

New Forest Cycle Event Organisers' Charter

1. Introduction

1.1 With many miles of relatively quiet roads and few steep hills, the New Forest is ideal for cycling. It is a great place to leave the car behind and enjoy the beautiful landscape and fresh air - and benefit from healthy exercise.

1.2 However, the New Forest is a working forest, with forestry, farming and equestrian activity on its narrow roads and tracks. Ponies, cattle and other animals are free to roam the Forest and many of its roads, and cycle events are sometimes incompatible with Forest activities, such as pony round ups (drifts). The New Forest also has many residential areas, some busy villages and its own local events, so care is needed to avoid potentially dangerous clashes or unnecessary conflict.

1.3 This charter is supported by the New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest District Council, New Forest Association of Local Councils, Verderers of the New Forest, Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire Council, Forestry Commission and Hampshire Constabulary, and aims to help cycle event organisers minimise negative impacts and maximise the benefits so that their events are welcomed by all involved and affected.

1.4 It is primarily designed for cycling events with 100 or more riders passing through the New Forest, but the underlying principles are applicable to all cycle events throughout the area.

1.5 Event organisers are encouraged to adopt the letter and spirit of the charter wherever possible, consistent with the size and nature of the event. However, the charter does not replace or detract from the need to comply with the Highway Code or highway legislation, nor does it alter statutory regulations affecting cycle races and time trials which are governed by the Cycle Racing on the Highways Regulations 1960.

1.6 Liaison with the [New Forest Public Events and Safety Advisory Group \(SAG\)](#) is vital to ensure that participants in all organised events enjoy their experience safely, whilst having due consideration for other Forest users and residents. The [SAG](#) acts as a central point of reference for New Forest District Council, Hampshire Highway Authority, Hampshire Constabulary, South Central Ambulance and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service. Organisers of all cycle events with 100 or more participants should contact this group, even if regulated by parent bodies or specific statutory requirements.

2. Plan well in advance

2.1 Consider carefully how you will ensure your event is safe and enjoyable and start planning at least 12 months in advance.

- [British Cycling](#) has a range of useful documents designed to help organisers of cycle sportives.
- Visit the web page of the [SAG](#) where guidance can be found on a number of relevant topics, including a section on what an event organiser should do.
- Choose a date with alternatives, starting location and route which avoid conflict with other known events – prepare to be flexible. [Events already notified to the SAG are listed on their web page](#). Other events listings to check, or to consider for publicity purposes are on the [National Park Authority website](#) and [New Forest official visitor website](#).
- Be aware that the impact of your event is likely to depend on a range of factors which may act cumulatively (e.g. high participant numbers, routes through towns and villages or along narrow roads, use of the same roads on consecutive days, the potential for traffic congestion or conflict with Forest activities and school holiday or weekend dates likely to be busy with visitors).
- To reduce inconvenience to other road users, including local residents, businesses and other cyclists, please accept a maximum of 1,000 riders. If another cycling event is planned for the same day, using the same roads, the total number of riders should not exceed 1,000.
- Between August and early November, about 40 pony round ups (drifts) take place, each involving dozens of galloping ponies. Drifts take precedence over other activities. It is therefore essential that event organisers considering using the same date as a drift liaise directly with the Verderers' Office (023 8028 2052) to avoid any potential clash.

2.2 When you have a proposed date and route, contact the [SAG](#) using the online event notification form provided on this [web page](#).

- The degree of scrutiny and nature of advice given by members of the [SAG](#) will depend on factors such as the number of participants, the track record of the organiser and their previous events, the duration of the event, its route and the potential for clashes with other events or traffic congestion.
- Organisers planning for 500 or more riders will be asked to provide a detailed Event Plan and a Traffic Management Plan that together address all safety issues, along with a detailed risk assessment. You may be asked to attend a meeting to discuss your plans. The SAG will also advise and seek information from New Forest National Park Authority staff and the representative from the New Forest Association of Local Councils (NFALC).
- Information on drafting a Traffic Management Plan is available on the [SAG webpage](#), and further advice is available from the Highway Authority (roads@hants.gov.uk).

Avoid potential issues by:

- careful planning of traffic access to and from the host venue, before and after the event
- starting the event early in the day before local traffic builds up
- consideration of staggered arrival of participants at the event venue to reduce traffic congestion
- starting cyclists in groups (so that they can be given final instructions) with appropriate gaps in between to enable vehicles to overtake.
- minimising the need for cyclists to turn right across traffic, e.g. into feed stations
- if necessary, liaising with horse riding stables to minimise impacts
- making sure that cyclists participating in your event or in another event will not be travelling in opposite directions on the same road at the same time
- using feed station venues that will easily accommodate the volume of cyclists expected, away from passing traffic (e.g. village halls)
- identifying potential pinch points and consulting with the Highway Authority to determine measures needed to minimise traffic congestion
- relevant signage at specific locations
- requesting temporary traffic speed restrictions on selected roads where appropriate
- provision of route information and start/finish times so that other people can plan their day to avoid being held up
- where appropriate, providing trained, proactive static and mobile marshals, especially at junctions and feed stations

2.3 At the same time as approaching the Safety Advisory Group, contact land owners for permission for feed stations, signs or any off road routes.

- In the New Forest much of the heathland and woodland (including the Forest verges) is Crown Land managed by the [Forestry Commission](#) in accordance with local bylaws. Other landowners include the National Trust, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, parish councils and private estates.
- Much of the New Forest is protected under UK and European Law by designation as a [Site of Special Scientific Interest \(SSSI\)](#), [Ramsar site](#), [Special Protection Area \(SPA\)](#) or [Special Area of Conservation \(SAC\)](#). For off road events crossing these designated areas, including those held on a public right of way, the landowner (e.g. Forestry Commission, National Trust, Hampshire and IoW Wildlife Trust) will need to gain consent from Natural England to ensure there is no harm to wildlife or habitats. Allow 28 days for this.
- If planning to use public rights of way across non-designated land you should contact the landowner to address matters such as livestock, boundaries and gate closures.

2.4 Especially for events for 500 or more riders and where the route passes through village centres or residential areas, liaison with Parish and Town Councils is recommended. The NFALC representative with whom the SAG liaises may forward details of your event to local councils affected but further direct liaison over specific issues may be necessary to avoid unforeseen clashes with local events and allay unnecessary concern. Contact details of Parish and Town Councils are available [here](#).

2.5 You should have public liability insurance for the event.

2.6 Some event HQs provide a good opportunity for National Park Authority staff or landowners to engage with participants (e.g. rangers with the mobile unit) – do consider inviting them.

2.7 Commercial events could consider introducing a contribution per participant (from the entry fee) that is given to a New Forest charity.

3. Before the event

3.1 When publicising the event, take opportunity to remind participants about the special nature of the New Forest and how we can all help care for it.

3.2 Offer local producers and suppliers (e.g. [New Forest Marque](#)) the chance to provide refreshments at the event venue and at feed stations and if possible, use local cycle businesses and mechanics to support the cyclists. Ensure that appropriate trading licences are in place.

3.3 Encourage visiting participants and their families to stay overnight locally by promoting the [New Forest official visitor](#) and [Our Land](#) websites. Traffic congestion can also be reduced if participants arrive early, share transport, cycle to the venue or use public or local transport options.

3.4 Ensure that pre-event and registration briefings include reference to responsible cycling, especially following the [Highway Code](#) and the [New Forest Cycling Code](#). Many participants may be unaware of the risks to themselves, local people and animals - for example, they should know how to safely pass horses being ridden. Putting this kind of information 'up front' on websites also shows that these issues are being taken seriously.

3.5 Advise cyclists to keep to a safe speed, on and off road, particularly through villages and on narrow lanes, steep hills and bends.

3.6 Give specific instructions not to race. This is particularly important if you intend to categorise participants based on their performance which could encourage aggressive and dangerous riding. Many events impose a maximum average speed to discourage racing. Tri-bars and spinaci type extensions should only be allowed in triathlons or time trials.

3.7 Instruct cyclists on best practice with regard to cycling in groups (e.g. extra concentration required and allowing a gap between groups to help vehicles overtake). Follow the Highway Code and ride in single file when appropriate.

3.8 Make arrangements for litter disposal at venues and feed stations, and stress the importance of not dropping litter anywhere along the route.

3.9 Ensure the route has enough toilets to avoid queues, if necessary providing additional facilities (e.g. at key feed stations) - and make sure the riders know where they are.

3.10 Obtain relevant permission from landowners for signs and ensure they cause no damage to existing furniture (e.g. timber signs).

4. During and after the event

4.1 Participants should be clearly identifiable to marshals, when used, through use of rider numbers: A6 on front and A5 or larger on back.

4.2 Through effective marshalling ensure that action is taken against participants who contravene event rules as determined by the organiser, including banning from future events for unsafe or anti-social behaviour.

4.3 Make sure that gates are not left open, allowing animals to stray.

4.4 Report immediately to the Police any instances of sign removal or tampering, obstacles or hazards placed on roads, or offences committed by other road users including other participants.

4.5 If riders' times are to be categorised or recorded, they should be provided individually or in a form that cannot be sorted into order of time.

4.6 Remove all signs and their fixings promptly after the event and litter pick any obvious examples of litter from the event.

4.7 Provide a clear mechanism for local residents and participants to feed back during or after the event – this can include compliments for good organisation and behaviour and suggestions for improvements. The [SAG events register](#) provides a feedback form for each event for 28 days afterwards – this will help monitor the success of different event plans and inform advice given in advance of future events.