



Guidance for Organised Outdoor Access Events

Cairngorms National Park

How to use this guide

This guidance has been written to help event organisers and land managers in the planning and management of organised outdoor events in the Cairngorms National Park. It should also be of interest to many other people, including community groups, businesses and public agencies – anyone who is interested in outdoor events and how they are managed.

A flowchart is shown on page 4 to provide a quick check of the process that should be followed to organise a successful outdoor event in the Park. This new approach should help maximise the enjoyment of all those taking part in events, bring benefits to the local community and minimise the impacts on the environment, on other people and on land management activities.

Feedback

We would like to hear your views on this guidance as we are keen to develop it based on the experience of event organisers and land managers. Please send your comments and suggestions to the Cairngorms National Park Authority:

email: outdooraccess@cairngorms.co.uk

or to the address below.

Acknowledgements

This guidance has been produced by the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) with the support of, and contribution from, a wide range of individuals and organisations.

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The Cairngorms National Park has a well-earned reputation for hosting outdoor access events. This has been won through a combination of welcoming land managers, skilled event organisers, high quality accommodation providers, all set against the magnificent backdrop of Scotland's largest National Park.

As the access authority, the Cairngorms National Park Authority is keen to promote access to the Park recognising both recreational and economic benefits. However, this has to be balanced against the need to take care of the fantastic natural heritage of the area.

Therefore we must not rest on our laurels, and to ensure the area's great reputation is maintained and to help both event organisers and land managers, we have produced this guidance. We are particularly grateful to a wide range of individuals and organisations who have helped us in developing this document and we hope that you will find it both informative and easy to use.

David Green, Convener,
Cairngorms National Park Authority

Tha Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaigh Ruaidh air cliù a chosnadh airson a bhith a' cumail thachartasan a-muigh. Bha seo mar thoradh air manaidsearan fearainn aoigheil, luchd-eagrachaidh thachartasan sgileil, sàr sholaraichean àite-fuirich, uile fa chomhair àrainneachd na Pàirce Nàiseanta as motha an Alba.

Mar an ùghdarras le còir cothruim, tha Ùghdarras Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaigh Ruaidh airson còir cothrom chun na Pàirce adhartachadh air sgàth a buannachdan a thaobh cur-seachad agus eaconamaidh. Ach, feumar seo a chothromachadh ris an fheum air coimhead às dèidh dualchas nàdair iongantach an àite.

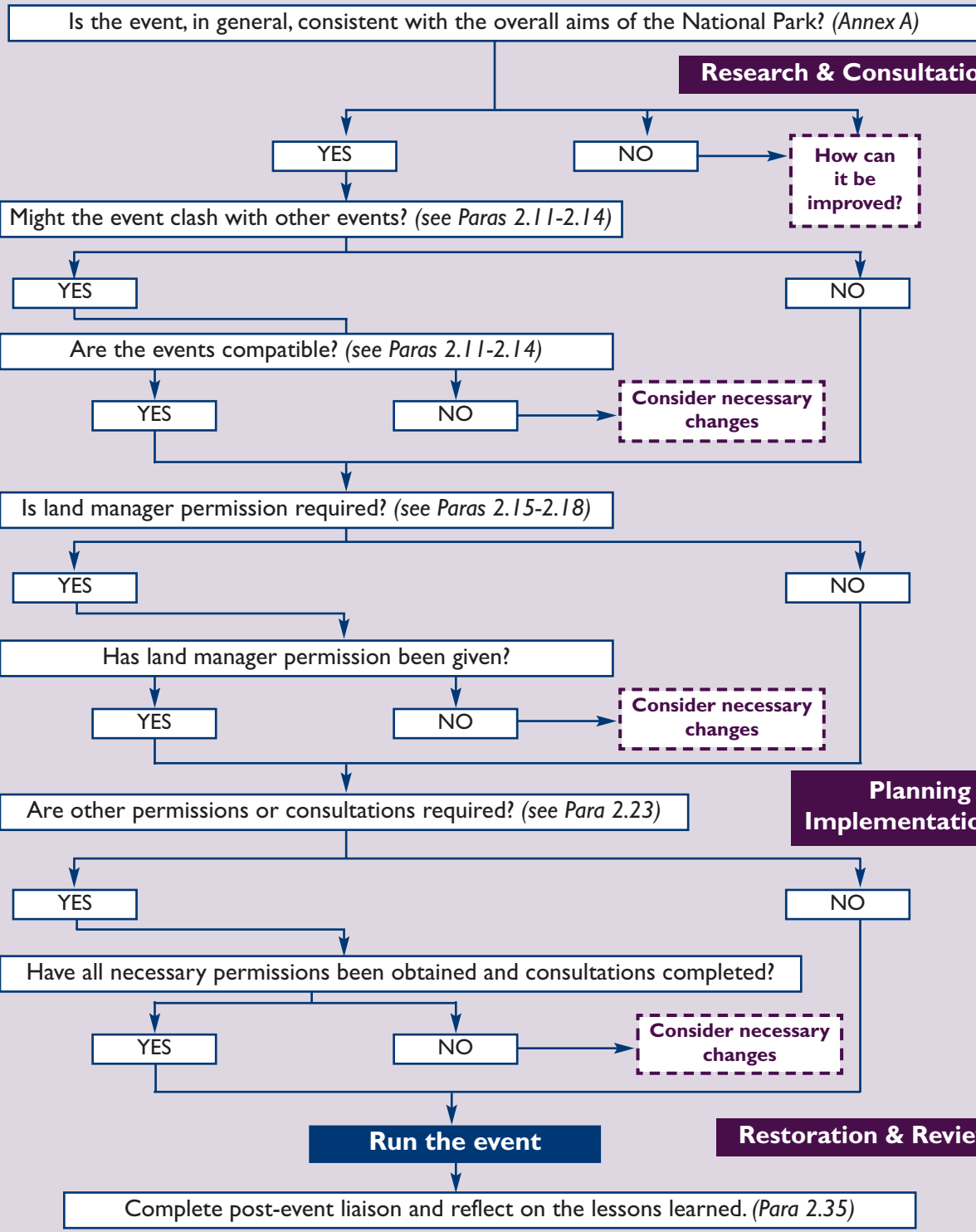
Mar sin chan fhaod sinn stad an sin, agus gus dèanamh cinnteach nach lùghdaich cliù na h-àrainn agus mar chuideachadh do luchd-eagrachaidh thachartasan agus mhanaidsearan fearainn, chuir sinn ri chèile an stiùireadh seo. Tha iomadh duine agus buidheann air ar cuideachadh a' deasachadh an sgrìobhainn seo agus tha sinn an dòchas gum bi e feumail dhuibh agus furasta a chleachdadh.

Daibhidh Green, Neach-gairm,
Ùghdarras Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaigh Ruaidh

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Flowchart for planning an outdoor access event



All key steps shown above are further explained in the guidance.

- I.1** The Cairngorms National Park is a great place to hold organised events and has hosted, over many years, a wide and varied range of successful outdoor events. The area offers unrivalled opportunities for participants in events to enjoy the spectacular landscapes and high quality environment for which the Park is already famous. Events provide many rich experiences for the people taking part and make positive contributions to the economy of the area, enhancing its reputation with visitors. To ensure that everyone (including organisers, participants, spectators, local residents, local businesses and land managers) derives the maximum benefit and enjoyment from events – and to minimise any associated problems – events require to be very well planned and managed.
- I.2** This guidance may be useful for anyone wishing to hold an organised event in the Cairngorms National Park but it is primarily aimed at events that are based on active outdoor recreation. There are many types of outdoor events and they are so popular amongst participants that new proposals are emerging all the time. The sort of events at which this guidance is aimed at include: hill races, orienteering events, sponsored walks, off-road races (eg 10k or half marathons), mountain-bike races, canoe races, triathlons, challenge events, off-road fundraising events and long-distance riding events.
- I.3** For such events the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the associated Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) will be particularly relevant. This guidance adds a Cairngorms perspective to the SOAC so that everyone understands how best to manage events and get the most from them in this particular and special part of Scotland. The guidance is a development of the policy on outdoor events which is contained in *Enjoying the Cairngorms – Cairngorms National Park Outdoor Access Strategy 2007-2012*, published by the Cairngorms National Park Authority. The policy is shown in Annex A (see p24). The Outdoor Access Strategy is available on the CNPA website (www.cairngorms.co.uk) or on request.
- I.4** It is worth noting that events such as outside television or radio broadcasts, road-based events, car rallies and Highland Games do not generally fall into the category of events covered by this Guidance. This is because they are not reliant on the access rights defined in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. However, many of the pointers to best practice will still be relevant.

- 1.5** There already is some excellent guidance available on organising and hosting outdoor events in relation to access rights. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code provides a very important source of official information on this topic and can be viewed on the outdoor access website (www.outdooraccess-scotland.com). For ease of reference, paragraphs 3.60, 3.61 and 4.22 are particularly helpful. The Code is based on three broad principles:
- **Respect the interests of other people;**
 - **Care for the environment;**
 - **Take responsibility for your own actions.**
- 1.6** In addition there are many other ‘good practice’ guides about how to organise events. This guidance does not attempt to replace or summarise these other sources. Instead it aims to complement existing guidance by specifically focusing on some of the main issues that are particularly relevant within the Cairngorms National Park. The most useful additional sources of information are noted throughout the document as appropriate.
- 1.7** The Cairngorms National Park Authority does not decide which events can go ahead and which cannot – instead this issue is generally left to the relevant land managers (generally the owners or tenants), in consultation with others. However, the CNPA does have a role in:
- Promoting best practice in organisation of events in the Park;
 - Ensuring events are contributing to the aims of the Park;
 - Upholding access rights in relation to events;
 - Arranging, if appropriate, for temporary suspension of access rights; and
 - Assisting event organisers contact the relevant land managers.
- 1.8** To help event organisers, the Cairngorms National Park Authority will hold two open meetings a year. Anyone can come along to these meetings to learn from the experiences of others and get help and advice with future events. Meetings will be held on the last Wednesday of October and January each year. Please email us at outdooraccess@cairngorms.co.uk for further details. In addition, the CNPA will hold a list of locally based event organisers who offer services relating to event organisation in the Cairngorms National Park.
- 1.9** This guidance has been developed through engagement with a wide range of interested parties and with advice from the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum. The Cairngorms National Park Authority is committed to reviewing the guidance and keeping it up to date and welcomes feedback on how it might be improved. Please email us at: outdooraccess@cairngorms.co.uk

2. So you want to run an event?

2.1 This section provides guidance for event organisers considering holding an event in the Cairngorms National Park. There are three key planning stages that require to be followed to ensure an event can be run successfully (see Table 1) and this structure is used throughout the guidance. The activities marked in bold text mark the end of each stage.

Table 1: The three key planning stages for a successful event

Planning stage	Activities undertaken
Stage 1 Research and consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify suitable areas/locations/routes/activities • Discuss proposals with all land managers affected by the event • Discuss proposals with relevant agencies (see Para. 2.22, p16 and Annex B, p25) • Timing to consider other events and seasonal activities and benefits • Seek and obtain permission from land managers (if required) • Book slot in events calendar (see Para. 2.11, p11) • Decide whether to hold the event or take stock of your plans
Stage 2 Plan and implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare an overall Event Plan • Health and safety planning (including risk assessments) • Arrange insurance • Ensure other approvals are in place • Identify how to maximise the enjoyment and benefits from the event to all interested parties • Recruit helpers, marshals and safety officers • Brief participants (including advance publicity and information about the Scottish Outdoor Access Code) • Brief all other relevant parties • Hold the event
Stage 3 Restoration and review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove all checkpoints and other infrastructure • Clear litter • Undertake all agreed restoration works • Seek feedback from participants and interested parties • Thank and acknowledge all involved or affected • Produce brief report on benefits, impacts and lessons learned for future occasions • Share results with others

Stage I - Research and consultation

2.2 The first stage in this three-stage process is that of research and consultation. This section of the guidance provides useful background information for event organisers on each of the bullet points listed on page 7.

Areas, locations, routes and activities

2.3 The Cairngorms National Park Authority welcomes events that get people active, are closely connected to the enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park, help build a positive reputation for the Cairngorms National Park and contribute to the economic and social sustainability of the area. The official policy on organised outdoor access events in the Park is shown at Annex A (see p24).

2.4 The Cairngorms National Park is the largest National Park in the United Kingdom and has an international reputation for its landscape and wildlife. Many event organisers choose to hold events in the Park to take advantage of this stunning scenic backdrop. There are parts of the land within the Cairngorms National Park that are covered by national and international conservation designations, and event organisers should try to familiarise themselves with these areas and their particular sensitivities. For example, the mountain areas contain some of the most sensitive plants and animals that have adapted to live in this arctic-like climate, and the pinewoods are home to specialised plants and animals that are restricted to this habitat. The mountains also offer areas for quiet recreation which allow visitors to enjoy the wild qualities of this special place. Wherever practicable, it is best to hold events that use existing paths and tracks. This can help avoid damage to the environment. Equally, the Cairngorms National Park has areas that are well suited to holding spectacular and successful outdoor events that can bring participants and spectators closer to this wonderful environment. If well planned and managed, events need not conflict with the environment, residents, other users, or land managers.



Left: Cairngorm Adventure Triathlon © Paul Matheson

2.5 The Aviemore - Glenmore area is a particularly popular area for outdoor events and it is easy to see why – it has spectacular scenery, is well served by good public transport links, has a wide range of accommodation and other facilities available and has many opportunities for circuit and loop courses. The area continues to come under considerable pressure from the number of events in the area, sometimes with several outdoor events taking place over one weekend. Some concerns have been expressed about the cumulative impact of outdoor events in this part of the Park on the local residents, on the environment and on other users. Event organisers who wish to organise events in this particular area should expect to plan their activities in very close co-operation with the relevant land managers.

2.6 Further background detail on the special qualities of the Cairngorms National Park can be found on page 25 of the Cairngorms National Park Plan – which can be viewed online at www.cairngorms.co.uk or is available on request from the CNPA. Further advice and more specific information about the specially designated sites within the Park can be found on the Scottish Natural Heritage website (www.snh.org.uk/snhi)

2.7 As well as the environmental sensitivities mentioned above, event organisers should be aware that all the land in the Cairngorms National Park is managed to some degree and provides direct and indirect employment to a large number of people. In planning an event it is important to consider the potential impacts on activities such as lambing, harvesting, forestry work, grouse and deer shooting and fishing. Further information on the relevant seasons for some of these activities can be found in Section 5 of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Not every single land management activity is included here and event organisers are encouraged to seek specific guidance from the relevant land manager(s).

Discuss proposals

2.8 It's good to talk! Land managers really appreciate early discussions about events and can assist organisers considerably by calling on a wealth of knowledge and experience. Event organisers therefore need to allow sufficient time for liaison with all the interested parties. The single biggest complaint about the organisation of events is that too little time is left for contact and discussion with interested parties before decisions are made to go ahead. The Cairngorms National Park Authority can provide a first point of contact about who owns what land and how to contact them.

2.9 General guidance about appropriate timescales for each type of event is given in Tables 3 and 4 below. These suggestions are provided to give a rough rule of thumb and it is acknowledged that there will be an overlap at the margins between small, medium and large events, as there is between the research and planning stages. That said, they give an indication of the approximate timescales required to take an event from proposal through to completion. For repeat events the timescales could be reduced. Spectator numbers also need to be borne in mind. For example, small events with a large number of spectators also need careful planning so try to gauge the impact of spectators and plan accordingly.

2.10 Entering into early dialogue with all the interested parties before the proposals have developed too far is therefore essential. This will assist both you and the land manager by clarifying all the necessary details and help towards the overall aim of achieving a well run event. To assist in this further it is worthwhile having the skeleton framework for Stage 2 in draft form so that the land manager can get a clear picture of the event. It also demonstrates that you have gone through a rigorous approach which can be greatly reassuring.

Table 3: Classification of events by numbers of participants

	Event Size		
Event Type	Small	Medium	Large
Foot based	25 – 50	50 – 200	200+
Cycle	25 – 50	50 – 100	100+
Equestrian	10 – 25	25 – 50	50+

Table 4: Timescales for undertaking activities in each of the three planning stages

	Planning Stages		
Event Size	Research and consultation	Planning and implementation	Restoration and review
Large	12 – 24 months	1 – 12 months	within 2 months
Medium	4 – 8 months	1 – 4 months	within 2 months
Small	2 – 4 months	1 – 2 months	within 2 months

Timing

- 2.11** An initial indication of some of the land management activities that take place on a seasonal basis were given in paragraph 2.7 (see p9). More detail can be found by visiting the countryside calendar on the outdoor access website (www.outdooraccess-scotland.com), but this too is quite general, so it is always best to discuss the timing with the land manager. There can also be environmental sensitivities at particular times of the year, such as bird breeding seasons. Again, the land manager should be your first port of call for the necessary advice.
- 2.12** Another factor that needs to be borne in mind is whether there are other events taking place on the same day and what the impacts of that might be for participants, spectators, land managers, other users, accommodation providers and emergency services. An outdoor events calendar can be viewed on the CNPA website (www.cairngorms.co.uk) by following the links to Outdoor Access/Rights, Responsibilities and Guidance/Organising an Outdoor Event. This provides an indication of events that are already in the planning stages and which are known to the CNPA. Events that are definitely happening and which have been publicised are published on the Hi-Arts website (www.hi-arts.co.uk¹). In addition, organisers are encouraged to attend the two open meetings which are detailed in paragraph 1.8 (see p6). This will provide a useful forum for discussing potential events and thus avoid conflicts.
- 2.13** As well as considering other events, remember that the Cairngorms National Park is also a popular destination for those seeking quiet recreation. Try to envisage the impact your event might have on the public and whether you need to consider additional measures such as stewarding to avoid potential conflicts with other users of the Park.
- 2.14** Event organisers should actively consider holding events outwith the main holiday periods, which can provide an economic boost for the area at quieter times and also reduce pressure on businesses during the peak season. Such a consideration can also open up more choice for event participants and spectators regarding accommodation and places to visit and to eat and drink. Local businesses will be very eager to have additional event-based business outside the main holiday periods.

¹ It is envisaged that a new website – www.visitcairngorms.com – will hold this information in the future, at which stage this guidance will be updated.

Liaison and Permission

- 2.15** It is good practice to **liaise** with, ie speak and listen to, all the relevant land managers. There are some circumstances, however, where you specifically need to ask for a land manager's **permission**. Please note the subtle but important difference between the two highlighted words. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code provides guidance on the circumstances where land manager permission is required and this is illustrated more fully in Table 5 opposite.
- 2.16** If permission is required, it can either be granted, with or without conditions, or refused at the discretion of the land manager. Outright refusal to hold an event does not happen very often in the Cairngorms as most land managers are willing to co-operate with reasonable requests from event organisers.
- 2.17** Where a land manager's permission is required, they can also make an appropriate charge. For events that are not commercial, this will often be closely tied to the cost of drawing up any written agreements, management time and/or facilities provided.
- 2.18** If event organisers are concerned that permission has been unreasonably refused, or there are other concerns from any relevant party, then the matter should be referred to the Cairngorms National Park Authority as the outdoor access authority and/or the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum.

*Below: Biking competition, Rothiemurchus
© David Gowans*



Table 5: Circumstances where specific land manager permission is likely to be required in the Cairngorms National Park

Does the event, no matter how well organised, have the potential to ...	Permission is likely to be required from the relevant land manager when ...
need new or temporary facilities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car parking, fencing, toilets, marquees, roped off areas, marked courses or any signage are required
hinder land management operations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car parking is required • Timing conflicts with planned land management operations or seasonal sensitivities, for example lambing, harvesting or grouse shooting • The event takes place close in time to other events over the same land
interfere with other people's enjoyment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large numbers of participants will be in remote areas or areas popular for quiet recreation • High volumes of people will be on narrow paths, passing in short timescales • Noisy events will take place in quiet areas • Competitive behaviour is likely, ie races • The event takes place close in time to other events over the same land
affect the environment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbers involved are likely to cause damage to vegetation in the specific location • Specific areas have suffered, or are likely to suffer, from the cumulative negative effects of events and need time to recover • The event could cause disturbance to protected or sensitive species, in particular, during the breeding season

Protected areas and species

2.19 Some places that you might want to hold your event within the Cairngorms National Park may be specially protected as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or Natura sites, ie Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). You can find out where these are by using the interactive maps at Sitelink on the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) website (www.snh.org.uk/snhi). To assist event organisers, Scottish Natural Heritage will be able to advise on any special precautions that may need to be taken to avoid damaging the special features of

such sites. The CNPA can also provide information and advice on how to avoid causing damage to other sensitive habitats. On SSSIs, land managers must obtain consent from SNH to carry out or permit certain operations – known as ‘operations requiring consent’ – that might damage the features of the site, and if the site is also a Natura site a further assessment may be required. It is therefore important that land managers are consulted in good time to allow them, if necessary, to discuss the issues involved with SNH.



Left: Race marshalling, Nethy Bridge ©Will Boyd Wallis

Stage 2 - Planning and implementation

2.20 Once the decision has been taken to hold the event the planning and implementation stage can begin. Many event organisers use an Event Plan which proves a very useful means of ensuring all matters have been considered and all involved have a clear understanding of their role. It also ensures that preparation is on track. It is recommended that an Event Plan is drawn up for all events. Preparing an Environmental Policy can also be very useful to make sure your event takes place with minimal effect on the environment. It can also help reassure land managers and others and attract both sponsorship and participants by giving a good impression. This need not be a long document but should indicate the steps taken to ensure that a positive and proactive approach will be taken to addressing environmental sensitivities. The Cairngorms National Park Authority can provide advice on best practice if required.

Health and Safety

2.21 A critical element of planning any event is the consideration of all aspects of health and safety. This applies to those taking part (including participants and organisers) and people who will, or could, be affected (including spectators, other visitors and third parties). Each event proposal will need to be assessed by the event organiser in the light of its particular circumstances. There is already lots of specialist advice on this topic, particularly on the importance of undertaking formal risk assessments, which can be found on the Outdoor Access Scotland website (www.outdooraccess-scotland.com).

Event organisers must undertake a risk assessment, keep a record of it and actively use it to plan a safe event.

Liability and insurance

2.22 It is strongly recommended that public liability insurance be obtained before any event takes place. Many land managers will make this a condition of granting permission. Public liability insurance covers injury, loss or damage to third parties as a result of negligence and therefore the extent of insurance required will be dependent on the potential risks involved. In all cases event organisers must ensure that they hold appropriate cover. It is the responsibility of organisers to take advice from their insurers on the cover required. For organisers whose sport or activity is undertaken under the auspices of a governing body, and for professional event organisers, it is likely that your organisation already carries public liability insurance. For voluntary bodies this may not be the case and organisations such as the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (www.scvo.org.uk) can advise on public liability cover. Event organisers should also make clear to participants what insurance cover is in place so that they can consider their own personal situation. This is a complex subject and further advice should be taken from relevant specialist advisers such as insurance brokers.

Who to involve and further approvals

2.23 The nature, scale and location of the event will influence which bodies and organisations you need to contact. In some cases approval will be required from public agencies such as Scottish Environment Protection Agency or Scottish Natural Heritage. If your event requires land to be temporarily excluded from access rights (for example, if you are charging a substantial fee for entry to an area of land) then approval has to be sought from the Cairngorms National Park Authority. A brief overview of each organisation's role in event planning is provided at Annex B (see p25). In cases of doubt, event organisers should err on the precautionary side and make contact. The CNPA can provide a first point of contact about who owns what land, the relevant community groups and how to contact them.

Briefing participants and other relevant parties

2.24 Early publicity for the event – once land manager approval has been given, if required – helps raise the profile of the event and can encourage local support and participation. Providing clear, easy to understand instructions for participants will assist in ensuring everyone fully understands their respective roles and responsibilities. Special attention should be drawn to how participants should behave during the event in order to address any site specific or safety concerns that have arisen during the planning stages.

Maximising the benefits of events

2.25 Promoting active participation

Scotland has a very poor health record and events can play an important part in getting people active. Encouraging people to move from a sedentary lifestyle to one that includes regular, moderate exercise can have huge benefits to the individual's health. Events can also be organised to appeal to a broad spectrum of society and should therefore be inclusive in encouraging excluded groups to participate. For example, why not consider a shorter or easier event, in parallel with the main one, to encourage a wider range of people to get active?

2.26 Promoting local economic and social benefits

Local produce and suppliers should be used wherever possible and can help add a distinctive Cairngorms feel to your event. This can cover issues such as supplying local food and drink at watering and food stations, and using local firms for printing of vest numbers for participants, publicity, and other requirements. If stewarding is required, it should be possible to hire local labour to undertake this task. Encourage participants, spectators and organisers to use local hotels, B&Bs, campsites and restaurants. Further information on how best to link with tourism services in the area can be given by contacting the relevant Destination Management Organisation (see Annex C, p26).

2.27 Promoting the Cairngorms National Park

Events can play a key role in helping people to think positively about the special qualities of the Cairngorms National Park and to speak positively about the area when they leave. If participants have had a good experience and enjoyed themselves they are more likely to treat the area with respect and to stay longer when they return. There are three good ways to do this. Events can be promoted as being '... in the Cairngorms National Park', can be shown on a map of the Park to give the general location and they can use the Cairngorms National Park brand image (as shown on the cover of this Guidance). The brand image can only be used where values of quality and positive environmental management are met. Event organisers can apply to use it on a very simple application form. For further information please contact the Cairngorms National Park Authority: email: enquiries@cairngorms.co.uk, telephone 01479 873535. The CNPA can also supply free copies of appropriate promotional material about the Park on request.

