



BALLYHOLME YACHT CLUB

Sea Swimming GO/ NO GO Assessment

BYC Sea Swimming Committee – All open water swimming events

DECISION AUTHORITY:

The GO/ NO GO assessment must be completed for each sea swim session.

The GO / NO GO decision rests with an Executive Member of the Sea Swimming Committee, acting in consultation with the Safety and Rescue Team and available Committee Members. The decision-maker's word is final. No participant, regardless of experience, may override a NO GO ruling.

EVENT / SESSION:

DATE & TIME OF ASSESSMENT:

LOCATION: BYC Yacht Club.

ASSESSOR NAME & ROLE:

1. Minimum Requirements – Must be confirmed before proceeding to criteria assessment

Safety & Rescue Team Minimums


One RIB or Safety Yak – PBL2 helm + minimum 2 crew	Present?	YES/ NO
Two onshore registration / observer / sign-out team members	Present?	YES/ NO
Minimum three experienced kayakers / paddle boarders on water	Present?	YES/ NO
Two-way VHF radios— RIB and kayak team briefed and radios tested	Confirmed?	YES/ NO
Loudhailer / air horn/ whistle available and functional	Confirmed?	YES/ NO
Shore first aid kit and defibrillator (AED) on site	Present?	YES/ NO



One RIB or Safety Yak — PBL2 helm + minimum 2 crew	Present?	YES/ NO
Nearest A&E / emergency contact number confirmed ULSTER HOSPITAL: (028) 9048 4511. Upper Newtownards Road, Dundonald. AMBULANCE: 999	Confirmed?	YES/ NO
⚠ If any safety minimum above is not met → automatic NO GO until resolved.		



Swimmer Minimums & Mandatory Equipment


Minimum eight swimmers registered and signed in	Count?	YES/ NO
Every swimmer wearing a bright coloured swim hat	Checked?	YES/ NO
Every swimmer carrying a tow float / visible flotation device	Checked?	YES/ NO
Sign-in sheet completed; count verified against wristbands where used	Done?	YES/ NO
Non-wetsuit swimmers identified; competency declaration signed	Done?	YES/ NO
Cadets (if present): life jacket / buoyancy aid worn; responsible adult confirmed	N/A or Checked?	YES/ NO
Pre-swim safety briefing delivered to all swimmers	Done?	YES/ NO
⚠ If any swimmer minimum above is not met → resolve before entering water.		

2. Criteria Assessment

VARIABLE	HOW TO CHECK	GO – ACCEPTABLE CONDITIONS	NO GO – UNACCEPTABLE CONDITIONS	OBSERVATIONS / NOTES	DECISION
 <p>Weather Wind · Rain · Lightning · Visibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check Met Office marine forecast and wind speed (Beaufort scale) • Check lightning / thunderstorm warnings • Observe conditions on-site in the hour before the event • Note wind direction relative to the course 	<p>Wind: Force 3 or below (gentle breeze, ≤15 mph / 22 km/h) for open water No thunder or lightning forecast or observed Visibility: swimmers and safety craft clearly visible across course at all times Rain: light rain acceptable; heavy rain reducing visibility → caution / shorten</p>	<p>Wind: Force 4 or above (moderate breeze, ≥16 mph) or conditions creating unsafe chop Any lightning observed or forecast within session window → immediate NO GO Heavy rain or fog significantly reducing visibility across the course Forecast conditions deteriorating sharply during planned swim window</p>		<p>GO/ NO GO</p>

 <p>Water Temperature Cold shock · Hypothermia risk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check current sea temperature (Met Office / DAERA / thermometer) • Consider air temperature and wind chill effect on swimmers exiting water • Note proportion of non-wetsuit swimmers 	<p>≥15°C: comfortable for most wetsuits; non-wetsuit declaration required below 18°C 10–14°C: GO with enhanced cold briefing; wetsuit strongly advised; time in water limited; weaker swimmers on shorter route Boxing Day / cold events: additional warm clothing / hot drinks arranged on shore</p>	<p><10°C: NO GO for general group swims unless event is specifically planned and risk assessed for cold water (e.g. Boxing Day with appropriate controls) Any temperature at which the safety team cannot guarantee adequate supervision and rescue response time</p>		<p>GO/ NO GO</p>
 <p>Water Quality Pollution · Sewage · Algae</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check DAERA bathing water quality report (daera-ni.gov.uk) • Visual inspection: clarity, colour, odour, litter, foam, sewage signs • Check for blue-green algae advisory notices 	<p>DAERA result: Excellent or Good — normal swim proceeds DAERA result: Sufficient — swim may proceed; advise swimmers of result; confirm they accept risk Visual inspection: clear water, no sewage, no unusual odour, no algae</p>	<p>DAERA result: Poor, or active pollution advisory in force Visual evidence of sewage, heavy foam, chemical discolouration, or confirmed algal bloom Coastal pollution incident reported by NIEA / Coast Guard in the area</p>		<p>GO/ NO GO</p>

 <p>Underwater Visibility Hazard detection · Rescue</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual check from shore and from safety craft • Assess if safety team can monitor swimmers' position and identify distress signals • Consider post-storm turbidity / silt 	<p>Swimmers and their tow floats clearly visible to safety team across the full course Marker buoys visible from all points of the course Safety craft can maintain visual contact with all swimmer hats at all times</p>	<p>Fog, mist, glare, or wave height obscuring swimmer visibility across any part of the course Safety craft unable to maintain visual on all active swimmers simultaneously Underwater turbidity so severe that rescue crew cannot locate a submerged swimmer</p>		<p>GO/ NO GO</p>
 <p>Currents & Tides Drift · Rip currents · Long-shore drift</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check tide tables for time, height, and tidal range • Assess tidal flow direction and speed through the course area • Identify any known rip current risk areas for prevailing conditions • Check long-shore drift direction; confirm safe exit points 	<p>Tidal flow through the course ≤ 1 knot, manageable for the group's ability No active rip currents or surf conditions in the swim area Tide state allows safe entry and exit at planned points throughout session Any tidal hazards (rocks, submerged jetties) are safely covered or out of the course</p>	<p>Tidal flow in the course area exceeds safe swimming threshold for the group Active rip currents or surf breaking into the swim area Low tide exposing significant submerged hazards within or adjacent to the course Tidal conditions at entry / exit points unsafe for the group's ability</p>		<p>GO/ NO GO</p>

 <p>Marine Hazards <i>Jellyfish · Weever fish</i> <i>· Other craft</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual check of water for jellyfish density • Review any local coastguard / RNLI marine hazard reports • Confirm other watercraft (dinghies, kayakers, powerboats) are briefed of swim activity • Check for weever fish seasonal risk (warm shallow water, May–Sep) 	<p>Occasional jellyfish present but dispersed – advise swimmers; allow individual opt-out</p> <p>Weever fish risk: advise footwear for entry/exit; brief all swimmers</p> <p>Other watercraft briefed; rescue RIB maintaining a clear cordon around course</p>	<p>Very high density of jellyfish making avoidance near-impossible – consider relocation or postponement</p> <p>Uncontrolled powerboat or watercraft activity within the swim area that cannot be managed</p> <p>Confirmed hazardous marine species (e.g. Portuguese Man O'War) in the area</p>		<p>GO/ NO GO</p>
--	--	--	---	--	------------------

⚡ Conditional GO – Acceptable Modifications

Where a GO decision is made but conditions are marginal, the assessor must specify any modifications below. Swimmers must be briefed on all conditions and any modified arrangements before entering the water.

Reduce circuit distance / shorten course
 Limit number of laps or total time in water
 Restrict weaker swimmers to inner course only
 Increase safety craft coverage in affected zone
 Mandatory wetsuit for all participants
 Enhanced buddy pairing for all swimmers

Modifications applied (circle or describe):

Overall Decision

✓ GO

All criteria passed (or passed with stated modifications). Event may proceed. **Time event commences:**

X NO GO

One or more criteria failed. Event postponed or cancelled. **Reason to be recorded below. Primary reason:**

DECISION MADE BY: Executive Member, Sea Swimming Committee

(PRINT NAME):

SIGNATURE:

Confirms assessment completed & decision made. DATE & TIME OF DECISION:

Retain this form with event records. Scan / photograph if required.

If a NO GO is called after swimmers have entered the water: recall immediately via horn / whistle/ verbal signal. Decision is final and overrides all participant requests.

Ballyholme Yacht Club — Sea Swimming Committee