

Guidance for organisers of outdoor recreation events in the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and UNESCO Global Geopark



NORTH PENNINES
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty


United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization


North Pennines
UNESCO
Global Geopark

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1. Introduction

The North Pennines is one of England's most special places – a stunning landscape of open heather moors and peatlands, attractive dales and hay meadows, tumbling upland rivers, wonderful woods, welcoming communities, intriguing imprints of a mining and industrial past, distinctive birds, animals and plants and much, much more. In recognition of its special qualities the area has been designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The North Pennines is also a UNESCO Global Geopark – highlighting its globally important Earth heritage.

The area is attractive for organising events and activities that seek to allow people to experience its unique landscapes in exciting and challenging ways. The AONB is a place rich in wildlife where the public can experience tranquillity and solitude.

Recreation events that are held in the AONB can have a positive impact if managed well. However, they have the potential to have an adverse impact on the environment and local communities. The North Pennines AONB Partnership seeks to promote best practice in event organisation to ensure that people can enjoy the special qualities of the area without negative impacts.

As a designated landscape with small rural communities, a vast access network and a feeling of wildness, the North Pennines has excellent opportunities for recreation events. Whilst there are some types and scales of events that will not be appropriate for the area, this guidance establishes a code of practice for people considering organising the type of events that are welcomed.

This guidance assumes that organisers have considered generic issues for running any event, such as legal obligations and public liability insurance.

The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership is the body responsible for co-ordinating efforts to conserve and enhance this beautiful and culturally important landscape.

This guidance has been developed with the support of the members of the North Pennines AONB Partnership's Tourism Working Group and Access and Recreation Working Group and has been prepared in consultation with the organisers of a number of existing events in the area.



2. Types of events covered by this guidance

The general principles contained in this guidance are applicable to a wide range of activities and there should be valuable information for many. However, they have been developed mainly to advise the organisation of events which:

- are formal and likely to attract large numbers of participants and/or spectators;
- use public rights of way, access land, permissive trails, rivers and other watercourses, lakes and reservoirs or the local road network;
- are competitive or not-for-profit; and
- are held on foot, cycle, horse, horse-drawn carriage, motor vehicles or water craft.

These guidelines are not intended, for example, for guided walks of the sort arranged by local walking groups, regular club bike rides or university kayaking societies, subject to the caveats elsewhere in this document.



3. Size of events

What constitutes a large event will depend entirely on the perceived 'risks' it poses. The numbers of participants that might reasonably be involved in an event on a local river with restricted access and vulnerable bank vegetation will, for example, be much lower than what one might consider acceptable for a large number of participants, support and spectators for a national road cycle tour. The key issue centres on a thorough and early assessment of potential impacts. As a general rule for example, a large foot-based event will involve in excess of 200 people, a large mountain bike event will involve in excess of 100 people, a large equestrian event will involve in excess of 50 people and a large water based event will involve in excess of 50 people.

Note that events crossing sensitive habitats or at certain times of year can be damaging with numbers smaller than these, for example during the bird breeding season. Numbers alone is not a definitive guide to suitability; it should be one consideration, along with location and time of year.

Even if you do not consider your event to be large, you may find this guidance useful in your event planning.



4. Initial planning and consultation

Large events take a long time to plan properly. Because of legal and other restrictions relating to land and wildlife, large parts of the year will be unavailable for some types of events. You should budget for 12-24 months to arrange a large event.

Once you have committed to develop your event beyond the initial idea, you should consult key organisations at the earliest opportunity.

Each of the three county councils covering the North Pennines AONB has a dedicated access and rights of way section that should be contacted in the first instance. The officers for each authority will be able to provide timely advice and details of others whom you might contact to help you in the early stages of planning your event – if they are not the people you need to talk to, they are likely to know who is.

Contact details are listed below:

Cumbria County Council

0300 303 2992

countryside.access@cumbriacc.gov.uk

Durham County Council

03000 265 342

prow@durham.gov.uk

Northumberland County Council

0345 600 6400



5. Benefits

Some large-scale recreational events can clearly bring benefits to the local economy and are good for the area in a variety of ways if their impacts are well-managed. These are some of the things you can do to help your event bring greater benefit to the North Pennines.

5.1 Promoting the area

Events can play an important part in increasing people's enjoyment and understanding of the North Pennines. Participants who have a good time and are able to experience the area's special qualities at first hand are likely to support the conservation and enhancement of the North Pennines and other protected landscapes. Consider adding information about the AONB and UNESCO Global Geopark, found in the introduction to this document, to any promotional material you produce, to engage participants in understanding the special qualities of the North Pennines. The AONB Partnership can help with further information of this kind and you can contact the staff unit to discuss use of the AONB Locator Logos in your marketing and communications.

If your event fully follows the principles of this guidance you can apply to the AONB Partnership to use the promotional locator logos. Further details are available at <http://www.northpennines.org.uk/our-work/tourism/north-pennines-locator-logos/>



A specific mention of www.explorenorthpennines.org.uk would be a good idea to encourage future visits.

5.2 Supporting the local economy

It is good practice to maximise benefits to the local economy through the purchase of goods and services from local suppliers. Identify accommodation and service providers, and their representative organisations such as local visitor networks, to encourage community support and economic contribution. If contacted early and with an open attitude, local communities and tourism businesses in particular are more likely to engage positively with your event. Consider if there is any mechanism that you can adopt to sustainably promote your event and allow business and residents to show their support... remember the yellow bikes of the Tour de Yorkshire!

5.3 Visitor giving

Contributions to local causes are a clear way for event organisers to demonstrate that they care about the area in which they are privileged to hold an event. Entrants are generally happy to see part of their fee go towards local charities, conservation work, maintaining countryside infrastructure such as path surfacing, or supporting community groups. The AONB Partnership can help you identify things or organisations you could support in the North Pennines.

5.4 Sustainability

Sustainability should be central to your planning. By fully considering the social, economic and environmental impacts and benefits of your event you will be able to ensure that minimum disruption and maximum gain is achieved. Addressing transport issues and eliminating disturbance to wildlife and disruption to communities should be at the core of your concerns.

6. Early decisions and actions

6.1 Protecting the natural and historic environment

Much of the North Pennines AONB is also covered by additional designation and protection for wildlife, geology and the historic environment. The legislation that provides these designations often includes legal protection and penalties for damaging them that should be at the forefront of concerns for event organisers. Much of our remote landscape is of the greatest importance for nature conservation, is carefully managed and can be very susceptible to disturbance.

The North Pennines AONB is particularly important for breeding birds and the organisation of large-scale events across farmland and open moorland should be avoided within the breeding season (March to July).

Areas with particularly sensitive flora should be avoided at all times of year, unless routes can be strictly managed to avoid impacts (eg. not straying off paths). Features of historic significance should also be avoided for such events unless they are judged by competent authorities to be robust enough to cope with the pressure anticipated.

6.2 Other matters to consider

6.2.1 Time of year

Understandably the summer months, school and bank holidays are the busier visitor periods in the AONB. The communities of the North Pennines also tend to arrange their shows and fairs in late summer. Events arranged outside busier periods are likely to be of greater benefit to the local economy.

6.2.2 Time of day

Avoid being close to residences and on land important for wildlife at night or during unsociable hours.

6.2.3 Impact on farming

Farmers are extremely busy in the uplands between February and May when lambing is taking place. Avoid using routes that pass through farmyards and across fields with livestock.

6.2.4 Impact on grouse shooting

Large areas of the North Pennine moorlands are managed for grouse shooting. The shooting season (12th August to 10th December) is a particularly sensitive time that you should consider avoiding depending on your event type and location.

Note: The rights of Open Access do not include 'organised events' so landowner permissions would be mandatory for events that include Access Land. In addition, any permissive routes may also require separate landowner permissions.



6.2.5 Transport

Of all the impacts that larger events can have, it is often traffic that receives greatest interest from local communities. Common issues that can generate negative publicity and local opposition include disruption to roads and settlements resulting from poorly managed event traffic and also road closures without clear warning and given well in advance. Addressing these issues early in your planning and engaging with the highway authority, amongst others, is vital. Having a clear narrative about the benefits of events (eg. supporting a local good cause) can also be useful in helping people to see that any disruption might have a wider justification beyond just the event.

Serious consideration should be given to arranging joint transport or identifying public transport options for events.

6.2.6 Who to contact

There is likely to be a range of people and organisations that you will need to contact at various stages in planning your event (contacts are listed at the end of this guidance):

- County council access and rights of way teams may be able to advise on specific county contacts relevant to the type of event you are organising.
- Landowners (this is generally considered good practice even if only as a matter of courtesy and local communities/other consultees may be able to advise you about landowner contacts.
- Local authority events and safety teams.
- Trail partnerships (eg. the Pennine National Trails Partnership).
- Natural England (especially if the event uses land with designations for nature conservation).
- Parish and district councils (especially if you require community support or your event has the potential to be disruptive).

6.2.7 Route selection and mapping

You should consider any route for your event early. Gather as much information as you can about any possible constraints, particularly nature conservation designations and vulnerable habitats. The MAGIC website (magic.defra.gov.uk) is a good source of spatial data displayed on interactive maps. Ordnance Survey Explorer Maps accurately depict the Public Rights of Way network and access land at the time of printing. Further detail can be obtained from the relevant county council's interactive online mapping. You should of course check out your route on the ground, applying any necessary assumptions about changes in seasons. Checking your preferred route one year in advance of any event is likely to lead to the best assessment, including any potential damage to environmental features or route surface. You should be thinking about places to start and end, and any checkpoints, as early as possible. You should also consider the capacity of the area to sustainably support the number and type of entrants and spectators you expect and be ready to seek (and listen to) the advice of others.

6.2.8 Numbers

You should consider how many entrants will make a sustainable event, based largely on your early planning. It is important to consider spectators and transport when deciding on numbers. Open-ended registrations are unlikely to be realistic and you should factor in your capacity to deliver a high quality experience, within environmental and community limits, when setting maximum numbers.

The carrying capacity of the location, at the desired time, should be the ultimate guide to defining numbers.



Detailed planning

7.1 Risk assessment and event plan

Though it may be the least popular thing on your list, a thorough risk assessment will take you simply through some of the necessary aspects of planning a safe, well-organised and sustainable event. By identifying potential risks to all people and the environment resulting from your event, you will be able to put in place effective systems for running it with confidence.

You should maintain a comprehensive Event Plan in which you should record and consider all the constraints, issues and procedures necessary to run an effective event. You will need to think about mobile telephone coverage, plans for extreme weather events or medical emergency, late or missing entrant procedures, cancellation plans and other organisations that might need to be contacted, such as the local Mountain Rescue Teams. These matters should not be left to chance.

Your Risk Assessment and Event Plan should be made available to relevant organisations in advance, eg. local authority safety/events teams.

7.2 Running your event

7.2.1 Signage

Any signage and waymarking that is necessary should be erected as near as possible to the event. Ensure that signage and waymarking does not obscure other official signage or cause a hazard. Marking road surfaces with warning and other signs should not be undertaken.

Equally important is the complete removal of signage as soon as possible after the event. There are reputational reasons for this, but it is also likely to ensure better future support from landowners and communities.

Ensure that any signage is completely removable.

7.2.2 Waste and litter

Effective waste and litter management is essential in ensuring a good reputation for your event especially with residents and visitors to the AONB. Follow best practice (for example establishing litter drops within set distances of feed stations), make litter a key issue in any entrant guidance or rules and consider penalties for those that do not comply.

All events should include a waste collection system that immediately follows the event.

7.2.3 Marshalls

Marshalls and helpers who are well advised and clearly briefed are an essential part of a successful event. They can help with event registration, parking, junction and gate management, providing safety cover, installing/removing signage and managing litter. Marshalls should have ID and high visibility clothing. Consider asking volunteers to check with their insurer to ensure they are covered if using their own vehicles.

7.2.4 Entrants

Entrants will want to feel that they are part of a well-organised event. In addition, if there is an entrance fee, they will want value for money. Clearly written information that covers details of the event can go a long way to ensuring that participants are well supported. Include noteworthy things that have been considered during planning (such as clear mapping and route details, emergency procedures and rules of behaviour (including litter)). Add key messages about the area and its importance as an AONB and UNESCO Global Geopark – your entrants are coming to a special place.

A full briefing should be given to all entrants prior to the event. The briefing will set the tone, so it should include messages about respect for the environment and local communities and following the Country Code. Remember that you and your event will inevitably be judged partly on the behaviour of the entrants. Up to date contact details are essential.

Contacts

The organisations listed below will be able to assist you with further advice and guidance.

Rights of Way / Access contacts

Cumbria County Council

0300 303 2992
countryside.access@cumbriacc.gov.uk

Durham County Council

03000 265 342
prow@durham.gov.uk

Northumberland County Council

0345 600 6400

North Pennines AONB Partnership

01388 528801
info@northpenninesaonb.org.uk

Pennine National Trails Partnership

0300 456 0030
info@yorkshiredales.org.uk

Natural England

0300 060 3900
enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

County Safety/Events Teams

County Durham

www.durham.gov.uk/eventsafety

Cumbria

www.cumbria.gov.uk/events_calendar/eventsafetyinformation.asp

Northumberland

www.northumberland.gov.uk/Protection/Safety/SAG.aspx

Destination Management Organisations

Visit County Durham

03000 26 26 26
visitor@thisisdurham.com

Northumberland Tourism

01670 794 520
info@northumberlandtourism.co.uk

Cumbria Tourism

01539 822222
info@cumbriatourism.org

Mountain Rescue Groups

Kirkby Stephen MRT

www.ksmrt.org.uk

North of Tyne MRT

www.notmrt.org.uk

Northumberland NPMRT

www.nnpmrt.org

Penrith MRT

www.penrithmrt.org.uk

Teesdale and Weardale SMRT

www.twsmrt.org.uk

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