

Southampton Canoe Club

As of 31st December 2022, we had a total of 88 members, consisting of 51 adults and 37 juniors. Our membership has dipped slightly since COVID but is now slowly increasing again. We are one of the top 10 clubs in the UK for Olympic discipline of Canoe Sprint with a number of our juniors having competed at both national and international events over the past few years.

We are an inclusive club, anyone is welcome to become a member of the club. The majority of our members live in Southampton, although we do have some who live in the surrounding areas such as Totton and Ashurst. Most of our new members hear about us either through word of mouth or through our website; however, this year we are looking to expand our advertising channels. For example, we are looking to expand our social media presence and advertise through local websites.

There are many benefits of paddling as a part of our club and being on the river from mental health benefits, social cohesion, increasing fitness levels and meeting new people and trying something new which some people may have not tried before.

The improvements we as a club would like to see to the River Itchen are focused around the quality of the water and access to the water. There is now more sewage in the River Itchen than ever before seen by our members which poses serious health risks but also doesn't provide a pleasant experience for users of the river. We have seen an increase in the amount of water pollution and littering incidents which become particularly apparent during low tide. Access to the river can also be challenging during low tide as there are not many points to access the river when the tide is out without having to walk through the mud which is filled with the sewage and litter.

In the past, we have run events on the river which have been based from the park but in recent years this has become more and more difficult as the council have not allowed us to base the event in the park as it was not seen as using the park for something useful. In turn, this meant we have run the canoe Hasler Finals in Eastleigh. This is a large event which sees paddlers from the top clubs across the country come and compete. It has felt as though there is a lack of connection between the river and the council which has led to a loss of business for the city.

In the future we would be looking to have our own club house with better access to the river as this is something we struggle with at low tide. We currently have a service level agreement with Active Nation in order to operate out of Woodmill Activity Centre but we would ideally like this contract to be directly with the council.

I hope this can be of help.

Thanks,

Sophie Gilbert-Johns
Chairperson | Southampton Canoe Club