



## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE RESPONSIBLE EVENTS ON NATIONAL TRAILS DURING COVID19 PANDEMIC**

Dear Event Organiser

Many thanks for those of you that have been in touch with us regarding your events this year. We are writing to convey guidance in light of the Covid19 national emergency.

It has become apparent that some events that were planned for spring/summer 2020 are being re-scheduled for autumn 2020. There are concerns about the safety and sustainability of events taking place at this time of year.

Event organisers are urged to speak to their local Trail Officer at the first opportunity to agree a suitable plan for re-scheduling their events. In some cases, cancellation will be the most responsible option if the original date cannot go ahead due to Covid19, rather than rearranging to later in the year. This guidance note explains this recommendation which will stand until further notice from your Trail Officer.

The current Covid-19 pandemic has created unprecedented need to support essential work being carried out to manage spread of the disease. This reinforces and illustrates the importance of different organisations working together and, in relation to National Trails, this includes colleagues in Natural England, Defra, National Farmers Union, emergency services and local authorities.

This guidance note has been produced to assist event organisers during the Covid19 pandemic and it presents the position of all National Trail Officers in England and Wales. It has been produced at a national level in consultation with representatives from local Safety Advisory Groups and Highway Authorities / Public Rights of Way departments. This guidance note is supplementary to the published National Trail Event Guidance which is available from Trail Officers.

In addition to National Trail guidance, it is important that event organisers check and adhere to national government guidance about Covid19, including specific guidance about access to greenspaces and use of public rights of way:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-guidance-on-access-to-green-spaces>
- <https://www.facebook.com/DefraGovUK/videos/848907328918645/>

These are unusual circumstances which require us to adapt and any event on a National Trail should be:

- Safe
- Responsible
- Sustainable



### **Event Management Planning and Safety**

Due to restrictions currently in place, you are not able to carry out or update your safety inspections or risk assessments. In addition to the potential impact on participants, spectators and support teams, this could invalidate your insurance/ public liability cover. Risk Assessments, Event Management Plans and Insurance are essential to running a successful event and core components in securing Local Safety Advisory Group support. Emergency services are under strain due to Covid19 so it seems irresponsible to put demands upon these services and hold an event with little or no emergency support.

### **Condition of Trail and participant experience**

The condition of the Trail plays a key role in determining participant enjoyment and safety. As a consequence of social distancing requirements and travel restrictions, a number of Trail staff and contractors have been furloughed. Volunteers are also not able to help carry out work on the Trails. This is impacting routine maintenance tasks such as seasonal vegetation cutting. Path widths and sight lines will be reduced and so parts of the Trail will be to a lower standard than would normally be expected. The likelihood is that there will be a backlog of maintenance tasks later in the year.

Also, as we move into autumn/winter, route condition is further reduced by wet weather, storm damage, flooding and erosion. It is not sustainable to subject the Trails to heavy use by events at a time of year when wet and cold conditions make surfaces more prone to damage. Participants are likely to be less prepared for such conditions.

### **Social Distancing and local use of Trails**

Events need to accommodate the general public using the Trails and Covid19 has brought about changes in the normal patterns of use. Whilst the hope is that movement restrictions will ease, it is highly feasible that a number of social distancing requirements could remain in force for a good while. As and when people are able to travel for recreation, it is likely that there will be high demand for use of Trails by the general public. This will result in busy Trails, particularly at weekends, and narrower sections of Trail will be problematic when people try to pass each other. If events are rearranged for when restrictions are eased, this will concentrate activities into a short period with possible clashes between events. It is important for the long-term reputation of events and National Trails, that participants and local communities do not have negative experiences.

We feel our recommendation is the most responsible option; it ensures the safety of you, your participants, your support teams and the general public. Trail Officers will be happy to promote the responsible conduct of event organisers on their social media etc.

**Trail Officers are monitoring central government guidance on an ongoing basis and, following the steer in government guidance, will update event organisers when the recommendation set out in this note becomes irrelevant or needs amending.**

The Trails will still be here after this is all over and we really look forward to welcoming events back to the Trails in the future when it is safe and responsible to do so.

**Thank you for your co-operation and stay safe.**

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