

RISK ASSESSMENT

Blue-Green Algae (Cyanobacteria) – Elevated Levels

Club:	Milton Keynes Sailing Club
Lake	Caldecotte South
Date of assessment:	23 July 2026
Assessed by:	Mark Tuffnell, Commodore
Review trigger:	Immediately if monitoring shows the most toxic (microcystin-producing) strains entering the RED zone, or sooner at the discretion of the Committee

1. Hazard Identified

Recent water quality monitoring has identified elevated levels of blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) in club waters. Certain strains of blue-green algae can produce toxins (e.g. microcystins) that may cause skin irritation, gastrointestinal illness, or more serious effects if water is swallowed, comes into contact with broken skin, or is inhaled as spray. Risk increases with the duration and extent of water contact and is highest for anyone who capsizes or swims.

2. Who Might Be Affected

- Adult club sailors and racers
- Rescue boat / safety boat crews
- Junior sailors

3. Current Status and Decisions

Given the elevated (red-level) algae readings, the Committee has agreed the following controls will apply until further notice:

Activity / Role	Status	Detail
Experienced / competent sailors	CONTINUE	May continue to sail at their own discretion, having read this assessment and accepted the personal risk involved. Sailors should stay upright, do not sail when there is a risk of capsizing, and avoid swallowing or inhaling spray.
Recently qualified sailors	NOT AT THIS TIME	Sailors who have only recently completed their qualification, unqualified, inexperienced and less fit sailors, should not sail while levels remain elevated, as they are statistically more likely to capsize or enter the water.
Rescue boat drivers	OPTIONAL	Not required to attend. Drivers may choose to crew a rescue boat only if they personally feel comfortable with the level of risk. No driver will be pressured or expected to attend.

Activity / Role	Status	Detail
Race officers	CONTINUE	Race officers will continue to run racing as normal, as their role does not involve direct water contact.
Club-owned boats	NOT AT THIS TIME	Club boats will not be made available for use at this time.
Junior sailing	NOT AT THIS TIME	All junior sailing sessions, training and racing are suspended until levels reduce and this assessment is revisited.

4. Personal Responsibility

Sailing is a voluntary activity, and members are reminded that participation is always subject to personal choice. Any competent, qualified sailor who chooses to go afloat while blue-green algae levels remain elevated does so in full knowledge of the hazard described in this assessment and personally accepts the associated risk. By launching, a sailor confirms that they:

- Have read and understood this risk assessment.
- Are content that their own experience and ability are sufficient to manage the additional risk.
- Accept personal responsibility for their decision to sail in these conditions.
- Will follow the precautions in Section 5 and report any symptoms of illness promptly.

This assessment does not remove the club's general duty of care but reflects that individual members are being asked to make an informed, voluntary decision about their own participation. An added complication is the current hose pipe ban. So, buckets and water drawn from the tap(s) only. NO HOSEPIPE!

5. Precautions for Anyone Entering or Near the Water

- Avoid swallowing water and try to always keep your head above water.
- Avoid capsize drills, swimming, or deliberate immersion while levels are elevated.
- Cover any cuts or grazes with waterproof plasters before sailing.
- Shower and wash hands thoroughly as soon as possible after sailing, especially before eating or drinking.
- Rinse and dry wetsuits, buoyancy aids and boats after use rather than leaving them wet.
- Do not sail through visible algal scum, discoloured water, or areas with a strong musty/earthy smell.
- Seek medical advice promptly if you or anyone in your care develops skin irritation, eye irritation, stomach upset, or flu-like symptoms after being on or near the water and mention possible blue-green algae exposure to the clinician.

6. Monitoring and Review

Water quality will continue to be monitored. This risk assessment reflects conditions as at the date above and will be formally revisited:

- Immediately, if monitoring indicates that the most toxic (microcystin-producing) strains of blue-green algae move into the RED risk zone, at which point sailing is expected to be suspended entirely pending further review.
- On a rolling basis while levels remain elevated, with updates communicated to members as soon as they are available.
- Once levels have returned to green/background levels, at which point normal sailing activity, junior sailing and use of club boats will resume.

7. Sign-off

Approved by (Commodore)	
Date:	23/07/2026
Next scheduled review:	Reviewed after EA test results return.