**This policy applies to the open water swim session organised by the club at ARDINGLY RESERVOIR**

The swim course

The swim course is about 1.9 Km long. Swimmers will enter the water from the rowers’ jetty in 2 waves, the first at 0700 (for the slower athletes) and the second at 0730. The course is 3 laps of an out and back route of 600 metres per lap (300 metres out – 300 metres back). Buoys will mark the route at 100 metre intervals. A larger buoy will mark the turn around point on the way out. The turn around point on the way in is the rowers’ jetty. All swimmers must touch the jetty. The swim finishes at the slipway, which is about 100 metres south of the rowers’ jetty and at the southern end of the reservoir.

The whole of the swim route is within 5-15 meters of the water’s edge.

Two safety boats crewed by qualified open water lifeguards will be on the water alongside swimmers for the duration of the swim. There will also be 2 land-based spotters on the bank. The spotters and the crews of the safety boats will be in contact by means of VHF radios.

Introduction to the reservoir

The reservoir is owned and operated by South East Water. It holds a maximum of 4,707,000,000 litres of fresh water that is stored for supply to the company’s customers. As of 17th August, the reservoir is a little under 75% full.

The reservoir is additionally used for a wide range of water sports including sailing, canoeing, windsurfing, rowing. These are organised and arranged through the Ardingly Activity Centre.

There are numerous other land-based activities in and around the lake in what is a picturesque setting. There are excellent opportunities for walking on the adjacent public footpaths and bridleways. Indeed, the reservoir is a commonly used as a picnic and recreational facility.

A full description of the Ardingly Reservoir is available at <http://www.ardinglyactivitycentre.co.uk/>

Contact details for site mangers

Mr Chris Kinsman (Manager)

Ardingly Resevoir

Ardingly

Sussex

RH17 6SQ

*Telephone:* 01444 892 549

Access arrangements for club

The reservoir is accessible from an access road off of College Road (B2028). All members’ cars must be parked in the public car park at the reservoir. The meeting and transition area is just to the north of the car park. The reservoir is the northwest of the car park.

Risk Assessment

The risk assessment for ARDINGLY RESERVOIR is attached at **Appendix 1**. Please ensure that you read it in full.

You must be aware at all times that the reservoir is routinely used for a variety of water and land based activities. It is unlikely that there will be any other activity on the water at the times that members are swimming but there will be land-based activity as you approach and leave the water and especially those preparing vessels and/or equipment in and around the slipway.

The session leader/safety coordinator will have the club’s first aid kit throughout the session. Additional first aid equipment is available at the Ardingly Activity Centre adjacent to the swim course. A qualified first aider will be on site throughout the session.

The nearest hospital is about 15 minutes drive time from the reservoir:

Princess Royal Hospital.

Lewes Road

Haywards Heath

West Sussex

RH16 4EX

Tel: 01444 441881

The nearest ambulance station is about 10 minutes drive time from the reservoir:

Mill Green Road

Haywards Heath

RH16 1XQ

Tel: 999

Water temperature

The temperature is well within the temperature span allowed for swimming under BTF guidelines. The water temperature will be taken on the day. All swimmers will wear wetsuits for the swim.

Water Quality

The quality of the water is extremely good.

South East Water advises that the current count of blue green algae in the water is about “600 cells per ml, and is stable, showing no significant increase”. To put this into perspective, the WHO guidance for risk assessment, quotes 20,000 cells per ml as low risk. A check will be made before swimming on Sunday that there is no visible algal scum in the designated swimming area.

###### NORMAL OPERATING POLICY

Individual responsibility

This policy presumes that all club members participating in the swim session at ARDINGLY RESERVOIR:

* Recognise the inherent risks associated with open water swimming
* Assume individual responsibility for their actions while at the session and, in particular, while in the water.
* Accord strictly to the directions of the session leader/safety coordinator. No swimmer will enter the water until given permission to do so by the session leader/safety coordinator.
* Each person MUST, before entering the water, have:
* Read the attached risk assessment for swimming at the reservoir
* Signed the club’s safety code and rules for open water swimming
* Completed the session entry form. This includes the indemnity waiver for South East Water, the Ardingly Activity Centre and the Mid-Sussex Tri Club. It also includes the person’s name, address, an emergency contact telephone number and information about any medical condition
* (in the case of those with medical conditions) Spoken in person to the safety coordinator/session leader and provided all relevant information about any medical condition, and the type and whereabouts of any medication. Please note that the club, it officers or agents cannot be presumed to be responsible for administering or providing any medication; that remains the responsibility of the person: see the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) below.
* While swimming, each person MUST:
* Wear a wetsuit
* Swim within the designated area of the course and always parallel to the bank in a clockwise direction
* Swim within his/her ability
* Wear the official club red coloured swim hat

If a swimmer gets into difficulty while swimming in open water, she/he should, wherever possible, roll on to her/his back, raise her/his arms in the air and shout for assistance. Swimmers may also swim the 5-15 metres to the bank of the shore and call for assistance.

#### The Club Session leader/Safety Coordinator

The club safety coordinator will act as a co-ordinator to facilitate members’ swimming and in doing so will:

* Determine whether it is safe to conduct the session, taking into account the weather, water conditions and other use of or on the water in consultation with activity centre staff.
* Allow only those who have completed the session entry form to enter the water. A manifest of all those entering and leaving the water will be kept by the session leader/safety coordinator
* Have possession of the club’s first aid kit, torpedo buoy(s) and sleeve, emergency whistle, binoculars and a mobile telephone
* Act, throughout the session, as an additional ‘spotter’, scanning the water for any swimmer who is in difficulty or needs assistance
* The safety coordinator will initially coordinate the efforts to provide assistance to any swimmer who need assistance bearing in mind the expertise of the safety boat crews and advice within the club’s Emergency Action Plans (EAP) as set out below
* Ensure that an incident report is completed in the event of an incident

###### EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

Prevention

If an emergency situation occurs on the water, the initial action will be to:

* remove the swimmer from the water
* assess the situation
* provide first aid as necessary, or, in the case of an emergency of where specialised medical assistance is required, to call an ambulance using the 999 facility
* remove the swimmer to a safe place on dry land

The standard club EAP contains the following information – this augments the specific safety arrangements for the session at the reservoir.

Specific Situations

DROWNING

There will be no ‘floating’ during club swimming sessions except in designated areas when appropriate. Anyone seen floating will be considered to be in difficulties of some sort and will be assisted by any other member who notices them. Aimless swimming also implies that something is wrong.

In addition to the safety boats, there will be two land based spotters carrying VHF radios set to the same channel as thpse carried by the safety boat crews. Both spotters will carry also whistles. If the whistle is blown it means that one of the spotters feels that there is a potential emergency situation.

Once the situation has been assessed in the water the priority is to get that swimmer out of the water quickly and safely.

HEAD INJURY

Collisions do occur in swimming. If a significant head injury occurred that was likely to incapacitate a swimmer, it is likely that the swimmer will be ‘floating’ or aimless. In this case the action plan for drowning is initiated.

HEART ATTACK

The population of the triathlon club is ageing!! Apparently fit and healthy athletes can still have heart attacks. Most heart attacks would give the individual time to swim to the shore, but they can be sudden and severe. They can certainly suddenly incapacitate somebody. Most people with heart attacks have sudden onset of chest pain, usually described as feeling like there is a weight or pressure on the chest.

In most situations the person would realise themselves that something serious may have happened and would adopt the recognised emergency position of floating on one’s back and raising an arm to attract the attention of other swimmers or spotters. If it is very sudden they may just be floating or aimless as a heart attack may trigger a cardiac arrest.

All suspected heart attack victims requires immediate assistance from the emergency services via 999.

STROKE

A stroke will occur without warning in many cases. It will suddenly incapacitate. It most commonly would leave someone weak or unable to move on one side.

The emergency procedure is exactly the same as for a heart attack. Safe exit from the water if swimming and immediate assistance from the emergency services via 999.

HYPOTHERMIA

This can and does creep up on a cold day, or with wetsuit failure. Hypothermia slows down brain function and makes people confused. It is most likely to occur, if at all during the three disciplines while swimming.

In the water it is most likely to make someone swim aimlessly as concentration goes. It is unlikely the individual would realise it himself or herself by this stage, so it is a situation that is best prevented. Again, aimless swimming must always be considered a sign that someone is in difficulty.

The emergency treatment is to get them out of the cold and initially warm them up with external layers.

DIABETES

The biggest risk with diabetes and exercise is hypoglycaemia - blood sugar level getting too low. It has an onset very similar to hypothermia, so it comes on gradually and is difficult for the individual to recognise once it happens. The first signs to other swimmers would again be aimless swimming, and eventually floating. Yet again, aimless swimming must always be considered a sign that someone is in difficulty.

The emergency treatment is to get some sort of sugar in to them once they are safely out of the water.

HYPERTHERMIA

Overheating is much more likely when running rather than when swimming. Drinking appropriate fluids during exercise, and taking extra care if it is especially hot, best prevent it. E.g. training early or late in the day.

WEIL’S DISEASE

This is included merely to increase awareness. It is rare but swimmers and rowers have been known to contract it across the country. The main symptom is a flu-like illness 2-12 days after exposure. Since flu-like illnesses are in themselves not that common during the lake swimming season it is highly recommended to be suspicious if this does happen and to make your doctor aware that you do swim in the lake. Weil's disease is treated with antibiotics. Although it is rare it can be reduced further by avoiding swimming in the lake if one has any open wounds, or covering them with waterproof plasters.

ANAPHYLAXIS

Most people who have this (it is a severe and potentially life threatening allergic reaction) know that they are at risk and usually carry their own supply of adrenaline. It is their individual responsibility to ensure they have this with them at all times and let others (leader, spotter, other athletes) know if they are prone to it and where they carry their adrenaline.

ASTHMA

Most asthmatics will not be exercising if they feel they are having an asthma attack. However occasionally asthma attacks are not recognised by the individual and can then suddenly become severe. In this situation the emergency position should be adopted if possible. This can be a life threatening condition so safe exit from the water and immediate assistance from the emergency services may be required via 999.

FIRST AID KIT

The First Aid Kit will be available with the session leader at the lake. It will only contain simple items that could be used by ANY club member.

* Plasters
* Sling and safety pins
* Bandages
* Antiseptic cream
* Antiseptic wipes
* Gauze
* Vaseline

The lake kit will separately contain the alert whistles, and the spotter's binoculars,