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SPORTING AND CHALLENGE EVENTS

Guidelines for Organisers

The aim of these guidelines

To give guidance to organisers so that they will be able to:

- Respect the wishes of local communities, landowners and public authorities
- Avoid or minimise the impact on landscape, heritage features, plants and wildlife
- Have no adverse effect on other established recreational activities

Code of Practice

1. Plan early
2. Consult widely
3. Get permission well in advance
4. Avoid inappropriate dates and locations
5. Avoid sensitive landscapes, habitats and archaeological sites
6. Respect the needs of landowner, farming and forestry
7. Arrange enough insurance and contingency cover
8. Limit the number of people entering to an appropriate level, and brief entrants thoroughly
9. Remove litter, event markers and signs straight after the event
10. Acknowledge all the co-operation you have received

SPORTING AND CHALLENGE EVENTS ON THE PEDDARS WAY & NORFOLK COAST PATH

Introduction

The countryside gives us valuable opportunities both for casual recreation and for organised activities. However, more and more people are taking part in these activities. This puts pressure on people who live and work in rural communities, as well as on the countryside itself.

The governing bodies of many long-standing organised activities have well developed guidelines for organisers. These guidelines ensure that events take place without disturbing landowners, local people, wildlife or flora and cover activities such as long-distance walking, endurance horse riding, running, and orienteering. This expertise, though, is not always easily available for new organisers of sponsored events, challenge competitions and other similar activities.

Pressure from recreation is particularly severe on National Trails and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) - you may find there are many benefits in basing your events in areas which are less highly pressured.

The scope of these guidelines

These guidelines will help organisers of events which:

- are formally organised, and designed to attract more than a small numbers of participants
- use public rights of way, permissive trails or open country over which access has been agreed
- take place on publicly owned land, privately owned land with access rights, or land owned or managed by organisations or agencies such as Natural England, The National Trail, AONBs, Norfolk and Suffolk County Council
- are competitive or just for fun, are profit - or non-profit-making, or raise funds for charity purposes
- are organised as challenge events by clubs, charities, businesses or other groups
- are organised by activity centres regularly using the same area
- are held on foot, pedal cycle or horseback.

The guidelines are not intended for:

- events organised under the rules of national governing bodies of sport and recreation (they have established guidelines which are at least as good as the following standards)
- small, informal, low- impact activities such as rambles or club runs and rides
- events that take place only on tarred roads
- spectator events held in one field or location on private land groups
- organised for sightseeing and tourism.

1. Plan early

The bigger the event, the earlier you need to start planning. The more competitors, the greater the possible impact. We suggest you use the timetable below to help you consult before your event. It cannot include everything you might have to do but it gives you a framework around which to organise your event.

First you need to decide into which group your event fits, based on the numbers taking part:

Events	Small	Medium	Large
foot-based	25-50	50-500	500+
cycle	10-25	25-250	250+
equestrian	10-25	25-75	75+

Months before the event

Small Events	Medium Events	Large Events	Action
4-6	8-12	12-36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Find suitable areas, locations, and routes -Find your event centre or command control -Arrange the toilets and car parking -Discuss the event with key landowners, the National Trail office, statutory authorities and the police -Consult with parish councils and farmer organisations (see the draft letter in Appendix A) -Arrange medical and emergency facilities. Contact St John Ambulance or Red Cross. -Arrange public liability insurance of at least £5 million
2-4	3-6	6-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Complete detailed route and checkpoint planning. -Walk and record the route before the event so that you are aware of any potential hazards for event participants (likelihood of natural disasters, steep areas etc) -Confirm the routes against definitive maps -Liaise with the local authority rights of way officers if appropriate -Find usable radio communication sites and book radios -Get written permissions from landowners -Identify any 'out of bounds' areas -Include details and guidelines in pre-event information e.g. Countryside Code. Important areas include respecting the environment and natural habitat, and leaving the route with no damage and free from litter
1-2	2-3	4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Recruit helpers and marshals, and a safety officer if public safety is an issue Inform any other landowners involved
2-4 weeks			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Re-check all route and checkpoint arrangements on the ground -Consider putting up notices about the event at key access points
5-7 days			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Send reminders to landowners
day before			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Put out checkpoints, waymarkers, road signs -Record or photograph any damaged trails
on the day			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fully brief entrants on their responsibilities including out of bounds areas -Have someone briefed to deal with unexpected land access or public relations problems -Remove litter and events signs where possible
day after			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Remove all checkpoints, markers and litter pick as necessary
5-7 days later			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Debrief the organising team leaders -Thank the authorities and landowners and/or other parties for co-operation received -Prepare an environmental/public reaction report

2. Consult widely

You must consult properly to guard against unexpected setbacks. At the very least it shows courtesy towards the people who may be affected by the event. Time spent consulting is time well spent. You may discover existing guidelines for the area that you will need to keep to.

Many people you approach will not reply. But the fact that they know the event is happening means they will be much more likely to react sympathetically to any problems or difficulties arising from the event. You will find a suggested letter in Appendix A.

The first time you meet landowners or others likely to be affected by the event, they may raise concerns that you have to address. However, by allaying these concerns you will have laid the foundations for a welcome in the future.

Initial consultation (when the event is first being planned)

Depending on the venue you have chosen, consultation may include:

- National Trail office and/or Rights of Way Departments regarding the use of footpaths, bridleways and byways - check for any relevant bylaws or Traffic Regulation Orders
- Countryside Departments for Country Parks and other local authority owned or managed locations if appropriate
- Key landowners over whose land the event passes
- National Park Offices, AONB Offices
- English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage or the Countryside Council for Wales - for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- Local Wildlife Trusts and other land-managing conservation groups
- National Trust, Forestry Commission (Forest Enterprise) and Timber Growers Association
- British Waterways (towpaths), Environment Agency, and water companies
- Local Tourist Information Office to register the date and avoid date clashes with other events
- the local police.

Secondary consultation (as planning for the event develops)

- Parish councils, local footpath officers
- Regional offices of the Country Landowners Association (CLA) and National Farmers Union (NFU)
- The landowners on, and by, your chosen route or area
- Local Authority Archaeological Office (for archaeological sites)
- English Heritage for Scheduled Monuments.

Final consultation (as a reminder)

- appropriate landowners

3. Get permission well in advance

All land is owned by someone - individuals, businesses, organisations or public bodies. If you use any routes off the public rights of way network you must get written permission from the landowners, or land-managing bodies. As well as this you will still have to consult over the use of any rights of way (see section 2).

You will need to get permission for access through farm fields, routes using forestry or estate tracks, and for using public footpaths for cycling or horse riding. You will almost certainly need permission for waymarking the route, checkpoints or feeding stations, overnight camping, car parking, and spectator access.

You may need to do some detective work to find all the landowners, as few rural areas have a land registry to refer to. You will need to visit farms systematically to build up a pattern of landownership. You can also use this time to build good relationships with, and an understanding of, the local community. Local sources of information such as local shops, pubs or the postman may help identify the key landowners, farm managers or tenants, as will the regional offices of the farming organisations NFU and CLA.

4. Avoid inappropriate dates and places

The countryside can be a busy place. Consulting early will help you to avoid clashing with the local foxhounds, ploughing match, fete or well dressing! It may be relatively easy to find out about major events, but it will be less easy to find out about the smaller sporting and recreational events - it may help to ask the local library, parish council, post office or police. Also local Tourist Information Offices often keep a register of local events.

When proposing dates or locations, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the area become swamped with visitors on bank holidays?
 - Does the area have a heavy seasonal influx of tourists?
 - Is there a suitable event centre with car parking and toilets?
 - Are local residents likely to be inconvenienced by the event?
 - Are there other events in the area on the proposed date?
 - Will the land take year-round use - or should it be used only in the summer?
-
- Are any sections of trail likely to be damaged by unusually heavy use?
 - Is there a potential fire hazard in the summer?
 - Will the event coincide with the lambing season, harvesting or other seasonal activity?
 - Will the event affect the breeding or management of deer, grouse and other game birds?
 - Will the event disturb users of trails which are already waymarked, or promoted for self-guided walks and rides?

5. Avoid sensitive landscapes, habitats and heritage sites

There are relatively few 'wilderness' areas in the UK, and we should respect the tranquillity of these areas.

Landscapes

Plan courses to prevent the creation of 'new' paths. Avoid trails which are already suffering from erosion, and routes which could be damaged due to a combination of their steep nature, thin soils and wet conditions - particularly where entrants are likely to be descending. Damage caused by heavy wear can quickly turn into a permanent scar exacerbated by the effects of rain and run-off - routes across marshy ground, peat moor land and upland streams are very prone to this.

Habitats

English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Countryside Council for Wales have information about vulnerable areas. You must consult them if you propose to cross SSSIs. By law, landowners must give four months' notice of routes passing through SSSIs, and you may wish to do this on their behalf.

Some of these sites may be vulnerable at certain times of year, restricting their use as event venues to defined months. Locations likely to be particularly sensitive include:

- summit plateaus, scree and rock gullies which support fragile fern, moss and lichen
- crags and rocky outcrops which may provide nesting sites for birds of prey
- fragile, unconsolidated sand dunes
- flower-rich hay meadows (which may be damaged by trampling)
- breeding sites for ground-nesting birds, generally mid-March to the end of July.

Also, avoid crossing badger setts. Consider setting up "sanctuary areas" for deer if the event may disturb them.

You may need to define, with tape, 'out of bounds' areas or acceptable routes.

Discourage the presence of dogs. They are generally incompatible with wildlife particularly in remote areas.

Archaeological sites and scheduled monuments

Respect ruins and ancient earthworks. The local authority Archaeological Office will give you guidance on sites which may be sensitive.

6. Respect the needs of farming and forestry

Farming and forestry

- cross fences, hedges and walls using only gates or stiles
- watch out for and avoid places where heavy machinery is being used
- note or photograph routes which have been damaged by agricultural or forestry machinery before the event Tell local authority Rights of Way Departments about any blocked routes caused by cropping, fencing or tree felling,

Farming

- discuss with individual farmers how the event could affect the lambing or tugging season
- dogs are disliked by stock farmers, gamekeepers and moorland owners, and should normally be banned or, only after consultation with landowners, allowed under strict control
- cows with calves may not appreciate human company and can be extremely aggressive
- avoid trampling arable crops, or fields prepared for mowing for hay or silage
- take account of the breeding and shooting seasons for deer and game birds such as grouse, partridge and pheasant

Forestry

- keep well away from areas where trees are being felled, Timber haulage operations may put the unwary at risk
- plan routes to avoid crossing areas of newly planted trees

7. Arrange suitable contingency cover

This should include:

- at least £2million (preferably £5million) of public liability insurance
- an 'own risk declaration' on the entry form, This will remind entrants of their responsibility for their own safety, This declaration is unlikely to protect careless or irresponsible organisers from legal action
- suitable medical cover
- emergency procedures in case anyone is missing, late or injured, or for those still out after nightfall. This may include liaison with local mountain rescue teams
- contingency or cancellation plans for periods of high fire risk or severe weather conditions such as storms, mists or snow
- adequate marshalling, and communications using radio or mobile phones.

In some remote locations the 1996 Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations may affect the event if it is a commercial one involving under 18 year olds. The event may also need a written risk assessment if employing staff means that your organisation is affected by health and safety legislation.

8. Limit the number of entrants to an appropriate level and brief them thoroughly

Participant numbers

Some venues will be unsuitable for large events. Often, organisers and land-managing bodies have widely differing views of what is appropriate. Documented experience from similar activities will give valuable help in setting the limit on entrant numbers, particularly if it comes from independent sources. Forests can absorb large numbers of competitors, and so may provide more suitable venues for large events than open country.

Information before the event

Participants should keep to the Countryside Code at all times. Publicity before the event should stress the need for high standards of individual responsibility. In particular, gates should be left as found - or closed if found ajar or swinging.

A list of equipment to be carried by all competitors in endurance events is likely to include: compass, maps, warm and waterproof clothing, space blanket, bivvy bag, emergency rations, torch and spare batteries, and a whistle.

Participant briefings

Maps and instructions with route information must be easily available and understood. An equipment check may be necessary in events using remote or hazardous terrain, with an informal check just before the start to make sure that participants are fit enough to undertake the event.

Ask entrants to report any damage to walls or fences to marshals en route or at the finish. Participants should show courtesy to residents and other recreational users. They should at all times act in a quiet and environmentally-conscious way. The only acceptable penalty for breaking these basic rules is disqualification from the event.

Marshals

Marshals provide contact between competitors and the general public. So an effective briefing on their role, with a written statement of their duties, is crucial to the smooth running of the event. You will need to consider the ratio of marshals to entrants, their positioning, and whether to have roving marshals. Their duties may include:

- recording entrants' names and times of passage
- passing information to competitors and the public
- setting in motion any necessary emergency procedures.

Radio or mobile telephone contact with and between marshals is highly desirable.

9. Remove litter, event markers and signs

Remember, if you do not remove all items after the event it will not only damage the reputation of your organisation, but may deter landowners from welcoming future events. On fixed route events, 'sweepers' should follow the last entrant looking for any damage and dealing with any problems. They will also be able to help entrants who find themselves in difficulties.

Landowners and path managers may prefer waymarking and control flags to be mounted on canes provided by the organisers, and these should be removed immediately after the event. Removing checkpoints and waymarkers is a good opportunity to take photographs and notes recording the effect of the event on any vulnerable or fragile areas.

10. Acknowledge all the co-operation you have received

Always write to thank everyone who has helped, given their permission, or been inconvenienced by the event. This will produce benefits which far outweigh the effort of writing. We recommend you phone the key landowners and authorities a few days after the event. This will allow you to deal quickly and effectively with any problems following the event. In some situations you may consider it appropriate to offer a donation towards the upkeep or management of the area used.

Further advice and information

The national governing bodies of sport and recreation have many years of experience in organising events in the countryside, and they may be prepared to share their own consultation procedures with you. Some hold training courses for organisers, to which non-members may be invited. For more information about these organisations contact the Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR), Francis House, Francis Street, London, SW1P 1DE. Telephone: 0171-8283163.

Acknowledgements

These guidelines make extensive reference to leaflets and documents produced by the following organisations:

British Canoe Union
British Horse Society Endurance Riding Group
British Orienteering Federation
Dartmoor National Park
Fell Runners Association
Land Access and Recreation Association
Long Distance Walkers Association
North York Moors National Park
Peak District National Park
Snowdonia National Park
Trail Cyclists Association

Appendix A: Draft consultation letter

I am writing to tell you that on the will be holding a event using rights of way which pass over your land. We expect entrants to use this/these routes/area, and we will be happy to send you a map or maps if you would like more details.

Participants will be made fully aware of their responsibilities to close gates, avoid disturbing stock, and will use only appropriate public rights of way.

If you would like more information, or have any comments, please write to or phone at the above address, preferably before as our plans will be finalised on this date.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Appendix B: Watersports

Activities may include: canoe rallies and races, white water rafting and other rafting events organised on rivers, canals and lakes. Sailing events are normally held on specific sites, usually managed in liaison with the Royal Yachting Association.

Motorized or motor-assisted events including personal water craft (jet skis) and water-skiing may also be affected by local planning restrictions, and need authorisation from local authorities or National Parks.

On many inland waterways you will need a licence from the appropriate navigation authority. On others which are privately owned, you must get permission from the river bank owners. You can get information on the status of waterways from your local British Canoe Union (BCU) Access Officer, who can be contacted through the BCU offices at John Dudderidge House, Adbolton Lane, West Bridgford, Nottingham NG2 5AS Telephone: 0115-982 1100.

You must get permissions for landing and launching sites. These will need to cover craft being carried to and from the water, and access by spectators, support crews and any entrants retiring from the event. If you also consult fishing clubs and any commercial boating operators this will help to ensure a smoothly run event.

We recommend that entrants in water-based events should be capable swimmers and that they wear buoyancy aids.

Appendix C: Motorized events in the countryside

Activities may include: trials, safaris, rallies or club runs, using byways or permissive tracks on four-wheel drive or trail motorcycles, as well as less specialised and vintage vehicles.

Motorized events in the countryside may cause more concern than those on foot, horseback or cycle. This is due to the greater possibility of surface wear or damage to rights of way, and to concerns over noise levels. It is very much in your interests to be particularly careful over consultation. Keep asking the question 'Is the proposed event and format likely to be seen by others as reasonable?' This may, to a large extent, be dependent on the number of vehicles taking part in the event.

The governing bodies of motorsports and recreation are well aware of the need for good public relations, and have produced a number of well-developed codes of conduct. There are also legally binding regulations for competitive events in the Road Traffic Acts, plus the appropriate Statutory Instruments, and the RAC/Auto Cycle Union (ACU) Standing Regulations for events.

We strongly recommend organisers of motoring events to obtain a copy of the Land Access and Recreation Association's (LARA) Access Guide for Motorized Recreation and Motor Sport in the Countryside. This contains well presented information, guidance and codes of conduct. Copies can be obtained from LARA. PO Box 20, Market Drayton TF9 1 WR, telephone: 01543 467218.

You will find specific regulations for competitive motorized events in the yearbook published by the RAC Motorsports Association, Riverside Park, Colnbrook, Slough SL3 0HG, telephone: 01630 657627.

Copies of the regulations for motorcycle trials and other motorcycle events are available from the ACU, Wood Street, Rugby CV21 2YX, telephone: 01788 540519.

Appendix D: Further reading

Organisation

Brecon Beacons National Park
British Canoe Union

British Horse Society Endurance Riding Group
British Mountaineering Council
British Orienteering Federation

Countryside Commission

Dartmoor National Park
Fell Runners Association

Land Access and Recreation Association
Long Distance Walkers Association
National Farmers Union/Ramblers Association

North York Moors National Park

Peak District National Park

Snowdonia National Park

Trail Cyclists Association
Trail Riders Fellowship

Publication

*National Park Plan (pp38-9).
Access to Non-tidal Waters.
Good Practice for the Safe
Conduct of Recreational Canoeing
Activities.*

*Ride Organisers' Handbook.
Club Guidance Notes.
Orienteering Rules and
Guidelines.*

*Managing Public Access (p64).
Out in the Country (pp46-8).*

*A Guide for Organising Events.
Access and Environmental
Guidelines.*

Access Guide.

Guidelines for Events.

*Sponsored Walks in the
Countryside.*

*Mass Recreational Events (in
preparation).*

*Events in the Upper Derwent
Valley and Moors. National Park
Plan (pp97-8).*

*Organised and Competitive Events
- Guidelines.*

Guidelines for Organisers.

Trail Riding.

Caring for Green Lanes

TRF Notes.