

# FRA Guidelines for Race Organisers 2021

This document is intended to give guidance to Race Organisers on how to plan and run a successful and safe fell race but is not prescriptive. The guidelines are not necessarily relevant to all races, nor are they totally comprehensive. Further material is available on the FRA website and in the Race Organisers' Pack. The guidelines refer throughout to the 'Race Organiser', and this includes members of the event team working on behalf of the organiser.

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## 1. Duty of Care

The general principle behind these guidelines is that runners must take responsibility for their own safety on the hills and they will have confirmed this by signing the entry form. The entry form is thus a key document – making sure that runners have filled it in properly and then retaining the signed forms is important. However the organiser of an event such as a fell race has a ‘duty of care’ towards all involved, including competitors and event officials, auxiliary helpers such as first-aiders and members of the public who may be affected by the event. A duty of care is an obligation to adhere to a standard of reasonable care while taking any action that could foreseeably harm others.

Every race is different and has different requirements and challenges and it is not possible to be prescriptive about the details of all categories of event. The Race Organiser should thus consider all foreseeable areas of potential hazard and put in place reasonable precautions to reduce the risks (other than risks normally inherent to fell running) to an acceptable level.

Inherent risks in fell running are the risks associated with running in natural, often mountainous, terrain in all weathers, including slips, trips and falls causing injury and hypothermia causing physical and sometimes mental impairment. These risks are exacerbated by fatigue, dehydration, running out of energy and extended exposure times due to getting lost.

## 2. Pre-Race Planning

### *FRA Race licensing requirements*

Compliance with the “FRA Requirements for Race Organisers” and the “FRA Rules for Competition” is a pre-requisite for FRA race licensing, including insurance cover. The FRA Fixtures Secretary should be consulted well in advance of the event to arrange the licence.

### *Race Liaison Officers*

The FRA has a team of Race Liaison Officers (RLOs) who work alongside Race Organisers to provide advice and guidance and ensure compliance with the rules. If your race is allocated an RLO you are expected to give them full cooperation – the RLO is there to help the Race Organiser to provide a high-quality event. The RLO will contact the Race Organiser before the event to explain that the race will be visited, and to ask for any written material in advance. This could include event plans, marshal briefing, risk assessments, landowner permissions, any other documents which are to hand. The RLO will then attend the race and complete a check-list. Generally they will try to have a short pre-race meeting and then a follow-up session after the race, but these meetings will not be lengthy and will not add significantly to the work-load on the day. The RLO will try to follow up any issues at the event, but otherwise will be in touch with the Race Organiser later. The RLO then files the checklist with the RLO lead, and there may be a further follow up in the event issues have been identified. The RLO procedure and check-list are available from the FRA on request.

### *Event Planning*

Plan your event in advance and write the plan down. The plan should include:

- An assessment of the major risks to runners, marshals and members of the public giving details of how you will mitigate these risks.

- Consideration of the environmental impact of your event, including maximum number of runners, parking and avoiding possible clashes with other events in the same area.
- Identification of the tasks involved in organising your event and allocation of them to you and your helpers.

The more complex the event, the more complex will be the plan. The plan can be used to help with communication to your helpers and when reviewing how the event has gone. Landowners and Local Authorities will normally ask for a written plan if asked to give permission for an event. Templates and examples of existing plans are available from the FRA website.

### First Aid

Decide what first aid and emergency medical provision you should provide at your races. Whilst some races may justify having mountain rescue or uniformed first aid support present this will not be necessary in all cases. However, as part of your event planning you may want to ensure that you have first aid kits available at the start/finish and out on the course and marshals confident in using them. This could mean, for example putting on basic first aid or CPR training, or selecting marshals with a 'Wilderness First Aid' qualification.

### *Pre-race publicity*

The FRA Handbook and website are the main channels of publicity available to all FRA Race Organisers. You can also consider flyers for local notice boards, notification of local fell running clubs, the FRA forum and other channels such as social media. Many on-line race entry systems (including SiEntries) will allow Race Organisers to email all entrants shortly before the event.

It is particularly important to ensure that the main race categories of length (L, M, S) and severity of climb (A, B, C) are correctly stated, in order that runners get the best possible information to enable them to decide whether they are fit enough to take part.

Pre-race publicity should also include the information the runner will need in order to take part in the race, including:-

- The location and timing of registration
- Location and cost of parking, or advice as to where to park without causing obstruction or giving offence to neighbours. Give a post-code if possible, or if the post-code covers a large area give directions for drivers. If parking will be tight, ask runners to car-share.
- If you need to restrict runners' access to the race route before the event make this clear, and indicate which bits of the route can be recce-ed.
- Include a map if possible, or at least a list of checkpoints with grid references, along with any other critical information (such as out-of-bounds areas or mandatory sections).

### *Course design*

The course is the single most important factor for most runners – a good course makes a good race. Decisions which will need to be addressed include:

- Length, climb and general terrain
- The number of runners which can be managed

- Whether certain sections need to be flagged or designated 'out of bounds', to restrict runners to certain locations (either because of access limitations or to avoid particular terrain).
- Environmental considerations
  - Path protection: The most vulnerable areas are slopes of more than 30%, very wet slopes, bare earth or peat slopes and scree slopes. The vulnerability of soils and vegetation increases and the likelihood of re-growth decreases with increasing altitude. Most race-related erosion is caused by descending runners.
  - Use existing paths: If there is a path in existence use it, following it as closely as possible and adhering to any erosion control instructions. Avoid creating new paths.
  - Pay attention to steep slopes: Avoid steep, bare slopes, very wet slopes and scree runs, particularly if alternative routes exist and especially on descent routes.
  - Resting the route: In areas suffering badly, consider resting the hill for the next few years until the ground has recovered.
  - Consider ground conditions: In very sensitive areas consider alternative areas when thawing snow, heavy frost or excessive rain have softened the ground to a considerable depth.
  - Boundary protection: Limit wall and fence crossing to specific locations e.g. particular stiles or gates and ensure that this is enforced.
- Environmental considerations, and/or landowner permissions, may require that you request runners not to practise on the course beforehand.
- Start Location: If possible, locate starts on areas of road or track, which can bear the pressure of many runners milling around. Allow adequate distance for runners to spread out before reaching any narrow footpaths, gates or stiles.
- Particular features or hazards which need to be pointed out to runners, including very steep ground and large or swollen becks.
- The location of check-points and marshals either to designate the full course (prevent runners short-cutting) or to monitor the race. Take into account the availability of radio and/or mobile phone connectivity.
- Important check-points or features such as tag-drops may need to be flagged even in the middle of a race, to ensure that runners approach the check point from the right direction.
- Does the race need to be designated 'ER' (experience required), or 'NS' (navigational skills required) or 'LK' (local knowledge an advantage)?
- Road sections and road crossings may be unavoidable, but the course design should minimise these. Road sections and crossings should normally be marshalled to assist runners and the extent of marshalling should be thought out in relation to the expected traffic density. You should consider consulting the police and/or local authority about this.
- An alternative 'bad weather route' should be planned, so that it is available to be deployed at the last minute if necessary. The alternative route may be needed for runner safety (for example to avoid crossing swollen streams), or for the safety and well-being of marshals (for example to avoid locating them on exposed summits if lightning is forecast).

- Will you impose cut-off times at one or more check points? These can help to reduce the exposure of both runners and marshals to bad weather. If there is a cut-off time, how will slower runners return to the race finish?
- Consider if you might need radios, which are available to borrow from the FRA Equipment Officer. The FRA also has other equipment for loan, including tents and rubber mats for entry to race fields.
- Overlap of outgoing and returning runners should be minimised, especially if it may take place on a narrow track or restricted area.
- Access to the route for marshals, first-aiders and emergency vehicles should be identified in advance. Consider how injured runners could be repatriated from each marshal point.
- It is important to allocate enough space and to provide adequate facilities and time for proper management of registration, as this is key to tracking competitors. Start and finish areas also need to accommodate sponsors' tents and vehicles and possibly a First Aid provider.
- The provision of adequate toilet facilities either in a race HQ or using portaloos. Toilets/portaloos must be available for any runners under the age of 18. Provision of adequate toilet facilities is important in ensuring that runners enjoy the race.
- Car parking is an important aspect and car parks should be large enough, clearly indicated and marshalled if necessary. Marshals in car parks should be adults and be briefed on avoiding personal injury, for example by standing in locations where collision with a vehicle is unlikely. If possible arrange assistance in advance if there is a danger that cars will become bogged-down.

### *Maps*

- Maps may be provided whilst adhering to copyright restrictions. Routes are normally defined by checkpoints, but the recommended line of a route (including GPX traces) may be used if desired on a printed map. Normally this would only be done to indicate flagged sections of the course. GPX traces should not be published.
- For 'on-sight' navigation events or legs, maps should follow standard marking conventions, and should include checkpoints, out-of-bounds areas, and any unusual obstacles or hazards and necessary explanatory details. Take special care to ensure that controls are placed precisely where indicated on the map

### *Entry Requirements and the Entry Form*

- Standard entry forms for senior and junior events are available on the FRA website and collect the minimum required information. Race Organisers are encouraged to take these basic forms and tailor them to their event in order to provide additional information if necessary.
- From 2020 the FRA is introducing two forms, for FRA members and non-members. The intention is to ensure that non-members have additional information around the 'Runners' Rules' and simple safety precautions which, as non-members, they may not have access to.
- The Race Organiser is fully entitled to impose entry qualifications (for example based on prior experience) on runners and relay teams. These should be spelled out in the event information and perhaps on the entry form.

- Kit requirements should be stated in advance. For all AM/AL/BL races the FRA Mandatory Minimum Kit is a requirement, while for shorter races judgement may be exercised. Race Organisers are free to increase the kit requirements, for example to include foil blankets, survival bags or head torches, or to specify the amount of emergency food to be carried.
- All FRA races strictly prohibit the use of electronic devices using aids such as GPS (including GLONASS etc) for navigation. Navigation in this context means to display routes with current location (including a 'breadcrumb trail'), function as a compass, or give a point location (grid reference) which can be used to locate the runner on a map. This includes watches, handheld devices and mobile phones, as well as future technologies such as visors or earpieces. Runners may not use such devices to delineate or follow a route (including the use of arrows or audio signals to warn of being "off track"), to display current position on a map, to display or follow a compass bearing or to reposition or otherwise navigate in any way. The use of such a device to display distance travelled, time, speed or altitude is allowed, as is recording of an actual route for post-race analysis.  
A runner may carry such a device for use in an emergency situation, but if used – even momentarily for repositioning – then the runner must retire from the race and declare himself/herself non-competitive to the race organiser.  
Race organisers, especially of mountain navigation events, may require that competitors surrender devices capable of providing navigational assistance (including mobile phones), or have such devices placed in sealed bags by the organiser for verification at the race finish, end of stage or overnight camp.
- Entry fees should be the same for all entrants in each category (senior, junior etc). The FRA does not currently apply a levy to unattached fell runners, but different standard entry forms are available for non-members of the FRA. Pre-entry and entry on the day may be charged at different rates. A small variation to allow for the different costs of on-line or credit card administration is permissible
- If the race will be recorded on video or photographed by the Race Organisation, then competitors (parents or legal guardians in the case of junior races) should be informed. This can be done by including the following sentence in the 'disclaimer' on the entry form: "I accept that the Race Organiser may use photographic or video equipment for the purpose of monitoring the race".
- It is not necessary to ask permission from competitors for professional and semi-professional photographers to record the race, though it would be courteous to make this known at race registration if the photographer has been specifically invited. If a competitor or parent objects they should be referred to the photographer.
- The EU General Data Protection Regulations (replacing the Data Protection Act) apply to personal information (including the entry forms and any videos or photographs) collected and retained for the event. Information entered on the entry form is 'personal information' and is provided to the Race Organiser by consent for use in the race administration. Runners should have positively agreed for their information to be used, and should know what it will be used for. Specifically:-
  - The normal uses of entry form data are to publish pre-entry lists, to contact runners prior to the event (for example to give information about changes to the event), and

to publish the race results including name, race category, race number, finishing position, and finishing time.

- The Race Organiser may also want to contact a runner after the event to progress issues, complaints or disputes (or perhaps just to hand over a prize or return lost property). This is a valid use of entry information.
- Entry form information may also be used to follow up incidents, including complaints and possible disciplinary action. In these cases the information may be shared with UK Athletics (for the incident management process), and with other sporting bodies including the Welsh FRA and Scottish Hill Runners, who may wish to apply their own disciplinary sanctions if an offending runner applies to enter one of their races.
- Pre-entry lists may be sensitive because they give information about the future whereabouts of an individual, however the template FRA entry form includes a statement of consent for pre-entry lists (which are normal practice for many events).
- Publishing race numbers in the results tables is also sensitive, because they permit an individual to be linked to a photograph. The template FRA entry form includes race numbers in the statement of consent.
- If the Race Organiser intends to use the entry data for other purposes (for example to give or sell to third parties including sponsors or to send details of future races) this should be made clear on the entry form so that the runner clearly agrees to this use of their personal information. The template FRA entry form does not include these uses of the entry information.
- Race Organisers may keep entry forms until all results are agreed and all possible consequences of the event can be assumed to have come to their attention. Three years is a reasonable compromise between the need to have full records of the race and the obligation to manage competitors' information. Aggregate information (numbers of runners in each category, record times etc) can be kept indefinitely provided they do not identify an individual.

### *Access, environment and permissions*

The FRA Access Officer can give specific help and advice on request. There are now general agreements between the FRA and National Trust, United Utilities and Natural England, and more may be added in future. These landowners in particular have well-defined application procedures, which must be followed, and considerable lead time may be needed. Consult the Access Officer as early as possible.

- Fell races can cause damage and disturbance on the ground and we should minimise the impact of a race and try whenever possible to leave the area without a trace of our passing.
- If significant parts of the route are on roads, or major roads are crossed, the police and/or the Local Authority Safety Advisory Group (SAG), if it exists, should be consulted. SAGs, or equivalent bodies in some areas, provide independent advice, but the responsibility for the safety of the event still rests with the Race Organiser. Many Local Authorities have a 'single point of contact' process which forwards race plans to the relevant public services, including emergency services. This will be available via the event management pages of the Local Authority website.

- A key part of good event planning is consultation with landowners, other interested agencies and farmers:-
  - Establish who owns the land and contact the owners in good time to obtain their permission. The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act (2000) indicates that this should be in writing. The Act restricts access for organised events. The restrictions are not a 'rule' but suggestions of ways in which races can be planned and organised to minimise the effect of the event on the environment.
  - In practice it can be very difficult to identify, and then contact, land owners and managers. The Land Registry, or other local landowners, may be able to assist. Be prepared to use email, personal visits and letters, but don't rely on a written reply. Log all contacts or attempted contacts for reference. A letter is useful with the key individuals, as they may not remember dates and times from a conversation 'over the farm gate'.
  - Make sure that the owner fully understands your proposals and that the costs of any damage may be reimbursed.
  - Consult whoever manages the land on a day to day basis, even if the course is on public footpaths or open access land. They may have livestock on part of the course and can also help by opening gates etc. It is useful to have made contact and at least informed them of the event in case of any problems arising during the event.
  - Natural England will be able to provide land ownership details of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Nature Reserves.
  - National Parks are managed by a Park Authority who can advise on other restrictions or considerations.
- Check the route before and after the event to record any damage, possibly using photographs or video of sensitive areas.
- It is also courteous to contact owners and tenants after the event has taken place, to thank them for their cooperation and check if there are any follow-up actions.
- The use of drones requires a Civil Aviation Authority license, and Race Organisers should ensure that any drone operator complies with this requirement. Landowner permission should also be sought (the National Trust, for example, insist that this is done).

#### *Sensitive Issues – wild-life, crops and animals*

- Wildlife habitats: Certain types of habitat may be particularly vulnerable to damage, e.g. summit plateaux, scree and rock gullies which support fragile fern, moss and lichen communities. Crags and rocky outcrops may have important nesting sites for birds of prey and others such as the Ring Ouzel. Much of our moorland is of international importance for its unique bird population and these birds and their nests are easily disturbed, resulting in increased mortality.
- Meadows are easily trampled, affecting wildlife and reducing hay crops for the farmer.
- Avoid planning races during the bird breeding season, mid-March to the end of June, or stay on well-used existing routes. Grouse moors should be avoided prior to a shoot, as jobs may be at risk if the area is disturbed and the birds dispersed. Consult relevant estates in advance

for dates. Mark and marshal any known vulnerable sites that must be avoided. In some cases it may be necessary to ban recce-ing before the event if the route passes over sensitive areas.

- Farm livestock: Consult early with landowners and tenant farmers regarding sensitive stock, stock movements and if necessary, request temporary stock protection from the route or removal especially near the start and finish areas. Care should be taken where there are cattle on the planned route as there have been problems with cattle stampeding, particularly during thunderstorms.

In case of any concerns the relevant fields can be specifically marshalled, and marshals at these points advised how to keep themselves safe while warning runners of a hazard. They should be prepared to stop the race, or insist that competitors walk through the unsafe area, if they feel it to be necessary. Some external guidance is available to assist, for example the 'Ramblers Association 'dos and don'ts' ([www.ramblers.org.uk/advice/safety/walking-near-livestock.aspx](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/advice/safety/walking-near-livestock.aspx))

- Dogs should not be permitted in a race; they pose a threat to wildlife, livestock and fellow competitors. The CroW Act does not permit dogs in access areas, except on a lead on an existing right of way.

### *Check-points and marshals*

Check points are points that define the course. Most checkpoints will have one or more marshals but need not be manned if a 'self-clip' system or electronic dibber is used. The job of the marshals is a) to record which runners visit the check point, and b) to assist with monitoring the race (counting numbers of runners). Marshals are generally not in place to offer assistance or help with route finding to runners and this may be incompatible with doing a good job of monitoring the race. However marshals will of course assist in cases of real emergency, such as a severely distressed or injured runner.

Areas to be addressed include:

- Choice of marshals: Ideally marshals should be experienced fell walkers or runners familiar with the terrain, and able to find the correct location and keep themselves safe while there. They should possess a range of skills to enable them to carry out their duties, including monitoring runners, communicating with race control using available equipment and handling both runners and public in an effective manner. First Aid skills are desirable.
- How to brief marshals, so that they know where they are located and the processes they will be expected to carry out. It is critically important that marshals go to the correct location, and the marshal briefing provides an opportunity to double-check that they can find their marshal point. Typically, they will need to know opening and closing times for their post, cut off times if applicable and when they can leave their post even if the number of runners checked through has not reached the expected level. Marshals should be provided with a printed sheet of instructions, including the grid reference of their location in case they need to call for assistance and contact details of neighbouring checkpoints. Verbal briefings should also be given if possible to answer any questions the marshals may have.
- The activities the marshals should undertake and whether they need to record race numbers only, or also times, and how they will do this. Waterproof wet weather writing boards are invaluable.

- The number of marshals required at each location. Allow additional marshals to answer queries or to help runners at remote locations, so that the process of recording race numbers does not get interrupted. At busy checkpoints an additional marshal may be required to handle communications.
- The equipment to be carried by the marshals a) for their own comfort and safety, b) for their job in monitoring runners and c) to offer assistance on the hill.
- Communications between marshals and race headquarters is highly desirable. Communication using radio/mobile phones is optimum if possible, but verbal communications using messengers may be needed. Third party organisations such as Raynet can help with radio communications. It is recommended that the communication plan is tested in advance of the race. The higher the risk to participants in the race, because of terrain, weather conditions, length of the race etc., the greater the need for an effective means of communication, and this should be taken into account when making preparations for the race.
- The Race Organiser will normally want to have a radio to keep in touch with the race. Consider also having a dedicated radio operator in race HQ. The radio operator can keep a systematic log of, for example, runners missing or retired, numbers of runners through checkpoints, issues with connectivity with remote marshal points. This frees up the Race Organiser to manage any developing situations.
- Whether to use sweepers, who can be valuable to help monitoring the race and to communicate with marshal posts.
- How to be confident that marshals are in place at the required time.
- Standard emergency action to be taken by the marshals, for example calling emergency services for immobile casualties or helping an injured runner off the course to a place of rescue.

#### *Additional resources*

The Race Organiser may call on a range of additional resources as required, for example

- First Aid help, either from the two major First Aid organisations, or other organisations or individuals with the necessary skills. First Aid provision in the form both of kit and a designated person, available at both start and finish of the race, is highly desirable.
- Mountain Rescue organisations can be asked to provide emergency assistance on the course. If not involved it may still be useful to inform them that the event is taking place.

#### *Emergency planning*

Consideration should be given as to how to cope with a range of emergency situations, for example:

- A runner failing to report to the finish, requiring the initiation of a search.
- A medical emergency either on the hill or at Race HQ. Some events now use race numbers which have a section on the back where runners can include contact details and also record any pre-existing medical conditions. Runners cannot be relied on to complete this information, but it may be valuable for people with known medical conditions.
- How injured runners can safely be removed from the course.

## *Team Briefing*

All marshals, helpers and organisations providing assistance at the event should be briefed, so that they know their own roles and what to do in the event of unexpected or emergency situations. Communication and clear responsibilities are key to the smooth running of the event. Written instructions for marshals may help avoid confusion.

### **3. Juniors**

For junior competitors, inexperience, and their greater vulnerability to bad weather, may require the Race Organiser to take additional steps to minimise risks during the event. The steps required may also depend on the age category of the junior competitors in question. This may involve taking decisions on behalf of the runners which would normally be taken by adult runners.

Consideration should be given to the following:-

- The distance limits, based on age, as documented in the 'FRA – Rules for Competition', should be observed.
- The Junior Championship series of races defines junior age categories in terms of 'age at 31<sup>st</sup> December in the year of competition'. This ensures that individuals do not change age category during the competition year. For club competitions or race series, the club or Race Organiser is free to use 'age on day of race' (or any other date) in the entry criteria if they choose, provided that runners are not entered in a longer race than is allowed by the 'FRA-Rules for Competition'.
- The terrain should not be too severe, avoiding boulder fields, crags, or excessively steep slopes.
- The course should be marked.
- If Junior races are held in conjunction with Senior races the start times should be calculated so that competitors do not mix in a dangerous way on sections of the course.
- The Race Organiser should set kit requirements for junior runners on the basis that juniors may be more vulnerable to hypothermia than adults.
- The Race Organiser should consider how junior runners will meet up with their accompanying adult after the event.
- Road crossings in junior races must be very closely marshalled.

### **4. On the day**

#### *On-the-day decisions*

- Review of weather conditions and last-minute decisions on kit requirements and possible route changes. It may be useful to retain a copy of a local weather forecast for the record to back up any decisions. Race Organisers should take very seriously weather forecasts that indicate the possibility of lightning and consider whether the race should be cancelled or moved to a safer lower-level route. The major risk from lightning is probably to marshals located on summits, though, of course, runners are also vulnerable.
- Race organisation is important and the Race Organiser should ensure that he/she has enough time to take control of any unexpected situations and is not tied to a routine activity. Ideally a race HQ will be away from all start and finish activity to enable decisions to be made in an

unhurried way. Race Organisers of larger events may wish to appoint deputies to manage specific routine activities, allowing the Organiser to handle exceptions.

- Cold wet weather increases the risk of hypothermia in runners and very hot conditions will increase the risk of over-heating (heat stroke). The pre-race information and briefing should include advice on the precautions which should be taken. In very hot conditions the Race Organiser may insist that runners carry a minimum volume of liquid and runners can be advised of the availability of natural water along the course.

### *Event registration*

To handle registration and preparation of the runners for the event, consider the following:

- Pre-entry may cut down the time spent on each runner at registration. Entry details may have been gathered on paper or using an on-line system. These are vital documents to link with any system of counting runners and to provide a record of car registration numbers, emergency contacts etc. that may be needed later.
- There are several options for managing race numbers. Normal good practice is to use consecutive vest numbers starting at number 1, or 101, or 201 etc., but more than one registration desk may be required for large events, which makes this difficult. Junior races can use different number sets for each age group, to assist the identification of runners. Obviously the processes and the man-power required will vary depending on the results system in use, whether it be the 'sticky label' system or a more automated chip/dibber approach. The key requirement is to know which runners register and are accepted into the race, their entry details and vest number.
- Race information additional to the mandatory list which might be displayed at registration, for example:
  - course description, including any unusual obstacles
  - any route changes from previous years (including the bad-weather route if there is a possibility it will be required)
  - emergency assistance or first-aid points, safe routes back to the finish for runners who abandon the race including safe compass bearings.
  - contact phone number to enable runners to contact race HQ
  - location of refreshments
  - location of toilets
  - directions to the start and finish
  - the absolute necessity of runners reporting to the race finish, even if they retire from the race.
- Runners may arrive at race registration without the required kit, and it may be helpful for Race Organisers to have some items available for purchase, for example race maps and food.
- Kit checking can be carried out according to the weather conditions and severity of the course. A common practice for the most demanding races is to require kit to be checked prior to registration and issuing the race number, to make the processes and flow of runners more efficient. Kit checks at the entrance to the start field are another way of knowing that those starting have the kit they need. Checks may be made of all runners, or of a selection of

runners. Final control can be carried out if needed by checking the kit carried by runners at the finish.

- Verbal race briefings can be useful, provided that runners can be assembled into a small area so that the speaker can be heard by all.
- For 'on the day entry' races there is a risk that too many runners will turn up. While accepting that anyone has the right to run on open ground they should be discouraged as strongly as possible from following the race un-registered, which can confuse checkpoint and finish recording and may pose a significant risk to race management. If possible advise them of an alternative area to run avoiding overlap with the race.

### *Monitoring the race*

It is critical that a robust system for accounting for individual race starters and finishers, with a backup check system to resolve any accounting issues on the day, is used. It is not sufficient to know how many runners have started and finished – it is essential to know who has started and who has finished. This is a key condition of the 'FRA - Requirements for Race Organisers'.

Information about the progress of the race will be valuable to enable the Race Organiser to make decisions during the event and manage any non-routine situations. Points to consider include:

- How to count the number of starters. For small races the number of entry forms collected and the number of vest numbers issued will be adequate. Larger and more complex races may consider having an additional head count at the start. Options include shepherding all the runners into a pen prior to the start, or having an early checkpoint where runners can be counted (perhaps using a tag-drop).
- Accurate counting of runners at checkpoints relies on marshals being able to identify competitors, normally by actually seeing a vest number. If the runner covers the number (for example in bad weather) they should be asked to expose their number briefly, perhaps by opening a cagoule. Having the runners shout out their number is prone to errors.
- At busy checkpoints a mini-funnel arrangement may assist the flow of runners (who may appear from any direction) and help to ensure accurate individual number identification.
- There are several technical options for accounting for each runner as they pass through each checkpoint and finally at the finish, ranging from simple systems using numbered wrist bands or tags to more sophisticated electronic dibbers/chips. A simple tag-drop system at each key checkpoint and at the finish is a fail-safe method of tracking runners around the course.
- Normal practice is to have two marshals at a check-point, one calling out competitor vest numbers and the other writing them down. At busy races and the early check-points multiple pairs may be required, plus backup marshals for other activities.
- Communication between marshal points and race HQ is valuable in that it enables an accurate runner count to be made known to the marshals. A similar job can be handled by a sweeper.
- The design of the finish funnel is important to ensure that all finishers can be recorded, and to prevent runners who have already finished either getting in the way or coming back through the funnel a second time. Normal practice is to have two pairs of officials at the finish, with one pair recording finishing times and the second pair recording running numbers. Electronic

systems simplify this, but a manual backup is a sensible precaution in case of equipment failure.

*How to arrange two independent systems for counting race starters and finishers.*

The 'FRA - Requirements for Race Organisers' requires the Race Organiser to be able to account for every runner individually, and to have a back-up system in place to ensure this is done without error. The key objective should be to employ a robust system to account for each runner, but also to have a secondary back-up system in case of uncertainty, to support a decision on whether to implement an emergency plan.

- The simplest system is
  - to collect paper entry forms and to keep careful count of the number of vest numbers issued (made simpler if the numbers used are in consecutive numerical order starting with 1). A secondary pre-start count of runners can then be used to verify the number of starters.
  - to employ one pair of finish funnel officials recording the vest numbers of finishers and another pair noting the total number of runners finishing. A fail-safe secondary method of accounting for runners at the finish is to take vest numbers from each runner as they finish and to store them in finishing order.
- An additional check is to use a 'matrix' system, with an official marking-off runners on a sheet of numbers. This can be used at the finish, or at check-points as an additional confirmation of numbers. An alternative is to use the 'five-bar gate' recording (4 vertical strokes and one diagonal indicating 5). This only records the number of runners seen, but is much quicker than the matrix system at busy checkpoints. Manual 'clickers' can also be used.
- Electronic systems have the advantage that they require little manpower, but some kind of manual fall-back should be available in case of failure.
- A tally-drop (e.g. using numbered plastic tags) at each checkpoint and at the finish gives a physical record of runners' progress around the course.
- A continuously running video record of the finish funnels can be useful, for example to establish finishing order in the case of a dispute. The output may only be available after the event.
- If a runner cannot be accounted for it may be possible to search for his/her car in the event car-park. If the car can be found it establishes that the runner has not gone home.

*At the finish*

- Normal practice is to provide water at the finish. It is valuable also to have some first aid provision and someone available to help runners in distress, for whatever reason.
- The Race Organiser and their team can move from operational race management to close-down activities when all competitors have been accounted for.

## **5. After the finish**

There are a number of activities to accomplish after all runners have been accounted for:

- Hold the prize-giving as soon as possible, as no-one likes hanging around for presentations.

- Marshals may need to be redeployed, for example to help with traffic management out of a car park, or to help with runners in difficulties.
- First Aid organisations will always compile their own log sheets of any treatment given, and the Race Organiser should get a copy of these, on the day if possible.
- Any significant incidents should be reported (using the 'FRA Race Organisers Incident Report Form'). If a runner is advised to get hospital treatment an FRA incident report is mandatory. Less serious medical incidents, and all other incidents (for example complaints about the behaviour of runners, issues with members of the public), 'near misses', and learning points in general, should also be reported on the same form, to provide useful information of value in future events.
- It is generally not possible to debrief marshals on the day, as they tend to finish their duties at different times and the Race Organiser may well be busy around the finish time. A useful approach is to send out requests for feedback with the thank-you e-mails.
- Try to get feedback from everyone else involved with race organisation, to enable snags and problems to be better handled in future years. Competitors will comment freely on forum sites or to race websites and provide useful feedback. It will be useful to log your information for future use.
- Posting the results and giving links to any photographs, is eagerly awaited by competitors and should be done as soon as possible. This really helps to promote the event as a high-quality race.
- It is good practice to get in touch with anyone affected by the race, notably to thank landowners who have given permission, or local residents who may have been inconvenienced by road closures or car parking. This helps to get the event approved for next year.
- If a Race Liaison Officer has been appointed for the race the Race Organiser should review how the event went with them, and discuss any changes or improvements which would benefit next year's race.

## 6. Race Organiser resources

There are a number of additional resources for Race Organisers.

If you need help in organising your race you are encouraged to ask the FRA for advice, or to put you in touch with another more experienced race organiser to help you. The FRA also has a number of Race Liaison Officers who can offer guidance.

The authoritative guidance document, including legal requirements, but also giving a wide range of advice on event organisation, is the Home Office "Good Practice Safety Guide for small and sporting events" (the Red Guide). This publication is currently withdrawn pending revision, but a copy of the previous document can be obtained from the FRA.

Another very comprehensive source of advice is the RunBritain "Race Directors' Handbook", which is aimed at road and trail events, but also has a lot that is relevant to fell running. This can be obtained from the UKA 'runbritain' website (<http://www.runbritain.com/race-directors-club>) or from the FRA. Registration is required in order to access the runbritain material.

The UKA advice on cross-country event organisation also has much of relevance to fell race organisation and can be found at [www.uka.org.uk/competitions/useful-documents](http://www.uka.org.uk/competitions/useful-documents).