



Image © Colin Drake

# Events on National Trails

## Guidance for Organisers

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# Guidance for Events on National Trails

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## Foreword

There are 16 National Trails in England and Wales, which when the England Coast Path is complete will provide the public with just over 4,500 miles (7,200 km) of high quality access across striking landscapes. As such, the Trails are chosen by event organisers as settings for a diverse range of organised events.

Successful events enrich people's experiences of the Trails and contribute to the local economy. Careful management ensures negative impacts, such as increased erosion and disruption to local communities, are minimised. Events with a good reputation are welcomed back to the Trails each year.

This guide sets out how event organisers can deliver successful and sustainable events on National Trails. It is not a comprehensive guide to planning an event but instead highlights aspects that are specific or significant to all National Trails.

The National Trails Officers and managing authorities<sup>1</sup> endorse this guidance as the basis for managing events on all National Trails. From this starting point, event organisers and Trail Officers can work together to shape great events.

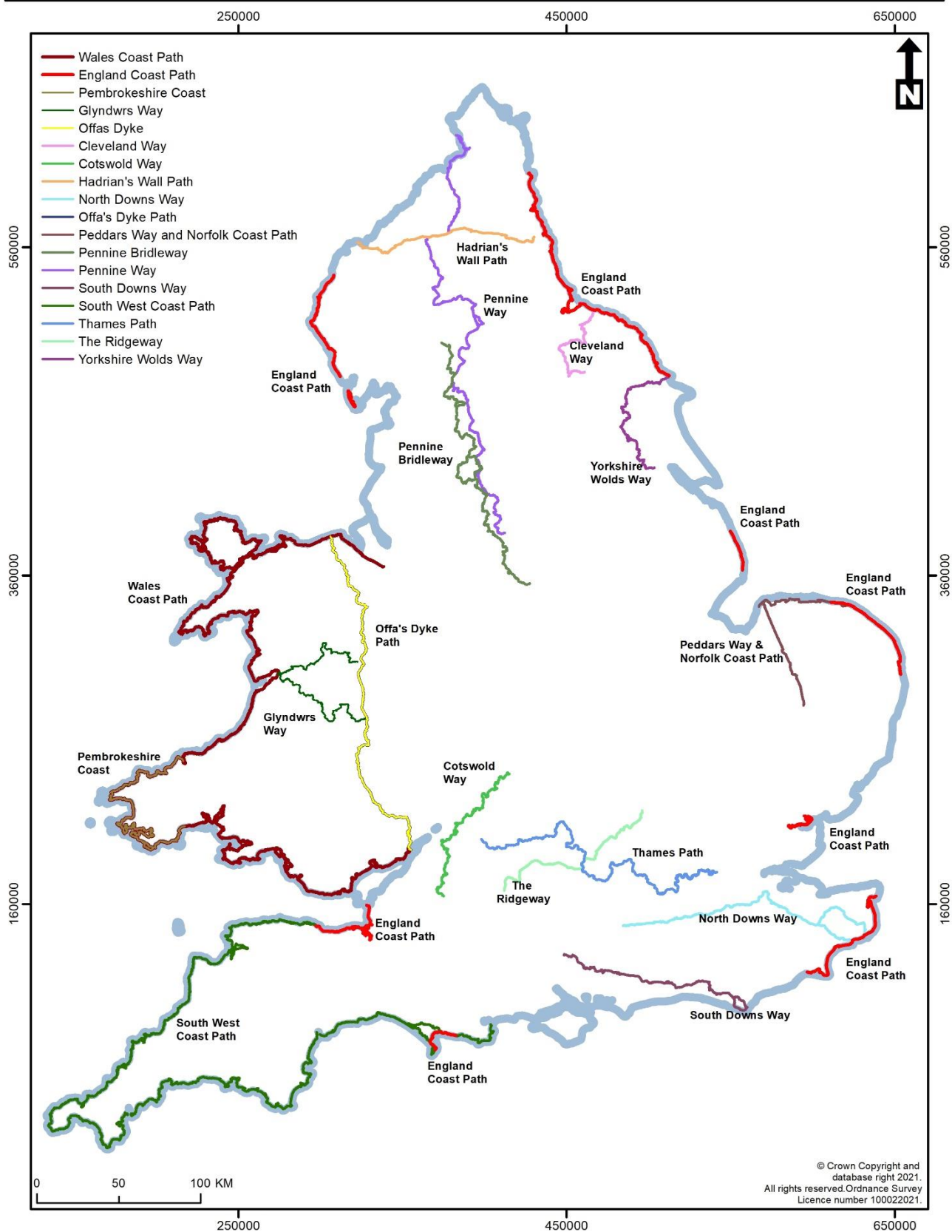
March 2017 (revised July 2021)

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, where the phrase 'National Trail Officer(s)' is used, read this to also include the relevant managing authorities for stretches of the England Coast Path where a Trail Officer is not yet in post.



## England & Wales Coast Path & National Trails



## Key Principles

- ❖ Events on National Trails engage people in enjoying our finest land and seascapes and can bring benefits to local business. Great events are welcome on the National Trails.
- ❖ National Trail Officers want to work with event organisers to help make their events a success. Making contact early in the planning stages and keeping in touch makes success more likely.
- ❖ National Trails pass through private land, and local communities and Trail users have a strong sense of ownership too. Liaison with stakeholders and the Trail Officer is critical to understand how best to develop an event which will be well-received year after year.
- ❖ Trail Officers co-ordinate with others, such as local authorities, to ensure legislation is adhered to and to help approval processes. However, event organisers are ultimately responsible for making sure all the necessary checks and permissions have been sought.
- ❖ It is in everyone's interests to ensure the Trails are in good condition and that valuable natural and cultural heritage is conserved. Events can be designed to be environmentally sustainable and can help attract investment in the physical fabric of the Trail.
- ❖ The best events will be tailored to suit the particular Trail and will enrich people's experiences. Officers can provide information about the specifics of each Trail. Trail-specific event guidance is available for some trails and should be referred to alongside this document.
- ❖ We seek good practice and aspire for best practice that befits the National Trail brand.

## 1. Working with the Trail Officer or managing authority.

Each National Trail or commenced stretch of the England Coast Path is managed by a Trail Officer or relevant local authority and their contact details can be found at [www.nationaltrail.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk).

All event organisers are encouraged to make contact with the Trail Officer or authority in the early planning stages of any event. This helps the Officer manage the Trail and there are also benefits to the event organiser:

- Gain access to a network of contacts relevant to your event, which may include landowners, local media, Trail visitors and parish councils.
- Obtain useful information about:
  - Trail infrastructure such as drinking water taps and parking locations.
  - Safety information such as emergency vehicle access points and safety hazards known to the Officer.
  - Diversions, maintenance activities and other issues affecting the Trail.
  - Other events taking place on or near the Trail.
- Benefit from our publicity work through the National Trail website and social media.

## 2. Choosing the site/course

An interactive map of each Trail is available on the National Trail website. It is also possible to download a gpx file of the Trails.

When selecting a route or fixed point on a National Trail, consider the following:

1. Choosing a good location for your event is essential to its success.
2. We want your event participants to enjoy themselves. Avoid locations where the physical condition of the surface, gates, stiles etc. is unsuitable for your participants. This relates to the Trail and to connecting routes you plan to use. Inform the Trail Officer of unsafe and poor condition so that it can be addressed.
3. Avoid 'sensitive' sites, including areas designated for their wildlife or archaeological importance. This is particularly relevant to gathering points where the impact of your event is concentrated, e.g. start and finish points, parking areas, checkpoints. As a first step, visit [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk) to see a map showing locations of Statutorily Designated Sites<sup>2</sup> (note that MAGIC lacks some information relating to Welsh Trails). Liaise with Natural England/Natural Resources Wales, Historic England/Cadw and other bodies in relation to 'sensitive' sites.

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<sup>2</sup> A good starting point is to view Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Scheduled Monuments and World Heritage Sites.



4. Select locations where the land is sufficiently robust for your use. If ground conditions could be poor or unsafe in wet weather, ensure you have a wet weather contingency plan.
5. Liaise with the Trail Officer and local people to gather local knowledge of periods and places to avoid. Popular locations are busy during Bank holidays, for example, and local festivals will draw crowds.
6. Where the National Trail does not run along the route of a public right of way, but where access is permitted under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, for example on many stretches of the England Coast Path, you may need to also obtain the landowner's permission to hold your event across their land. Please also refer to Defra's information note on Schedule 2 to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000: general restrictions.
7. Some locations function better as checkpoints, start points etc. than others because they are more robust, easily accessible by road, spacious, equipped with a water supply etc. Over the years, some locations have been regularly used and the Trail Officer may seek to focus events in particular locations.
8. Choose easy-to-find location for start/finish points.
9. Locations with good public transport links are preferable to keep event traffic to a minimum, particularly along rural lanes. Consider how your participants will drive to and from your event and where they will park. Travel information is available through the National Trail website.
10. Design courses that are enjoyable to your participants and not too difficult to navigate or require lots of signage!



Select a start location where the ground is resilient enough to cope with your competitors and their supporters, or have a contingency plan. Image © Sarah Wright.

### 3. Planning your event

1. Plan well in advance and liaise with the Trail Officer at an early stage. Start engaging the Trail Officer whilst there is still flexibility in your plans.
2. Develop a plan for your event, setting out what will be involved before, during and after your event. This plan can be as simple or as comprehensive as you require, but it needs to address critical issues. Use the National Trail website to find information about the Trail, other events and the local area.
3. Obtain support in realising good practice by working with authoritative bodies relevant to your event, e.g. UK Athletics. Seek accreditation where appropriate.
4. Establish what forms of 'approval' are needed for your event. In particular see 3 and 6 above for events on the ECP. For example, liaise with landowners along your event route to agree locations for parking areas, portable toilets, gathering points or checkpoints. Please note that Trail Officers cannot give you 'landowner permission' since they do not own the land but in some cases they may be able to help you make contact with landowners. The legal implications of using rights of way and public roads need to be checked with the Highway Authority. In some cases, you will need to submit a Temporary Event Notice to the local authority, e.g. sale of alcohol, providing music entertainment.
5. When picking a date for your event, check the dates of other events to avoid clashing. It is particularly important that walking, cycling and horse riding events do not meet on the same route. Refer to the events calendar on the National Trail website but be aware that there is no guarantee that this will be comprehensive.



Ensure that walking, cycling and horse riding events do not clash. Image © Colin Drake.



6. Consider the farming calendar and avoid using the Trail where it is busy at harvest and during the lambing season. Your event should also avoid disturbing ground-nesting birds during the nesting season.
7. Once you and the Trail Officer are confident that a sensible date for your event has been found, add your event to the event calendar on the National Trail website. In doing so, you will promote your event but also help other event organisers to plan their events alongside yours.
8. Design an event which adheres to countryside access and countryside and rights of way legislation. Parts of many National Trails follow public footpaths, or have been created using open access legislation, along which only walkers have a public right of access so cycling or horse riding events cannot use these parts of the Trail. Events involving racing of horses or cycles on a right of way is illegal without consent of the highway authority and landowner.
9. Provide adequate facilities for your event. Events which prevent other Trail users from using local facilities will attract complaints, e.g. taking all the spaces in local car parks.
10. Inclusive events, such as entry level events, are welcome on the National Trails. Consider how you can engage different people, within the constraints presented by the Trail.
11. Consider who might be affected by your event, including regular users of the Trail and also holiday makers. Liaise with local councils and local people who may be affected by your event, particularly where the event could cause disruption and for large events. Use feedback from stakeholders to design an event that avoids negative impacts.
12. Devise ways to manage the number of participants in order to guard against overcrowding and other detrimental impacts to the Trail, the landscape and local communities. Consider staggered starts and set a maximum number of participants in liaison with the Trail Officer.
13. Liaise with the Trail Officer in relation to health and safety and emergency procedures. In some cases, the Trail Officer will be in contact with Safety Advisory Groups or similar groups, but event organisers must not assume all the necessary information is being shared with the Officer. Event organisers are responsible for ensuring they have appropriate Public Liability Insurance etc. The Trail Officer can provide useful information to inform your plans, including safety hazards. However, event organisers must carry out their own risk assessment and please report safety issues to the Trail Officer so that they can address them. Since National Trails often pass through remote areas, ensure there is a suitable procedure in place for checking participants in and out and tracing lost or injured persons. It should also be noted that mobile phone coverage can vary so it is important to ensure an adequate communications system is established.
14. Design your event to support local businesses and promote local attractions. Make use of local suppliers, e.g. local printers, local food producers, local marquee hire. Encourage your event participants and spectators to consider staying overnight,

using local shops and eateries and visiting local attractions. Visitor information is available on the National Trail website and Trail leaflets can be provided for event information packs. Trail Officers may be able to help you make contact with relevant local businesses.

15. If you are camping, please be aware that 'wild camping' is illegal in England and Wales without landowner permission.
16. In advance, agree the signage to be displayed on the Trail with the Trail Officer. As few signs as possible is best so design your route and participant information to minimise the need for signs. Design event signage so that is easily removable; can be fixed securely so as not to create litter; does not obscure permanent signage; will not damage Trail signposts, etc. Plan to put up directional signs as close to the event date(s) as possible since signs can be vandalised/moved and they create litter. We recommend that you put an event name, contact name, contact phone number and date(s) of your event on your signs so that passers-by are informed. Record where you erect signs as you will need to return to remove them after the event!
17. It may be necessary in some cases to not allow entry on the day.
18. Devise a monitoring strategy to gather information that will help you deliver successful future events. The Trail Officer would welcome you gathering and sharing information about your event that will help us manage the Trail and attract support from others – numbers at start point, number and types of complaints, positive comments about the Trail/event, amount of money raised for charity etc. Please encourage participants to provide feedback.
19. Develop a budget that allows for a donation towards the management of The Trail. For further details, see section 'Donating to the Trail'.



Manage participant numbers to avoid a detrimental impact on other trail users and the landscape.  
Image © Dan Milton.

#### 4. Promoting your event

There are benefits in working together to promote events on the National Trails. Great events make good publicity for the Trails and event organisers can tap into the promotional work that Trail Officers undertake.

Listing your event on the National Trail website exposes your event to the 1.6 million visitors using the website each year. The website provides instructions about how to upload your event information, including an image or logo.

Images, leaflets, descriptive text, web links and so on can be shared to enable joint promotion. Trail leaflets (paper or electronic) can be made available for participant information packs. Making arrangements with the Trail Officer to promote each other on social media can also be effective.

Each Trail Officer has the discretion to license the use of the National Trail logo to events. The fundamental principles common to all National Trails are as follows:

- The logo may not be licensed to a new event in its first year. The first year is your opportunity to prove that your event is sustainable and well received.
- The logo will be dated and will be issued on an annual basis.
- The use of the logo will not be issued/will be revoked if:
  - Valid negative feedback is received about your event.
  - Unacceptable disruption is caused due to poor management.
  - Damage is caused to the Trail due to irresponsible use.
  - Donation that was agreed with Officer is not received.



## 5. Before the event

1. Liaise with the Trail Officer about what Trail information could be included in participant briefing packs. Refer participants to the National Trail website.
2. Fully brief all marshals about the Trail prior to the event, not only to help manage participants but also to engage positively with local people and other Trail users.
3. Nominate a central co-ordinator who can be easily contacted during the event and provide their contact details to the Trail Officer.
4. Put effort into promoting group travel and public transport options to minimise event traffic.
5. Check all routes/facilities are in a condition that is safe for your event. Carry out these checks well in advance of the event and again immediately before the event. Monitor the weather as high winds and heavy rain can create problems on the Trails, e.g. fallen trees, flooding. Inform the Trail Officer of safety hazards and other problems so that they can do what they can to address the issue. In some cases, you may need to arrange an alternative route to ensure people's safety.
6. Put up directional signs as close to the event date(s) as possible. Ensure your signage does not obscure or confuse permanent signage which is needed by other users.

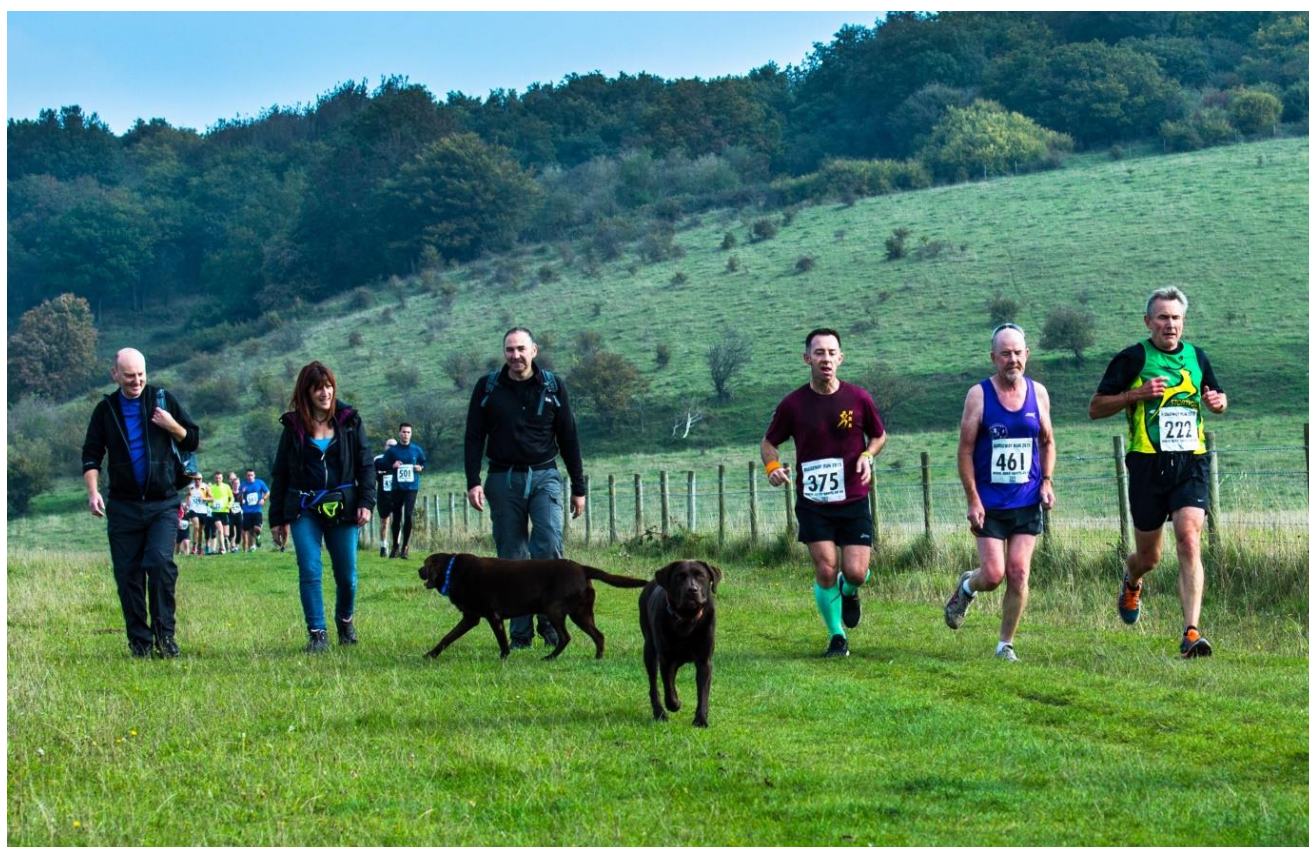


National Trails are usually well-marked so additional signage should be kept to a minimum. Image © Dan Milton.



## 6. On the day

1. Inform the Trail Officer and others if the event has to be cancelled at short notice or if there is an emergency. We can spread the word via social media, email networks etc. if necessary.
2. Monitor the event carefully so that any problems can be dealt with quickly and effectively. Make sure 'problem spots' are suitably marshalled. Share information with the Trail Officer so that we can work together.
3. Check event signage remains in place and is not confusing other Trail users.
4. Brief participants on-site, before the start of the event. Promote the Countryside Code in [England](#) and in [Wales](#) and general considerate behaviour, including not dropping litter. Your event and sport/activity will be judged on how your participants behave and a bad reputation will create resistance to an event returning to the area.
5. Engage positively with others using the Trail and record any feedback received.
6. Leave the Trail and other areas in the same state that you found them. Conduct a litter pick and remove event signage.



Remember that other users will be on the trail at the same time as your event is taking place. Image © Colin Drake.

## 7. After the event

1. Review the event to identify any improvements that could be made. Liaise with the Trail Officer, landowners and other local contacts so that we can work together to improve the National Trail itself and people's experiences of it.
2. Where relevant, work with the Trail Officer to repair any damage to the Trail caused by your event.
3. Share photos and positive feedback with the Trail Officer as it will make useful content for future promotional material, reports etc. about the Trail.
4. Show thanks and celebrate the successes of your event. This will encourage people to welcome your event back to the Trail in future.

## 8. Supporting the National Trail

National Trails are maintained largely at public expense and by volunteers. National Trails are maintained to a higher standard than the general rights of way network in recognition of their national status and high usage. The ongoing maintenance and improvement amounts to thousands of pounds each year. Much of this work is not a statutory duty of the local councils and relies on good will and partnerships. Events, particularly large events, can put extra strain on these already popular routes.

To help maintain the Trails, event organisers are encouraged to donate at least **£1 per participant** for one-day events using a National Trail.

Donations can be made online using the National Trail website or the Trail Officer can provide details for donating by other methods.

All event donations are acknowledged on the website, and via the National Trail website and social media.

## 9. Further advice and guidance

For Trail Officer contact details, visitor information relating to the Trails and for the Countryside Code, visit the National Trail website [www.nationaltrail.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk).

Institute of Fundraising in 'Outdoor Challenge Events (including the Three Peaks) Code of Fundraising Practice' which can be found at [www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk](http://www.institute-of-fundraising.org.uk)

For detailed information on 'sensitive' sites (nature reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Scheduled Monuments etc), visit [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk).

For further guidance on organising events with conservation and sustainability in mind, visit the Best of Both Worlds – Outdoor Pursuits and Recreation website: [www.bobw.co.uk](http://www.bobw.co.uk)

Health and Safety Executive guidance is available here [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)