

Event Guidelines for the Downs Link

A long distance, mostly off-road shared use route for walkers, horse-riders and cyclists

Every year organised events provide an excellent opportunity for people to visit and enjoy the Downs Link as well as raising money for charity. These guidelines have been produced to help you organise a successful event and to avoid conflicts with other users and landowners. They apply to the West Sussex sections from Rudgwick parish southwards to Shoreham-By-Sea. For the Downs Link in Surrey you will need to contact rightsofway@surreycc.gov.uk.

The event organiser is responsible for the safe running of the event and we advise you should ensure all appropriate permissions, marshalling, first aid cover, contingencies, risk assessments and insurance are in place.

Who can run an event on the Downs Link?

Most of the Downs Link in West Sussex uses Public Rights of Way, in particular Public Bridleways, and Public Highways. This means that anybody has the right to travel along the route at any time. Therefore, anyone can run an event whether it is a sponsored marathon, cycle ride, a cross country running challenge or just a large group of hikers, but you must remember that you do not have exclusive use of the route.

Your event must not prevent, block, or interfere with other lawful uses or users of the Downs Link.

To help minimise clashing with other events contact West Sussex County Council (WSCC) in advance of your proposed event via countryside@westsussex.gov.uk.

Please note that other events may be being held along the route which are not known to us.

Restrictions

There are several types of Public Rights of Way and some users are restricted to using specific routes. The Downs Link uses Public Bridleways signposted with a blue arrow. This colour coding system is used throughout England.

Public Bridleways can be used by pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists. Motorcycles are not allowed on Public Bridleways.

Walkers and horse riders have priority on all Public Rights of Way including on Public Bridleways such as the Downs Link.

Section 30 of the Countryside Act 1968 allows cyclists to use Public Bridleways provided they give way to pedestrians and equestrians.

Under Section 31 Road Traffic Act 1988 it is illegal to race bikes on Public Bridleways. This includes time trials. There should not be a prize for coming first and a list of results including competition times should not be published.

It is an offence to drive a motor vehicle on a Public Bridleway or Public Footpath without lawful authority (Road Traffic Act 1988, Section 34). As such, event vehicles cannot drive along Public Bridleways or Public Footpaths unless permission has been given by the landowner(s).

Items such as checkpoints, first aid points, refreshments points and toilets cannot be erected on any Public Right of Way as this would constitute an illegal obstruction, nor can they be erected off a Public Right of Way without the landowner's permission.

Key considerations for organisers

Start planning early.

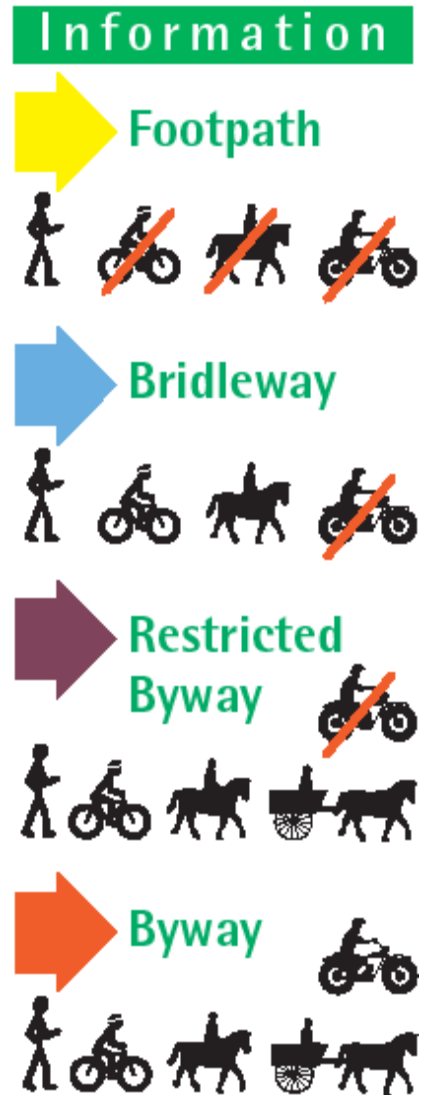
The Downs Link is owned by several landowners. Organisers should satisfy themselves as to the suitability of the route and should always consult with the owners of the land over which the Downs Link runs.

Some sections of the Downs Link use farm tracks. Farm machinery may be using the Downs Link and/or working in fields along its route.

Keep to appropriate participant numbers for the location.

Participants should give way, be courteous to and respect other users of the Downs Link.

Participants must be prepared to stop and/or slow down and do not have priority over other members of the public.



Cyclists should not expect other users to get out of their way but should slow down and ensure a safe passage past other users.

On occasions sections of the Downs Link may be closed. Wherever possible closures are listed on the WSCC Downs Link web pages although in some instances emergency closures may not be listed. Event organisers are advised to regularly check the WSCC web pages and have a contingency in place in the eventuality of a closure.

Carefully consider how participants will get to and from your event. Most of the car parks along the Downs Link are small with spaces for 5 - 10 vehicles only and may have height restrictions. Individual travel by car should be discouraged as should parking on grass verges.

Seek landowner permission for the putting up of signs and ensure they are all removed immediately after the event.

If you put up your own signs do so as close to the event as possible and include a contact telephone number. Ensure the signs do not flap as this might frighten horses and they may also blow away. Do not use paint, or nail or staple any signs to existing way markers or other infrastructure such as gates. Use ties or string instead.

Do not obscure existing waymarks, signs or notice boards.

Ensure all event signs, way markers, ties and string are removed immediately after the event.

Avoid large numbers of participants setting off at the same time e.g. arrange staggered starting times of small groups.

It is the responsibility of the event organisers to ensure all litter is removed from site.

Organisers should ensure that all participants are fully briefed before, at the start and throughout the event including the following:

- Ensure all participants are clear about the route of the event.
- The route crosses, and uses some sections of, roads and all participants should take necessary precautions.
- They are properly aware of the public's rights and responsibilities when using Public Rights of Way as set out in the [Countryside Code](#)
- Walkers and horse riders have priority. Cyclists must give way to them.
- Participants should not bunch up as this restricts the width of the path and may interfere with other lawful users of the Downs Link.
- Use bells or call out to warn people of your approach. Be mindful that some people are hard of hearing.
- Particular care and attention must be taken where horses may be present. Horses may be "spooked" by unexpected occurrences.
- Respect the needs of landowners and respect the privacy of residents.
- Farm machinery may be working on or adjacent to the route.
- Take all litter home.
- Use toilets and not fields, trees or bushes etc.

- Follow the WSCC Think, Share, Be Aware message –
 - Think of others
 - Share with others
 - Be Aware of others

Helping to Maintain the Downs Link

The Downs Link is maintained at public expense and by volunteers, for the public's use and enjoyment. This constant maintenance and improvement costs thousands of pounds each year. Each signpost costs £100 and track surfacing costs over £4000 per 100 metres. Events, especially large events can put extra strain on this already popular route, but you could help by donating money to help maintain and improve the route.

If participants pay an entry fee why not consider asking for a donation towards the maintenance of the Downs Link by adding a tick box to your application form and collecting additional money. All donations can be sent via bank transfer to WSCC's Countryside Services Team and ring-fenced for improvement works on the Downs Link, so every penny helps the route. Please contact countryside@westsussex.gov.uk.

After the event

To help us manage the route effectively it is important to know how many people use the Downs Link, so it is useful if you let WSCC know the number of participants that took part in your event. We would also welcome any other feedback about the Downs Link via countryside@westsussex.gov.uk.

WSCC Countryside Contact

countryside@westsussex.gov.uk

Telephone: 03302 225544

