Guidelines for Organised Events in Wicklow's Outdoor Recreation Areas

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Created by:
Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee

Acknowledgments

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Images throughout this document have been supplied kindly by Wicklow Tourism

Guidelines for Organised Events in Wicklow's Outdoor Recreation Areas

Introduction

These guidelines are provided by the Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee (WORC) for the use of any individual, community group or professional body that are involved in organising an event that takes place in Wicklow's Outdoor Recreation Areas. Examples of these events include: walking festivals; challenge walks; adventure and multi-sport races; mountain marathons; charity challenges; fund-raising cycles; equestrian or motorised vehicle trials. Events can be considered as "once off" or "multi day" instances which involve more than 50 participants.
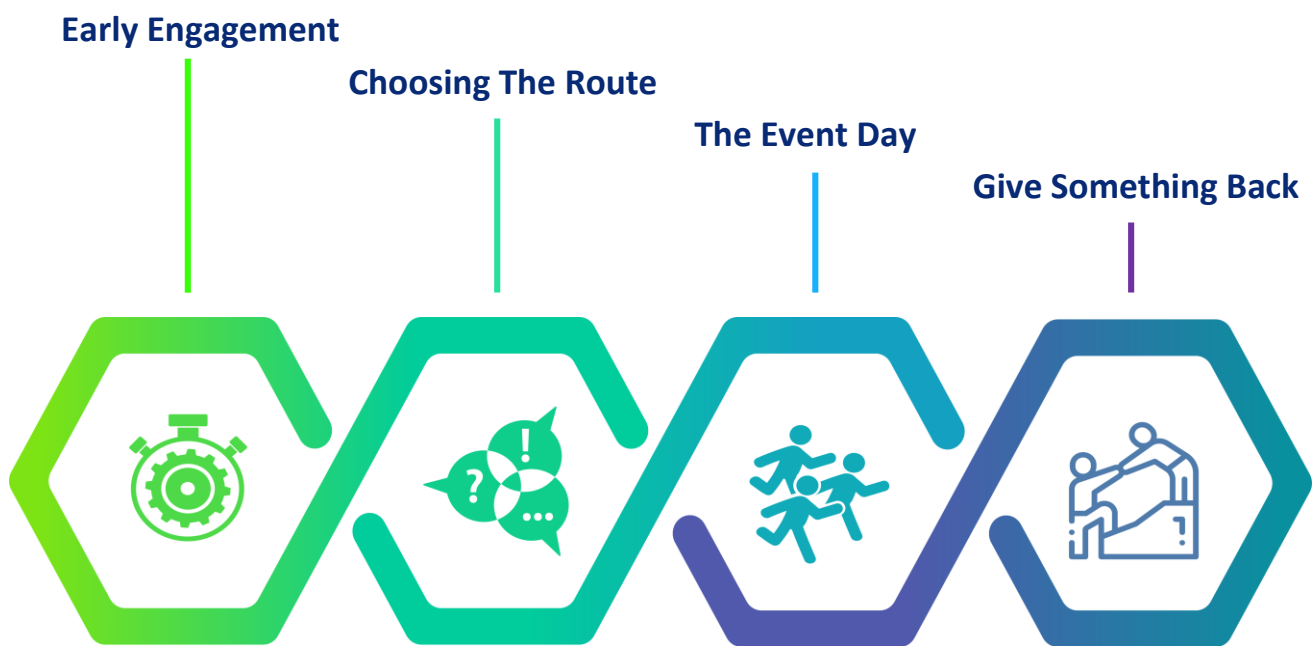
Wicklow's Outdoor Recreation areas are diverse, comprised of upland hills and mountains, forests, beaches, waterways, sea cliffs and associated vicinities.   These environments are rich in areas of outstanding natural beauty, forming inspirational landscapes with a sense of wilderness and space. Despite their rugged character, Wicklow's Outdoor Recreation Areas include many sensitive habitats and heritage sites that are vulnerable to intense footfall activities. The principles of "Leave No Trace" should always be followed.

There has been continued growth of organised events taking place in Wicklow's Outdoor Recreational Areas over the past few years, sometimes resulting in unwanted damage to the environment and inconvenience for local people. These guidelines aim to provide a roadmap to organising a successful event that is mindful of its impact on the environment and local community.

Guidelines for Event Organisers

The Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Committee has identified four key stages of operating a successful and considerate event in Wicklow's Recreation Areas. These are;

Early Engagement

Choosing The Route

The Event Day

Give Something Back

Early Engagement

- **Consult early with landowners and local people.**

Ensure there is early, and open, discussions with landowners (private and public) and the local community in the area for the event. Establish an agreement with all landowners that the event crosses, including state bodies such as Coillte, who manage state forests, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, who manage Wicklow Mountains National Park and Wicklow's Nature Reserves. These bodies operate a permit/licencing system for Events on their lands or that cross their lands. You should also consult with local Gardaí.

- **Build Your Team.**

It will involve a considerable amount of time and effort to organise a successful outdoor activity event. You will need a solid team of people involved.

- **Give Yourself Time.**

It can take up to a year's preparation, particularly for a first-time or one-off event. Allowing time to develop the plan will be essential.

- **Pick the Right Time of Year.**

Consider scheduling the event for a time of year when damage is less likely. For example; mountain areas are more vulnerable in months with high rainfall to damage, while ground nesting birds may be nesting in these area in the spring/summer.

- **Heritage Sensitivities**

Be aware of the natural and cultural heritage along your proposed route and any legal provisions that may apply. Wherever possible sensitive areas should be avoided. Check http://webgis.npws.ie/npwsviewer/ to find out whether your proposed route is located in a Natura site (SAC, SPA) or other protected area. Activities in protected sites may require assessment under EU legislation which may impose an extra burden on event organisers. Seek advice from local NPWS staff on any consents or further information required. (0404-45800 or wmnp@housing.gov.ie)

Check www.archaeology.ie and http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/ to find out whether there are any recorded monuments along your proposed route. If so, contact National Monuments Service on T: 01 8882000 for advice on any consent that may be required.

Check www.wicklow.ie for the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) in case there are any protected structures along your route likely to be damaged by the increased footfall e.g. ruins of structures or mining related features such as dressing floors and spoil heaps. Consult with Wicklow County Council, Heritage Officer on T: 0404 20100.

- **Parking & Traffic Management**

  Prevent congestion in villages and on rural roads by providing sufficient parking. For large events you will need to liaise with the Gardaí regarding traffic management. Some events will attract spectators and supporters which need to be considered when planning parking capacity.

- **Road Closure**

  Where the closure of a public road is required for an event, an application must be made to Wicklow County Council, at a minimum of 8 weeks before the event. The application must include a map or detailed sketch and the closure will be advertised by Wicklow County Council in a local newspaper. The cost of advertisement must be paid by the applicant to Wicklow County Council. Application form and further details can be found at Wicklow.ie

- **Risk Assessment and Insurance**

  Carry out a full risk assessment for the event. This process is about understanding the risks associated with your event and where necessary taking action to reduce the level of risk.

  Event plans should include proposals to deal with incidents during the event. You should ensure that you have adequate public lability insurance cover for the event, and it may be necessary to provide indemnity to landowners.

- **Very Large Events**

    Be mindful of the number of participants for your event, as every single person will have an impact on the environment. Event organisers should work tirelessly to ensure that the route choice will be capable of handling the numbers encouraged into Wicklow Outdoor Recreation Areas.   Where events are expected to attract large numbers (into the 100's), an impact assessment should be conducted on the environment the route will cross. If the event is expected to attract over 5,000 people, the organiser must apply to Wicklow County Council's Planning Department for an Event Licence, in accordance with Planning legislation
    Some important points to note:
    - The licence application must be submitted at least 13 weeks prior to the date of the event. In the case of an application for a number of events at a venue during the year, the application must be submitted at least 16 weeks prior to the holding of the first event.
    - It is mandatory for event promoters to have a pre-application consultation meeting with Wicklow County Council prior to submitting an events licence application.
    - The application process includes a public consultation period of 3 weeks.

    Please contact the Planning Department of Wicklow County Council for further details.

- **Have a Plan B**

    Have a bad weather plan or warn participants the event may be cancelled if weather is bad on the day, or ground conditions are not suitable. Notify relevant bodies in advance of event e.g. Coastguard, Mountain Rescue.

- **Event Promotion**

    The internet offers a great way to promote your event and inform participants about the route. Having a website or Facebook page are simple ways to grow exposure for your event. Online platforms are also a great way to inform and educate participants about the route particulars. It is also recommended that you contact with Wicklow's tourism board to have your event included on the visitwicklow.ie website.

Choosing a Route

- **Think outside the box.**
  Be imaginative in designing your event and route. Try to avoid the obvious 'highest peaks' approach.

- **Make use of existing routes**
  Wicklow has a large network of Waymarked trails that should be considered when choosing an event route. These trails have a higher carrying capacity than upland paths, and will have a monitoring and maintenance structure in place. Additionally, using these routes will aid in preventing participants becoming lost, as traditionally large number events will have a high likelihood to attract inexperienced participants who may have poor navigational experience.

- **Location is key.**
  Choose the most robust route available, as firm well-drained surfaces can carry larger groups with very little impact. Where there is not a robust route, limit numbers and concentrate people along routes where there is some evidence of a path. It is better to use established damaged lines than undamaged areas.

- **Spread the load.**
  Offer different options or levels, using different routes, that way you will spread the load from the event and participants can choose what best suits them.

- **Safe Infrastructure**
  Check the condition and arrange repairs to any infrastructure on route, such as bridges, stiles, steps, etc.

- ## Waymarking /Directional Information

  If way marking/directional/temporary signs are to be used, a considered approach must be taken to reduce impact on environment. All temporary signs must be removed after the event and a procedure for this should be agreed in advance. Paint should never be used on any surface to provide information to participants. Signage, including cable ties or other fixings should always be removed post event and nails/ staples should never be used to attach temporary signage to trees/ shrubs.

Poor Event Planning Practices

The Event Day

- **Information is Key**

  Provide detailed information on the nature of the event in advance, e.g. terrain, possible weather conditions, plus the skills and equipment participants should have.

- **Detail and Rationalise the route choice**

  Explain clearly to participants the route choice rational, communicating the importance of reducing impact on the environment where the event will take place.   This may include details of circumventing heritage sensitive areas, avoidance of private landowner's property, path carrying capacities or other important route planning details.

- **Have a Control on Numbers**

  Ensure that participants register in advance; this allows you to control numbers and provide information to participants beforehand. Limiting participant numbers will reduce environmental impacts and logistical problems to do with parking, safety, transport etc.

- **Litter & Waste Control**

  Provide litter bins at the start and end of the event. Encourage participants to use a toilet before going into rural areas. Arrange access to local facilities or hire portable toilets

- **Events at Night**

  For night-time events, be particularly mindful of noise and disruption to local residents.

- **Livestock and Dogs**

  Advise participants on how to behave around any livestock they may encounter on the route. A 'no dogs' policy is advisable for organised events in rural areas, many waymarked trails also have a 'no dogs' policy.

- **Temporary Signs**

  The use of markers should be kept to a minimum, and should be completely removed post event, under no circumstances should paint be used to mark a route. If you propose to put up temporary signs in advance of the event, you should contact Wicklow County Council and local landowners to obtain consent. Details of the Wicklow County Council policy on temporary signs can be found at this link;
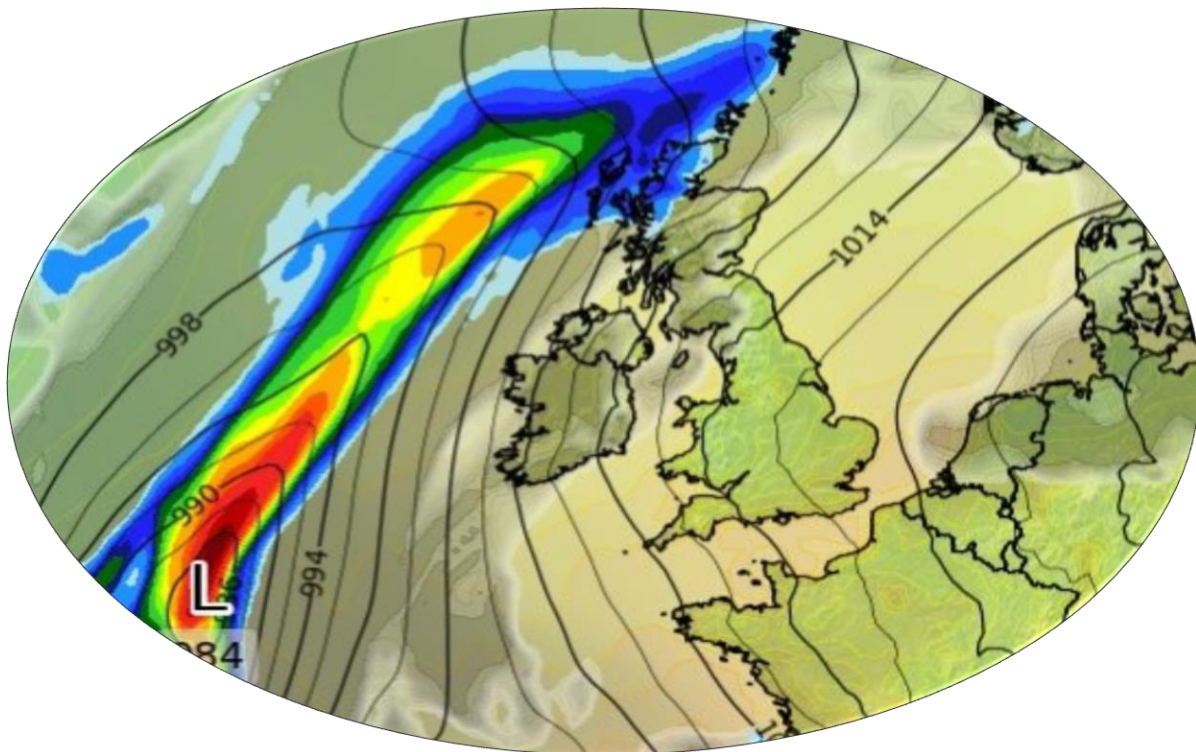
  https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Environment/Recycling-Waste-Management/Litter/Signage-Guidelines

- **Have a plan for removing litter**

  Walk the entire route after the event to remove any litter, markers or cable ties and check for any damage. This process can also help inform planning for future events.

- **Maintain Good Relationships**

  Speak with people in the area immediately after the event to thank them and check if they are happy with how the event went.

**Be prepared to react to
weather changes**

Give Something Back

- **Keep Local People informed and involved**

  Aim to maximise the local economic benefit from the event, ensure there is good local awareness of what is happening and that there is minimal inconvenience to local residents.

- **Help the Local Businesses and Communities**

  Use local companies for catering, transport, merchandise, hire of portable toilets etc, and work to encourage event participants to support the local area by providing details of accommodation and other local services on event literature / website.

- **Make a plan that benefits everyone**

  Consider starting or ending the event in or near local towns/villages. Your event will deliver more local benefit and run more smoothly if you work closely with local service providers.

- **Be thankful**

  Encourage participants to acknowledge landowners, farmers and local people they meet during the event.

- **Donations are always welcome**

  All Recreational Areas need support. Consider adding a local support fee to each participant's entry fee so that you can make a donation to a local cause, such as the mountain or coastal rescue, lifeguards, the local community, the management committee for the waymarked trail you may be using, or other good natured groups working to better their area.

- **Act responsibly**

  Accept responsibility for any damage caused and ensure that it is promptly rectified. Repair work should only be undertaken with the landowner's agreement.

**Keep Gates & Driveways Clear
for Emergency Access**

Checklist for Event Organisers

	Task	Yes	No	N/A
1	Do you have a team of people who can support you for the event?			
2	Have you given yourself a realistic timeframe to organise the event?			
3	Do you have written consent from all landowners where the event will take place, including state bodies?			
4	Have you considered how the time of year will affect your event?			
5	Have you taken appropriate measures, in consultation with NPWS staff, to avoid negative impacts of your event on Natura sites and/or other habitats and species protected under the Wildlife Acts?			
6	Have you taken appropriate mitigation measures, in consultation with National Monuments Service / Wicklow County Council to avoid negative impacts on recorded monuments or protected structures?			
7	Do you have a plan in place to control Parking & Traffic Management?			
8	Have you conducted a robust Risk Assessment?			
9	Do you have adequate insurance for the event?			
10	Do you have an Event Licence from Wicklow County Council's Planning Department? (In circumstances of events over 5,000 participants)			
11	Do you have an event cancelation plan?			
12	Have you considered all available route choices?			
13	Have you considered utilising existing walking routes to reduce impact on upland paths.			
14	Have you selected a route that is capable of carrying high user numbers, even in poor weather conditions?			
15	Is there an option of a shorter/alternative route for participants?			
16	Have you checked the condition of the infrastructure on the route (eg Stiles, Gates, etc)			

17	Have you plan to place and remove waymarking/directional arrows for your event?			
18	Have you provided participants with detailed information about the event in advance?			
19	Have you advised all participants about the Dog Policy for your event?			
20	Have you ensured that there is a suitable registration process for the event?			
21	Have you a plan to reduce waste during the event?			
22	Have you a plan to collect litter following the event?			
23	Have you a plan for locating lost participants at your event?			
24	Have you informed all local residents of your event, and how it may affect them?			
25	Have you worked to engage the services of local businesses?			
26	Have you considered making a donation to the local community where the event takes place?			
27	Have you sent out information to participants about what to expect on the route and the reasoning behind this route choice?			

	Useful Contacts
1	**Wicklow County Council Heritage Officer** **Advice on Heritage Sensitive Areas.** **T: 0404 20100.**
2	**County Wicklow Partnership's Rural Recreation Officer** **Advice and Establishing who are the planned route's landowners.** **T: 0402 20955**
3	**Coillte** **Establish if a licence is required.** **T: 1890 367378**
4	**Wicklow National Park's Ranger** **Establish if a licence is required.** **T: 0404 45425**
5	**Wicklow County Council Planning Department** **Details on an event licence.** **T: 0404 20148/ E-mail plandev@wicklowcoco.ie**
6	**National Monuments Service** **Advice on consent or mitigation, as relevant for recorded monuments along your proposed route.** **T: 01 8882000**
7	**Wicklow Tourism** **Promote your event and ensure there are no conflicting events proposed.** **T: 0404 20070**

WICKLOW
ENDLESS OPPORTUNITIES

County Wicklow Partnership

www.visitwicklow.ie
Wicklow
County Tourism

Rural
Recreation
Officer

Wicklow
Local Sports Partnership
Comhpháirtíocht Áitiúil Spóirt Chill Mhantáin
—— SPORT IRELAND ——

WICKLOW
OUTDOORS

WicklowUplands
COUNCIL

COILLTE
GROW · TRANSFORM · SUSTAIN

National Parks & Wildlife Service