency exit points
- The adequacy of the emergency exit plan
- The adequacy of the boat equipment
- The adequacy of the pre-season preparations
- The adequacy of the race day procedures
- The adequacy of the Safety Boat Cover
- The appropriateness of the individual roles on race days –Is there too heavy a burden on any particular officer
- The availability of sufficient numbers of Boat attendants
- The availability of sufficient numbers of Shore Observers
- Any accidents or near misses that occurred during the season

The Race Committee will compile an end of season report, together with a list of any recommendations it feels are necessary, which will then be submitted to the Committee for discussion and deliberation.

Please refer to Safety Race Day Procedures which includes:

1. Safety Checklist – Resources
2. Pre-race safety briefing
3. Event Planning Checklist
4. Risk assessment Form
5. Sketch Map of Swim area
6. Safety Boat Checklist
7. Rescue Plan