



RACE WALKING ASSOCIATION
FOUNDED 1907

(www.RaceWalkingAssociation.com)

“The Road to Recovery”
Return to Competition – August 2020

***Requirements, Restrictions and
Guidance for the Staging of
Race Walking Events
in England***

Version 1.0 - 30th August 2020

Revision History

Ver	Date	Remarks
1.0	30-08-2020	First release.

Introduction

In line with the easing of Covid-19 restrictions by the UK Government, England Athletics are driving a phased return to competition in a “safe and secure” manner. Limited track and field events have resumed since the beginning of July and during August some road / multi-terrain running events have been staged in a limited form.

From 1st September 2020, non-track race walking events will be possible in mainland England. This document sets out the necessary requirements and restrictions that must be complied with in order to obtain a permit and stage race walking events from this time. This will apply to both track and road events, except where a track walk forms part of, or is held at the same time and place of, a track and field event in which case the walk must be covered by the track and field permit.

Geographic Scope

This document applies to all race walking events staged in England except for the Isle of Man and Guernsey.

The restrictions on race walking events on the Isle of Man and Guernsey were lifted in July after an extended Covid-free period on those islands in conjunction with tight travel restrictions to and from. The only restriction to these events is that the respective local regulations and guidance must be followed. This situation will continue for the foreseeable future provided that the islands maintain their Covid-free state and the requirements / restrictions in this document need not apply. Some of the guidance, however, may be of use or interest in complying with the respective local regulations.

Race walking events in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will be governed solely by the respective home nation bodies.

Basis of Content

The content herein is based on the requirements and guidance issued by the UK government at the time of writing. For our purposes, the main reference is their guidance for a phased return of sport and recreation which states:

People should continue to socially distance from those they do not live with wherever possible. Social interactions should be limited to a group of no more than two households (indoors and out) or up to 6 people from different households (if outdoors).

Businesses and venues following COVID-19 Secure guidelines can host larger groups. This is also the case for events in public outdoor spaces that are organised by businesses, charitable or political organisations, and public bodies, provided they take reasonable steps to mitigate the risk of transmission, in line with COVID-19 Secure guidance and including completion of a risk assessment. Any other gathering in an outdoor space must not be any larger than 30 people.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation/guidance-for-providers-of-outdoor-facilities-on-the-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation#introduction>

More general guidance is given in the staying safe and alert which states:

It is against the law for gatherings of more than 30 people to take place in private homes (including gardens and other outdoor spaces) or in a public outdoors space, unless planned by an organisation in compliance with COVID-19 Secure guidance. Businesses, and venues following COVID-19 Secure guidelines can host larger groups provided they comply with the law.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing-after-4-july>

The term “COVID-19 SECURE” is the key to facilitating a return of race walking in a “safe and secure” fashion. There is no hard and fast route to making the environment of an event Covid-19 secure. Each event is unique and will require its own assessment and action plan to achieve this.

The Legal Responsibility

From the above and further reading of these documents, it can be clearly seen that there is a legal responsibility for any event organiser to ensure the event is Covid-19 secure. This applies where the event will gather more than six people together (the six people will include competitors, officials, volunteers / helpers and spectators / supporters).

It is clear that a risk assessment and action plan must be produced and implemented to comply with the law. From 28th August, hefty fines can be imposed on the organisers of any illegal gatherings.

Event organisers are also open to civil proceedings against them should anyone come to any harm (Covid related or not) arising from the staging of an event. Obtaining a race licence (permit) and consequent UKA insurance cover for event will help protect you against liability claims.

Overview of Specific Application to Race Walking

Race walking events are generally very different from most running races and in many ways they will be easier to plan and organise but there are also some factors that being unique to race walking will require further consideration.

The size of the field in a walk will be typically only 20 to 30 and usually held on a lap of 1 to 2 kilometres so the field will have a low density of participants but, however, consideration of ‘lapping’ will be required.

The need for race-walk judges around the lap will require extra consideration for making a safe space for them to operate. Also, there needs to be a safe means to convey the ‘red cards’ to the chief judge / reorder. Conversely, the posting of judges provides a possible means for monitoring and ensuring the progress of the race is maintained in a safe fashion.

Procedure for Race Walk Permit Applications

Going forward, the procedure for applying for RWA permits will be largely the same as before the Covid outbreak but with the exception that it must be supported a full Risk Assessment (RA) and a Covid Action Plan (CAP).

As before, the permit application (with RA and CAP) should be submitted the RWA Honorary General Secretary. This can be done either electronically or by post but bear in mind that the approval process will take longer than before and could be rejected, either as an outright 'no' or as 'requiring further work'.

Initially the final review and approval will be conducted by UKA and their insurers. We cannot say how long that process will take as it will depend on the quantity of permit applications from all disciplines they are dealing with. It is likely that a 'small' race walk will be relatively simple and should be turned around within a week or so, but there is no guarantee.

In time, it is hoped that responsibility for small events will return to the RWA where certain requisite conditions are met.

Risk Assessment (RA)

It is expected, though not mandatory, that the risk assessment will follow the standard UK Athletics procedures and forms. There is online guidance available but it would be beneficial if the UKA risk assessment training has been undertaken.

The risk assessment should be full and cover all aspects of the event. It is particularly important to cover the risk of transmission of the Covid virus. This will be by both airborne droplets and by contact with contaminated surfaces. It should be shown how these hazards can manifest themselves at your event and state the measures that will be taken to minimise or mitigate the risk. These measures might well be a reference to specific items in the Covid Action Plan.

Covid Action Plan (CAP)

This is the key document that will demonstrate how the event will managed to make it Covid Secure. The measures identified will essentially determine if the event is permitted to go ahead.

The required size and complexity of this document will be determined largely by the size and complexity of the prospective event.

The CAP should have a version number and date for tracking in case it requires subsequent updates.

Having full permission and co-operation of landowners and venue / facility providers is essential to making the event Covid secure. To this end the CAP must list all permissions that have been granted including the name, contact details and dates for each.

It is not a statutory requirement to inform the local authority or local public health officer of the intention to stage an event but this is highly recommended as they do have the power to prohibit the event, even at the last minute. They may also be able to provide some positive suggestions or advice to help you organise it safely. Getting them on board early is more likely to obtain approval and less likely to result in a last minute cancellation of your event. Make note of any such contact in the CAP as it will add to the likely hood of it being approved a permit issued.

A named Covid Control Officer and a named Race Referee must be clearly shown at the top of the plan along with the name of the person producing the plan. The role of the Covid Control Officer is to implement the action plan during the preparation and staging of the event. The Race Referee is responsible for ensuring that all measures have been fully implemented and that no unexpected safety issues have arisen on the day. The Referee has the authority and responsibility for stopping the event taking place if he deems it unsafe to continue.

For smaller simple events, the above roles may well be undertaken by the same person but larger and/or more complicated events it would be expected that roles are filled by different suitably qualified individuals.

The CAP will most likely be supported by one or more maps or layout diagrams to illustrate the how the measures will be applied. Clear communication is paramount to successfully gaining approval of the plan.

The size and complexity of the course will determine the maximum number of competitors that can be reasonably accommodated in a safe manner. This maximum number should be carefully assessed and clearly stated in the CAP. Any areas of concern such as pinch points or tight corners etc. should ideally be identified on the map / layout with reference to specific measures to be implemented at these points.

A full list of officials (by role rather than name) should be included in the plan. Ideally, the officiating position(s) of each should be shown on the map / layout diagrams. Note any measures that may be required to provide a safe operating space for them to work in.

Descriptions in the CAP should be specific where possible. For example, rather than saying “overtaking wide” it should say “overtake with separation of 2 metres”.

One of the key principles identified by the government in running a Covid secure event is clear frequent communication to all involved. The CAP should identify what communication will be deployed leading up to and during the event (e.g. competitor code of conduct, facilities and provisions for supporters / spectators (e.g. parents, coaches etc.)).

Considerations and Suggestions

The following sections discuss possible considerations and suggest ideas that may help race organisers in the planning and help to achieve a successful Covid secure event.

Social Distancing

The accepted measure for controlling the risk of airborne transmission is social distancing. At the time of writing, the UK government guidelines are maintaining a distance of 2m or 1m plus other mitigation.

The CAP should identify where 2m cannot be realistically maintained and what mitigation will be implemented. Where 1m plus cannot be guaranteed, special measures must be implemented to minimize the risk of airborne transmission (e.g. avoid face to face positions and limit time of possible exposure). These measures must be clear and concise with a defined method to ensure that they are properly implemented.

Actual physical contact between members of different households must be avoided in all but unforeseeable emergency situations!

Hygiene

The accepted method for controlling the risk of transmission by surface contact is cleaning, sanitising and disinfecting.

The CAP should identify what hygiene provisions already exist at the venue (e.g. hand washing and sanitising points, cleaning and disinfecting procedures etc.) These will probably not be sufficient to provide reasonable protection for the event and so the CAP must clearly show what additional provisions are going to be made.

Wherever possible, no equipment or materials should be handled by more than one person before, during and after the event. Where it is not reasonably practical to implement this, the CAP should identify how such items will be sanitised / disinfected between contact by different people.

P.P.E.

Personal protective equipment may be used where necessary to supplement other distancing and hygiene measures to reduce residual risk of transmission. (P.P.E. should not be relied on as a sole measure of protection instead of good hygiene or distancing).

Where P.P.E. is to be used as part of the plan, the CAP should clearly show what is to be provided to whom and what instruction / communication will be implemented to ensure that it is correctly used at the right time.

Registration

“Track and Trace” is part of the government’s plan to control the spread of Covid-19. To assist with this, event organisers should maintain a register of everyone attending the event (athletes, officials, volunteers, supporters, parents, coaches etc.). The CAP should clearly show the method that this will be achieved.

Pre-registering is preferred to avoid social interaction on the day. One method to achieve this could be to use registration cards mailed out (electronically or by post) before the day and people can fill them out at home and drop them in a clearly signed receptacle as they reach the venue.

The registered details should be at least name and contact number as a minimum.

The registration list or cards should be securely kept for a minimum of 28 days after the event and then securely destroyed.

Entries & Pre-Race Information

The entry system should minimise the handling of materials, forms and money. Ideally an on-line entry and payment system should be used. Having assessed the capacity of the course in the RA and CAP, the number of entries must be limited accordingly.

Pre-race information identifying all measures and procedures to be implemented on the day should be communicated to all attendees (in whatever capacity) in advance of race day so that people know what to expect before they arrive. Ideally this information should be readily available before people enter the event or sign up to officiate or volunteer.

It is expected that the information should provide codes of conduct for all attendees, examples of these issued by UK Athletics are included as an appendix to this document. You may well need to add event specific points or additional codes.

Event organisers are not required to have evidence of pre-health screening but it is essential that pre-race information communicates this as a requirement for all attendees. Consider adding a declaration to the registration system to encourage people to just stop and think for a moment. An example of how this might look is included as an appendix in this document

Mailing out of race numbers is preferred to minimise social interaction at the venue. If this is not possible then the procedure and control measures should be clearly explained in the CAP and the pre-race information.

Remember, the government consider that effective communication is a key part of the 'stay alert' ethos. Everyone needs to know what to look out for and how to respond or behave.

Arrival & Moving Around the Venue

The pre-race information should, where possible, include arrival instructions. e.g. where to park, how to get from the car park, where to find facilities such as toilets (people may have travelled some distance to get there) etc.

Is there a need to for staggered arrivals to stop everybody arriving at the same time? If there are multiple races at the event, would it help to request people not to arrive until a certain period before their race?

The CAP should clearly show where facilities and points are as well as how people will move around. Consider the need for signage to tell people where you want them to be and how you want them to get there. Is there a need for a one-way system to operate in certain points to avoid congestion and / or face to face confrontation? Are there areas or points that necessitate the use of face coverings?

Changing Facilities

At the time of writing, the changing rooms in most facilities are still closed necessitating the need for competitors to come ready to race and be prepared accordingly.

Should facilities be available, the capacity and suitability should be assessed in conjunction with the facility provider. The cleaning and sanitising regime will be of paramount importance in assessing the suitability of their use.

Toilet Facilities

Toilet facilities may already exist at the venue but the cleaning and sanitising regime should be assessed to ensure that they satisfy the needs of the event. This will probably require information from the facility provider.

It may be necessary to provide extra cleaning or sanitising or provide additional facilities in the form of “Porta-loos”. Are the hand washing and sanitising provision also adequate?

In any case, the outcome of the assessment should be noted in the CAP to show it has been properly considered.

Warm Up / Down Area

Is a designated warm up and / or warm down zone appropriate to allow participants space to do so away from other people? The area(s) should be readily accessible from the start and finish.

Start Line

The start of the race is typically the most congested part of the race and requires special attention. It is highly unlikely that a single line of competitors spread 2m apart can be accommodated so extra measures will no doubt be required and a separate diagram in the CAP may be called for to illustrate how this is going to be controlled.

Starting competitors one at a time in a “time trial” fashion is an easy implementation but loses some of the feeling of a proper race. The gap between starts needs careful consideration as race walking courses are usually on a lap and the early starters will be coming around again before too long. Starting in waves will get more competitors on the course quicker but may require larger gaps to allow for distancing to occur between members of the wave.

Race walking events often use “yacht” handicaps where the slowest athletes start first but the aim here is for everyone to finish at roughly the same time. This could be a worse scenario as competitors will be tired, hot, sweaty and breathing very heavily at the finish.

In all cases of phased starts, there will need to be a carefully controlled holding pattern to ensure proper distancing of the competitors waiting to start.

Reducing the distancing between competitors at the start could be allowed with mitigation of face coverings or strict control to prevent competitors facing one another. For example, competitors must wear face covering and distance by 1m in the start area and for a set distance thereafter. A bio-safe method for the collection and disposal of face coverings will need to be implemented.

Another possibility is reducing the distancing but ensure all competitors face forward only until the race has started. This will require extra policing, possibly by having the referee closely observing the start procedure and disqualifying any competitor before the start who does not comply.

Race Progression

How will the risk of transmission be controlled once the race is underway? As competitors’ breathing becomes more forceful, so does the production of airborne droplets. The need for distancing becomes more important. The CAP needs to identify measures taken to minimise the risk of transmission.

Race walking by its very nature and ruling is a regulated discipline and athletes are accustomed to competing within the rules. This provides an opportunity to add extra rulings such as maintaining a gap of 2m to the person in front unless overtaking where a specified overtaking gap to the side must be maintained and only for a specified time limit (say at least 1 metre for 15 seconds or 2m for 30 seconds). Walking side by side should not be permitted.

It may be possible to utilise the judging infrastructure to police distancing measures. For instance, if a judge observes a distancing violation then he/she could proffer a warning to the culprit in a similar manner to the usual definition of race walking infringements. Repeat offenders could be reported to the referee who would have the power to disqualify the competitor and remove them from the results. Communicating such procedures to the athletes in advance is more likely to result in good distancing practice from the competitors.

Judging

A code of practice (COP) for race walk judges in a Covid secure manner is currently being developed and will be included in future versions of this document once published. This will probably provide useful guidance as well as laying down essential procedures. Once it is available, the CAP could reference this COP as an accepted standard to be followed.

Penalty Zone (pit lane)

Operation of a penalty zone requires additional officials and would need to be suitably sized and arranged to ensure proper distancing can be maintained. Race organisers should consider whether the use of a pit lane is really necessary for their event and if it is then full details should be included in the CAP.

Feeding Stations

Water stations provide a whole raft of problems to maintain a Covid secure environment and should probably be avoided unless necessitated by the distance of the race. Where a feeding station is to be used, the CAP should include sufficient detail to show how it can be done with minimum risk.

The distribution of water in cups would be very hazardous in terms of virus transmission. Consider encouraging, or even insisting, athletes bring their own drinks. Athletes should pick their own drink from a suitably large enough table, under no circumstances should a drink be handed to an athlete.

Sponging and misting provide a medium for easy transmission of a virus and should be avoided unless absolutely necessary in which case a very strict operating method would be required to minimise the risk of transmission.

Finish Line

The finish area is typically another point of congestion as athletes hang around to catch their breath and to cheer fellow competitors over the line. It is unlikely that there will be sufficient space for all the athletes to recover while maintaining distance and not infringing on the safe space of the officials.

Consideration should be given to providing a recovery area where athletes can quickly move to from the finish. This is also likely to draw personal supporters such as parent and friends away from the finish line as they go to congratulate the athletes etc. In this case the recovery area should be large enough and laid out to provide for this whilst allowing the necessary distancing.

After the Event

It is preferable for competitors to disperse and leave the venue as soon as possible after their event. Ant prizes or medals could be sent by post if necessary.

Post-race presentations should only occur if the participant numbers are low enough to permit it happen safely and must be carefully planned to ensure they go ahead within the capacity of the venue and with approval of the facility provider who should be able to advise the maximum capacity. A plan must be put in place to regulate the flow of attendees leaving the event afterwards.

Provision for Spectators

The likely attendance of supporters (family, friends, coaches etc.) will have already been assessed. The CAP should clearly show how these people can be safely accommodated around the course bearing in mind the tendency to want to watch the start, the finish and often a favourite point on the course.

Plans should be put in place to ensure that different households can be properly distanced and to manage any flow of people at different stages of the event. Is there a need for clearways / corridors for people to move and defined areas for standing to watch? Does there need to be signage or ground markings to assist?

Provision for the General Public

Race walking events sometimes take place in private or enclosed spaces such as cycle tracks where there is no access to the general public. If this is the case it should be clearly shown in the RA / CAP and stated that no further measures are required.

Where the event will or be likely to affect the public, measures must be put in place to protect them. This involve the provision of safe corridors, signage, controlled crossing points etc.

The CAP should clearly show the likely numbers and frequencies and indicate what measures will be deployed and how they will protect the general public.

In recent years, race walking events have often taken place on traffic free courses in public parks. These parks, however, often get very busy especially on nice weekend days when races tend to occur. At the time of writing therefor, it is felt highly unlikely that a permit would be issued for such events even if permission could be obtained from the park authorities.

Participant Code of Conduct

Please ensure that you read and observe this code of conduct to ensure a safe and enjoyable event for everyone.

- Do not travel to the event if you are showing any symptoms of covid-19 as outlined by the NHS
- Do your homework – make sure you are aware of and understand the pre-race briefing information offered by your event
- Come ready to run - minimise your interaction with race staff, volunteers and participants by being as self-sufficient as possible
- Come alone if you can
- Under no circumstances swap your number or give your place to another participant
- Be respectful to volunteers and participants
- Observe social distancing wherever possible
- Carefully consider your travel plans, avoiding public transport if at all possible
- Leave more time than you normally would to get to and from the event
- Be prepared to bring your own water and food and carry it with you during the race and please dispose of rubbish responsibly
- Be aware of your personal hygiene e.g. avoid spitting and nasal clearance
- Be mindful of your surroundings and impact on other participants, spectators, volunteers and the public. Don't run with or carry children in the race.
- Bring your own hand sanitizer
- If you experience COVID symptoms soon after the event, then please make this known through the government's Track & Trace system

Volunteer Code of Conduct

Please ensure that you read and observe this code of conduct to ensure a safe and enjoyable event for everyone.

- Attend a pre-event briefing (in person or virtually)
- Receive written instructions on their roles
- Do your homework – make sure you are aware of and understand the pre-race briefing information offered by your event
- Do not travel to the event if you are showing any symptoms of covid-19 as outlined by the NHS
- Leave more time than you normally would to get to and from the event
- Be prepared to bring your own water and food and carry it with you during the race and please dispose of rubbish responsibly
- Bring your own hand sanitizer
- Ensure you maintain Social Distancing
- Must wear PPE as supplied by the organiser (gloves, masks)
- If you touch an athlete re-sanitize or replace gloves
- If you remove your gloves, replace with new or sanitize your hands
- Avoid using public transport to the event where possible
- When shouting encouragement or instructions to athletes ensure you are wearing your face mask
- When collecting and returning Instructions, Hi Vis, Radios etc. please keep to social distancing if in a queue
- If you experience COVID symptoms soon after the event, then please make this known through the government's Track & Trace system

Spectator Code of Conduct

Please ensure that you read and observe this code of conduct to ensure a safe and enjoyable event for everyone.

- Consider whether it is necessary for you to attend as a spectator
- Do not travel to the event if you are showing any symptoms of covid-19 outlined by the NHS
- Do your homework – make sure you are aware of and understand the pre-race briefing information offered by the event
- Be self-sufficient – bring your own hand sanitizer and refreshments
- Avoid the most congested areas of the course including the start and finish and plan how you will get to your viewing position
- If you are travelling home with a participant, agree a designated meeting place after the race
- Avoid physical contact with participants, volunteers or spectators including high fives and hugs etc
- Wherever possible keep toilets clear for the use of participants and event staff and volunteers
- Be respectful to volunteers and participants
- Observe social distancing wherever possible
- Carefully consider your travel plans, avoiding public transport if at all possible
- Leave more time than you normally would to get to and from the event
- Be mindful of your surroundings and impact on other spectators, participants, volunteers and the public. Please dispose of any rubbish responsibly
- If you experience COVID symptoms soon after the event, then please make this known through the government's Track & Trace system



Covid Registration and Declaration Card

EVENT: **DATE:**

Every individual attending this event in whatever capacity must complete and sign this registration card before coming to the event and deposit it in the "Registration Card Box" at the entrance to the venue. The details are for use purely to assist the government's track and trace procedures if necessary. It will be kept safe and securely disposed of after 28 days if not needed by the track and trace or public health authorities.

NAME:

ADDRESS:

CONTACT TELEPHONE:

DECLARATION: I hereby declare that I have not had, or knowingly been exposed to, any Covid related symptoms in the last 14 days. Also, during that time, I have not been advised to self-isolate by track and trace or been in contact with anyone who has. I understand that the organisers of this event have done everything reasonably practicable to minimise the risk of transmission of the Covid virus but there is still a very small residual risk to myself by attending the event.

Signed:

Date: