



# SOUTH DOWNS WAY EVENT GUIDELINES



For further information about the South Downs Way,  
visit [nationaltrail.co.uk/southdowns](https://nationaltrail.co.uk/southdowns) or  
[southdowns.gov.uk](https://southdowns.gov.uk)

NATIONAL TRAIL 

# EVENT GUIDELINES

## INTRODUCTION

The South Downs National Park and its iconic, 100 mile long National Trail, the South Downs Way, provide the public with an opportunity to experience the natural beauty, tranquillity, cultural heritage and wildlife of this special place.

Situated in the busiest part of the UK, and as the closest National Park to London, there are many pressures on the South Downs Way. This guide provides all of the information you will need in planning an event on the South Downs Way while minimising your impact on this unique place.

## THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

The National Park Authority is the lead partner in the South Downs Way Trail Partnership and oversees the management of the South Downs Way National Trail.

The National Park Authority does not own any land or trails within the National Park. The Authority does not decide which events can or cannot take place. However, the Authority has two key statutory purposes and a duty:

- **Purpose 1:** To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.
- **Purpose 2:** To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.
- **Duty:** To seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of the local communities within the National Park.

Events can be an important way to help deliver purpose 2 and the duty, but should not do anything to harm the special qualities conserved under purpose 1.

It is not the role of the National Park Authority to advise on risk assessments, insurance or provide volunteers for events.

The National Park Authority does have a role in:

- promoting best practice;
- ensuring events contribute to the purposes and duty of the National Park;

- helping to minimise any potential impact on the National Park and National Trail and its communities; and
- assisting with provision of local knowledge and landowner liaison, where possible.

## TYPE OF EVENTS COVERED BY THESE GUIDELINES

These guidelines are applicable to events held on foot, mountain bike and horseback using the South Downs Way National Trail and surrounding rights of way with more than 25 participants.

## GETTING PERMISSION

The South Downs Way is a public highway maintained at public expense and open to all legitimate users at all times free of charge (see "Public Access" below). Therefore no formal permission is required for most events as long as the event is legal and not in conflict with the restrictions below. Permission will be required for any event infrastructure on private land from the relevant landowner.

## AVOIDING CLASHES WITH OTHER EVENTS

The South Downs Way is a very popular venue for events. It is therefore very important to avoid clashes between large events.

To help avoid this problem there is an events listing on the National Trail website. Please check the SDW event listing before you set your date. Organisers can then log in and add their own event to the site on [nationaltrail.co.uk](http://nationaltrail.co.uk)

## PUBLIC ACCESS.

The South Downs Way uses Public Rights of Way and Public Highways, this means that anybody has the right to travel along the Trail subject to the restrictions below and therefore, no one has exclusive use.

However, please remember that these public 'rights' run over predominantly private land where farm businesses are run and other private rights may exist. This area also provides rare and important habitat for many native species and so care does need to be taken. Dogs should always be under close control. More information about

# Getting out and about

You can explore many places in the National Park on over 3,000 kilometres of rights of way, plus there are also Country Parks such as Queen Elizabeth Country Park in Hampshire and Seven Sisters Country Park in Sussex. There are also other countryside sites, open access land and woodlands open to the public.

Please keep to designated rights of way or open access land at all times. Look out for these symbols as your guide:



**Footpath**



**Bridleway**



**Restricted byway**



**Byway**



**National Trail Acorn** Identifies 15 long distance routes in England and Wales. All are open for walking and some trails are also suitable for cyclists, horse-riders and people with limited mobility.



**Open access land** Some areas have a right of access where you may walk freely without staying on paths. Check the Open Access pages at [naturalengland.org.uk](http://naturalengland.org.uk) for details and maps. Right of access may be suspended at any time for a range of reasons. Check the website or call **0845 100 3298** for the latest information. A 'negative' access symbol (with a line through it) may be used to mark the end of area-wide access.

dogs in the countryside can be found in the "South Downs National Park – Guide for Dog Walkers"

The SDW can be ridden on horseback or pushbike continuously between Winchester and Eastbourne. However, in some places separate routes are available for walkers and riders. Horse-riders and cyclists can use all public routes except public footpaths.

Please remember and ensure that all participants are aware of the following:

- All users should be aware of and courteous to other users. Event participants even if racing on foot do not have priority.
- On bridleways cyclists must give way to walkers and horse-riders by law (Section 30 Countryside Act 1968)
- Racing of bikes on a public highway (bridleway) including against the clock or riding recklessly or without due care and attention is a criminal offence. (Road traffic Act 1988, sections 66 – 69)

## EVENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Support and marshals' vehicles are NOT allowed to access the South Downs Way or any other public rights of way unless it is an open Public Byway or they have the express permission of all the relevant landowners.

Please also remember that any marshal or check points, refreshments and toilets etc. erected next to the route will need the permission of the relevant landowners. Any such infrastructure can not of

course restrict the route of the South Downs Way or any other private access.

A list of selected landowners that are happy to be contacted by event organisers is available upon request.

Please note that the SDNPA are unable to release other landowner information to third parties under our data protection obligations.

## EVENT WAYMARKING

Temporary event waymarking is discouraged, however if you do put up event waymarking, do so as close in time to the event as possible. All event waymarking must include the event name and if possible the event date. Any waymarks without an event name may be removed. Please ensure that all signs and waymarks do not obscure official signage and are removed (including any staples or pins) within 24 hours of the event. Remember also that some horses are spooked by flapping signage.

Please also remember that there are strict regulations about signage on or adjacent to public carriageways and permission may be required from the relevant Highway Authority.

## AVOIDING CONFLICT WITH LANDOWNERS AND OTHER USERS

Nearly all of the South Downs National Park is privately owned and over 85 per cent is farmed. All event participants should abide by the Countryside Code and be respectful of the fact that people are making their living from the South Downs. Farm machinery may be using the tracks

including the South Downs Way and other rights of way, and working in fields along the route.

Please ensure all participants must:

- give way to farm machinery and moving livestock;
- if riding or running; slow down when approaching livestock or other horses being ridden or held to avoid them taking fright and causing injury;
- remember they do not have exclusive use of the Trail;
- slow down when cycling around blind bends or past driveways and junctions and be prepared for other users on the trail.

Most problems occur when large groups of participants pass without a gap. To minimise this please consider staggered starts or enforced rest stops.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Please consider the rubbish your event may generate (including any additional waymarking you have erected). Plan it in a way that minimises rubbish and recycles as much material as possible. Ensure that litter is not left behind. It is the responsibility of an event organiser to ensure that litter is not left on site.

Getting participants and support crews to and from your event can cause considerable disruption. Be aware that most of the car parks along the South Downs Way are small (10–15 spaces) and many have height restrictions. You may also have to pay for parking at some locations. To protect the tranquillity and environment of the South Downs National Park, individual travel by car should be discouraged. Where larger parking facilities are required, it is advisable to negotiate with adjacent landowners rather than trying to use the small public car parks.

## RISK ASSESSMENTS AND INSURANCE

All event organisers should have undertaken an event risk assessment and have adequate insurance, marshals and first aid cover for their event.

There is some good advice regarding health & safety and risk assessments from the following resources.

Managing Visitor Safety in the Countryside, published by the visitor safety in the countryside group. [vscg.co.uk](http://vscg.co.uk)

Health & Safety Executive website  
[hse.gov.uk/event-safety/index.htm](http://hse.gov.uk/event-safety/index.htm)

## PROMOTING YOUR EVENT

It is important that your event is well publicised not only so that you get a good take up but also to avoid conflicts with land managers, and other users. For example, some farmers may delay carrying out some works or move animals if they know a large event will be coming through their farm.

Please ensure that your event is added to the SDW events list on the National Trail website. This receives just under 1 million visitors a year and also allows land managers and other users to see what's going on near them.

Visit [nationaltrail.co.uk/south-downs-way/add-data](http://nationaltrail.co.uk/south-downs-way/add-data) to learn how to add your event.

Any event added to the National Trail website will also be added to the South Downs National Park website and the annual National Park magazine, South Downs View.

Unfortunately it is not possible to erect advertising banners or events fliers along the South Downs Way except in a few locations such as Queen Elizabeth Country Park when agreed with the park manager.

## PROMOTING THE SDW AND NATIONAL PARK

Organised external events are a great way to promote the SDW and National Park and to help participants understand and think positively about the special qualities of the National Park.

The National Park would be happy to supply free general information about the National Park to provide to event participants. The National Park would also, where possible, be happy to have an information stand at either the start of or finish of your event. Please talk to us about this well in advance.

## HELPING TO MAINTAIN THE SOUTH DOWNS WAY – GIVE A £ FOR THE DOWNS!

The South Downs Way is maintained largely at public expense and by volunteers for the public's use and enjoyment. This constant maintenance and improvement costs thousands of pounds each year but much of this work is not a statutory duty of the local councils and relies on good will and partnerships.

The South Downs Way National Trail is maintained to a higher standard than the general rights of way network in recognition of its national status and high usage.

Events, especially large events can put extra strain on this already popular route. It is important that the special qualities of the Trail and the National Park generally are not damaged or eroded by extra pressure events can cause.

Ensuring the highest possible levels of maintenance, signage, vegetation control and wider landscape works can protect these special qualities but this inevitably costs money.

The National Park Authority is piloting a visitor giving scheme to help contribute to the management of the South Downs Way and

its corridor. Every pound raised can help the National Park bring in up to £3 of additional funding, so please consider joining the voluntary £ for the Downs scheme below.

Please consider making a donation of 2% of entrance fee income or £1 per participant if your event:

is using the SDW or linking path network;  
includes an entrance fee.

Donations can be paid by cheques payable to "South Downs National Park Authority", via a purchase order or by direct bank transfer using the following details.

**Account Name:** SDNPA General Account  
**Sort Code:** 30-80-12  
**Account number:** 11191960.

Please ensure you let us know you've made a donation and include SDW & event name as a reference, so we can ensure it gets banked correctly.

All donations will be acknowledged on a donations page on the SDNPA website, and via the National Trail website and social media.

Thank you for your help in ensuring we have a high quality trail for future events.

## AFTER THE EVENT

To help the National Park manage the SDW effectively and to help us attract funding it is very important to know how many people use the Trail. Please let the SDW Officer know the number of participants that took part in your event and if applicable the amount of money raised for charity.

Please encourage any participants to complete the SDW on-line user feedback questionnaire on [surveymonkey.com/s/southdownsway](https://surveymonkey.com/s/southdownsway)

## USEFUL EVENT PLANNING INFORMATION

The SDW team can supply the latest information regarding:

- Emergency vehicle access points
- Key consented landowner contact details
- Drinking water points
- Car parking

## CONTACT DETAILS

SDW team  
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BN1 9SE

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