

Title: How to organise a walks festival

Reference: LED006



Introduction

Organising a festival requires substantial planning and preparation; however the experience can be a highly rewarding one and well worth the investment of time and effort. Here are a few points to consider:

Administration

- Do you have sufficient numbers within your Group to organise a festival? Due to the inevitable time commitment involved, it's best to have a dedicated team of people who will not be needed elsewhere to coordinate the event.
- Do you have walk leaders available to run walks, or could you use your Group's existing walks and package these up into a short festival.

Structure of Festival:

- Weekends tend to be most popular, although weekdays may also appeal to those who have commitments on Saturdays and Sundays.
- Walks should be accessible by public transport if possible - if not, will the festival promote a car-sharing scheme?
- It will be important to offer a good variety of walks (starting both am and pm) and led by welcoming, friendly and experienced leaders.

Health & safety, risk assessment and insurance:

- You should treat festival walks as you would any other Ramblers walk and recce them where possible, be aware of potential hazards, etc. refer to the pages on leading a walk on the Walks Leader resources page.
- If the festival is your own and all the walks are under your Group's control, or if you are doing Ramblers walks as part of someone else's festival and agreed by your Group committee, then you are covered by Ramblers insurance. However, if you have been asked to lead walks on behalf of another organisation for their festival and they are not part of your programme, then it should be clear that the other organisation is responsible for the insurance cover.

Publicity before the festival:

- An interactive website is an important resource for listing walks information, or you could produce a programme and circulate it by e-mail to let people know what's on offer
- Is it possible to secure a local (or national) sponsor, to help cover the costs of publicity and even provide funds for advertising? The Isle of Wight organise a big walking festival every year and have succeeded in securing corporate sponsors
<http://www.isleofwightwalkingfestival.co.uk>

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- **It will be important to raise as much publicity for the event as possible, to include:**
 - o Sending out local press releases, distributing leaflets (preferable by e-mail, to keep costs low) and posters in public places/ via local employers, linking with partners to further promote the event, setting up reciprocal website links to relevant organisations.
 - o The Ramblers can help to publicise the event. Please send details which you would like displayed on the Ramblers website's events page to volsupport@ramblers.org.uk or to volunteer@ramblers.org.uk and we can upload your information and tag your festival walks on WalksFinder for you or else you can do this yourself if your Group uploads to WalksFinder.
 - o Central office can provide suggestions about publicity awareness to help to raise awareness of the Ramblers work and encourage new members to join us. For further details, please contact volsupport@ramblers.org.uk.

On the walks:

- o Walk Leaders are advised to spend a few minutes at the start of each walk welcoming newcomers and explaining the route. This is a great time to quickly outline the work of the Ramblers and provide details of how to join. This can be just a few words; it will also help to make newcomers feel welcome.
- o It is also a good idea at this point to collect email addresses or contact details for anyone who is not already a member, so that they can be invited to later events or contacted about membership in the future.

Planning next year:

- Will the event run again next year - if so, collecting people's information will allow you to inform them about the event the following year.
- Finally, try to get as much feedback as possible (both from leaders and attendees) which will help you to improve things for next time.

If you have any queries, please contact: volsupport@ramblers.org.uk or ledwalks@ramblers.org.uk

