

DART ANGLING ASSOCIATION

Risk Assessment Policy – (Reviewed 13/1/2025)

1. Definitions

- a) Association: refers to the Dart Angling Association (DAA).
- b) Hazard: A hazard is anything that can cause harm such as High-tension electricity cables.
- c) Risk: A risk is the chance high, low, or medium that someone may be harmed by the hazard.

2. General Description of the River and Overall Picture of the Risks and Hazards

It is the duty of the Dart Angling Association (DAA) to advise its members, officials and all visiting anglers of the principles of safety and risk assessment. All members, officials and visiting anglers should make themselves aware of the risks they face in the surroundings they find themselves and carry out their own risk assessment. This usually amounts to common sense. All persons must then take the appropriate action to ensure their own safety and that of others. However, it is a requirement that all anglers read, understand and accept this Safety & Risk Assessment Statement.

Special care should be taken when accessing Nursery Pool from just under the railway bridge and also the path at Caddaford is very narrow, difficult to negotiate and often full of holes. The power lines at Caddaford are low and care should be taken with your back cast. Access to Caddaford Turn Pool is also difficult. These cautions apply to the left bank only

By its very nature the river poses a risk to the user whatever the activity. The user should be aware of the risks and should take precautions to minimise them e.g. the angler should always carry a wading staff and the use of a life jacket is recommended if wading. If night fishing, the angler should always have a functioning torch and a whistle to hand.

The overall risks are assessed as MEDIUM. No serious incidents or fatalities have been recorded recently as a direct result of fishing the river but it is necessary to inform everyone of its risk potential.

The main hazards exist during periods of high water. A lot of the water must be fished from the bank. This can create a problem in landing a fish. Trees at the bank edge have to be negotiated, difficult in itself but more so when a long rod is used.

Often there is a temptation to cross the river and the water can be deeper and faster than it appears. In many places on the river the rock is tilted and exposed. This produces a slippery, rough, deep clefted surface creating hazardous wading conditions and where a wading staff is useful even when walking along the bank itself.

The Association accepts no liability, howsoever caused, for incident, injury or death involving any member of the Association or public whilst in the immediate vicinity of the Association waters. All

persons (Members, Guests and Day Permit Holders) fishing DAA waters, do so at their own risk. Members and ticket holders are requested to report any hazards or problems to the Secretary which they experience when on the Dart.

3. Bank Clearing

Those members involved in bank clearing should be aware of the DAA Bank Clearing Code of Practice, the DAA Risk Assessment Forms and wear appropriate clothing and footwear.

The person in charge of the work should:

- (a) Complete the DAA Risk Assessment Forms obtaining necessary signatures prior to the work commencing and also complete the DAA Working Party Briefing Form. After the work, these should be given to the Secretary and retained for 12 months.
- (b) Ensure that a charged mobile phone is taken as well as noting the grid reference of the location(s) being visited if necessary to advise the Emergency Services.
- (c) Ensure that those participating are wearing correct clothing and footwear for the task.

4. Hazards and Risks Associated with Angling

a. Paths

Only use obvious paths along the bank. Always beware of cyclists, horse riders and walkers. Do not place anything on the path which may cause a trip hazard. Beware of tree roots, brambles etc. which may cause trip hazards. Not all paths on DAA waters are maintained, so one should take care when using all paths.

b. Wading

Take particular care when wading in deep or fast water and on rocky bottoms. Use a wading staff and wading belt at all times. A floatation device or buoyancy aid is also recommended but is at each Angler's discretion. It is strongly advised that all Anglers familiarize themselves with wading any pools to be fished in good daylight conditions before attempting to fish during the hours of darkness. Ensure that the footwear you choose is adequate for the terrain.

c. Power Lines

Do not fish under or near power lines, electricity can arc over considerable distances. You are ideally earthed in water to conduct electricity. Carbon fibre rods are also an excellent conductor of electricity as is a fly line coated in water.

d. Trees

Fishing under trees can be unsafe in windy conditions. Beware of falling branches.

e. Stiles, Bridges and Fences

Always take care when negotiating stiles and crossing bridges. Fences and walls should not be climbed this causes damage and presents further unnecessary hazards. Before negotiating a stile or bridge a visual inspection should be made to ensure safety for use.

f. Electric Fences

Electric fences used for the control of animals can periodically discharge high voltages. Contact with the wires may result in a painful electric shock, or worse.

g. Lightning

You are ideally earthed when in water and if using a graphite rod, so you have a good lightning conductor. In case of lightning, it is recommended that you lay your rod flat on the ground and take shelter (not under trees). A car is a good place to shelter.

h. Casting

Always show consideration to other users on the river bank by avoiding contacting anyone with your back-cast. It is recommended that protective glasses are worn when fishing to protect your eyes from hooks and flies.

i. Hooks/Flies

Hooks by their design are sharp and easily penetrate the skin. Their use brings them into contact with germs etc. that can be injurious to health. Caution should be used when handling hooks, tying on or removing hooks. Rusty hooks should be avoided at all times. Weighted flies can cause unpredictable movement of cast when casting. Extreme caution should be exercised. When casting all flies ensure they do not come in contact with you, your fellow anglers or the public, paying particular attention to persons using bankside paths.

j. Domesticated Animals

Recent reports elsewhere suggest that cattle should be avoided. As cattle are grazed in several fields near to the river keep to the edge of the field and away from the stock themselves.

On no account should dogs accompany an angler.

Treat all livestock with respect. Note that cattle can be troublesome! Avoid contact where possible and approach the river with caution.

k. Weil's Disease and Lyme Disease

Weil's Disease is a form of Leptospirosis produced by infection by a bacterium hosted by the common rat and introduced into the water and waterside environment in its urine. Every river has its own population of rats. Weil's Disease is usually a fairly mild feverish illness. Occasionally, it is severe and the patient develops pronounced jaundice, haemorrhages of the skin and often the eyes, with violent muscular pains and even kidney failure.

The disease begins with fever and malaise and after a few days meningitis develops. It is a disease not to be taken lightly. You should consult your doctor if you feel you have any symptoms associated with the disease.

Never put wet lines in your mouth or any other items of tackle that has been in the water. Wear waterproof plaster on any cuts or abrasions. There may also be a risk in some waters from treated or untreated sewage effluent. Use anti-bacterial hand-wash and avoid handling food items until you have washed thoroughly. Symptoms of Weils disease include: Chills, nausea & vomiting, sudden headaches, loss of appetite and muscle pain (particularly in the calves and lower back). If you have these symptoms after fishing, seek urgent medical attention.

Lyme disease is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected ticks. Typical symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, and a characteristic skin rash called erythema migrans. If left untreated, infection can spread to joints, the heart, and the nervous system. Most cases of Lyme disease can be treated successfully with a few weeks of antibiotics. Steps to prevent Lyme disease include using insect repellent, removing ticks promptly, applying pesticides, and reducing tick habitat. The ticks that transmit Lyme disease can occasionally transmit other tickborne diseases as well.

l. Falling into the water

Falling into the water may cause drowning. It is recommended that a buoyancy aid is worn at all times when on, in or near water. Wearing these devices is at each angler's discretion and a matter considered at their own risk.

m. Weather Conditions

The weather may change suddenly and cause unforeseen dangerous water conditions. Be constantly aware of changing weather and its consequences. The Dart is a spate river and in extreme conditions of heavy rain can rise very swiftly. In conditions of heavy rainfall such as heavy thundery showers, keep an eye on the level of the water where you are.

n. Risks specific to Junior Members

The DAA recommends and expects that all junior anglers under the age of 12 years are supervised by an adult member at all times.

Junior members over 12 years of age are allowed to fish Association waters with parental consent.

It is recommended that junior anglers do not wade above knee height.

All junior members should wear eye protection for their safety.

Junior anglers under 16 years of age may not fish Association waters during hours of darkness (sunset to sunrise) unless accompanied by an Adult member who can supervise their safety, or with written parental consent (supplied to a DAA Official).

o. South Devon Railway. For a considerable distance the railway runs along the left bank immediately adjacent to the river. The trains run regularly during the spring, summer and autumn. It is very dangerous to trespass on the railway. There are paths available to enable anglers to avoid walking along the railway and these should be used. Crossing points indicated on the maps of the DAA water should be used and always with great care.

p. Totnes Weir Pool. This pool is only fishable at low tide. Be aware of tide times and ensure you can return to the bank when the water is at a wadeable depth. The tide can come in quickly.

q. Wild Birds and Animals

Swans, in certain circumstances, pose a hazard e.g. when sitting on eggs or with young cygnets. It's safer to give them a wide berth. Anglers can become a hazard to wild life. They should be aware of the importance of the potential damage from their own actions and movement. This is particularly important in spring, the main reproductive period of most animals and birds.

r. Used Tackle

Discarded Nylon provides the hazard of entanglement to birds and small mammals. It should be removed from the bank or river, taken home and then cut into small sections before discarding. De-barbed or barbless hooks are recommended. These can be removed with minimal damage to the fish. A pair of forceps facilitates removal of a hook deep in the gullet. Environment Agency guidelines on the safe release of fish should be observed at all times.

s. Deep Water

Deep Water occurs in many sea trout pools. In low illumination it is difficult to gauge the depth of water. The angler always should make a daytime assessment of any unfamiliar water that the angler intends fishing at night, especially if considering wading. The angler should always have a functioning torch and a whistle to hand if fishing at night.

t. Preventing Infection

To prevent infection the following precautions are relevant: -

- a. Cover cuts, sores and scratches with a waterproof plaster
- b. Cover food with a wrapper or wash your hands before eating it
- c. Don't put your hand in your mouth after immersion in the river
- d. Never place items of fishing equipment in your mouth
- e. Avoid touching dead rats

If flu like symptoms occur after fishing and persist then contact your doctor.

5. Responsibilities of Users

Members and day ticket holders are requested to report to the DAA Secretary any potential hazards, any incidents or accidents (using the Incident Report Form) involving Members, ticket holders or the general public. This should be done as soon as possible so that an investigation can commence and then any necessary follow up action (from the 'lessons learnt') taken to prevent it occurring again.

