

Appendix: a practical guide for event organisers returning to cross country following the COVID-19 restrictions during **phase 3** of the route map for exiting lockdown

This practical guide, prepared by our team in consultation with **sportscotland** and UK Athletics in line with government guidelines, outlines the specific measures **scottishathletics** recommends that event organisers take to ensure a safe return to cross country activity.



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Introduction

Current phase 3 guidelines mean that the traditional format of mass participation cross country is not feasible, and an alternative approach should be used. The following pages outline a method of cross country event delivery in line with government and sport guidance, which allows for cross country events to be staged safely in Scotland over the coming months. This guide aims to help clubs and other event organisers in Scotland to host their own cross country events safely this Winter.

1. Event Guidance

Overview

Before clubs or event organisers begin to consider hosting a cross country event, they must understand that, unlike track and field events held in stadiums where the management of the number of people, in particular athletes being allowed into the stadium (in compliance with National Guidelines) is easier to control and manage via a formal entry system, the management of athletes' numbers at cross country events is much more challenging.

When considering the actual area, e.g., public park where the cross country event is planned to be held, the actual size of the park has to be large enough to take account of anticipated athlete numbers, including parents, spouses etc which allow them to arrive, warm up* and cool down outside their allocated Competition Bubble, as until they actually enter their Competition Bubble, they are constrained by the National Guidelines of remaining 2m apart at all times. Please note that the same considerations must also be applied to Officials and event volunteers.

* This 'warm up' is separate from their warm up when in their allocated Competition Bubble.

This latter aspect is extremely important as clubs or event organisers do not want to be the cause of numbers of people congregating in a park and not complying with National Guidelines of remaining 2 metres apart at all times, (albeit not directly in control of these numbers), nevertheless the event that the club or event organisers are the reason they are there in the first place.

For clarity here:

- Athletes enter a Competition Bubble when they enter the designated Pre-Start Call Up, Warm Up and Competition area and leave it when they cross the finish line and enter the Cool Down Area.
- Athletes must not enter their Competition Bubble until their allocated time which means that they cannot walk or jog round the course beforehand.

Event Plan

The Event Plan should be designed to comply with the National Guidelines that permit bubbles of up to 30 athletes and a maximum event-attendance of 200 athletes and coaches / team managers. Spectators are not allowed during this phase of exiting lockdown, except in special circumstances, e.g., adult chaperones may be required for athletes aged under 18, in line with welfare guidance. However, they should maintain physical distancing at all times and be included in the overall numbers.

Athletes

Competitors should be allocated Competition Bubbles prior to the day. This divides athletes into groups of no more than 30, in line with National Guidelines for sport. Once athletes enter their specific Competition Bubble they will be able to warm up and compete without adhering to physical distancing measures, i.e., they can be less than 2 metres apart. However, timing of athlete groups entering their Competition Bubbles must be planned to ensure that interaction between different Competition Bubbles is avoided.

Officials

Officials and event volunteers should also work within their own Officiating Bubbles, e.g., Admin Officials, Start Area Officials, and Finish Area Officials. However, Officiating Bubbles must not be able to mix with other Officiating Bubbles. Course marshals who will normally be isolated when at their posts, must also ensure that they maintain physical distancing before, during and after carrying out their marshalling duties.

Officials will be expected to wear face coverings when working in close proximity to athletes or other people, and additional hygiene measures such as hand sanitiser and appropriate PPE should also be made available to all event volunteers.

Officials Required (minimum):

- Referee – holds overall responsibility for ensuring that the race complies with UKA Rules
- Call up – 2 officials to check in athletes on arrival and supervise athletes within the warm up area. Additional officials would be required if declarations on-the-day.
- Start Area – 2-4 officials to set waves off. Start signal may be gun, whistle, etc. A graded starter is recommended but not required in phase 3.
- Marshals – to act as the ‘eyes and ears’ on the course, directing athletes and reporting any incidents. Numbers required is dependent on the course design.
- Finish Area – 4-7 officials for timekeeping, line judging, funnel control and place recording.

Manual timing using wave starts may be best done using ‘time of day’ records rather than having multiple watches running for each wave. Finish timekeeping officials then call time of day for recorders rather than race time. Runners’ actual race times would then be calculated later. Don’t forget to have timekeepers sync their watches pre-race! A back up video can also be recorded on a smart phone, action camera or dash cam: a recording with a time stamp will aid any results editing.

2. Course Design

Courses should be designed as simply as is practical and cover one lap only wherever possible. Multi-lap courses could result in athlete congestion and difficulty in maintaining separation of Competition Bubbles. Although it is expected that events will be conducted with wave starts to accommodate numbers, the course should be wide enough to enable each group to spread out and avoid bunching of athletes.

Club Tents

Unless absolutely necessary, the erection of club tents and gazebos should be **discouraged**.

In case of inclement weather, gazebos could be set up without sides (**maximum of one side** against prevailing wind) with suitable pegs and ropes and should not be too close together. Physical distancing in and around tents must be maintained at all times, meaning the number of people able to shelter in the same tent will be severely limited. Event organisers must ensure that the area designated for club tents is managed at all times with physical distancing enforced, particularly as athletes from the same club may be competing within different Competition Bubbles.

3. Race Schedule

It is recommended that an all-day event is split into two sessions – for example, an AM session for Young Athletes and a PM session for Senior Athletes. The AM and PM sessions would then be further divided into Male and Female events. A clear gap between the AM and PM session is required to allow morning attendees to leave before afternoon attendees arrive, as well as providing a break for Officials. Within each set, the waves should be scheduled fastest to slowest.

Example Timetable

1000-1130hrs Young Athletes Races
1130-1230hrs BREAK –Officials change over as necessary
1230-1430hrs Senior Athletes Races

AM Session:

1000hrs WAVE 1 U17 Men	1030hrs WAVE 4 U17 Women
1010hrs WAVE 2 U15 Boys	1040hrs WAVE 5 U15 Girls
1020hrs WAVE 3 U13 Boys	1050hrs WAVE 6 U13 Girls

PM session:

1230hrs WAVE 7 Senior Men A	1315hrs WAVE 10 Senior Women A
1245hrs WAVE 8 Senior Men B	1330hrs WAVE 11 Senior Women B
1300hrs WAVE 9 Masters Men 40+	1345hrs WAVE 12 Masters Women 40+

This example-schedule will allow a maximum of 180 Juniors and 180 Senior runners to participate within a single day. The above schedule can be adapted to suit your entry numbers and age group/gender categories as required. You could also choose to combine age group races, or include Masters athletes in Senior races.

4. Pre-Event Entries and Declarations

Entry Process

It is strongly advised that event organisers collect entries in advance, either from individuals or clubs. This is most simply done online. Be aware that limits may need to be placed on the maximum number of athletes permitted to enter in order to comply with bubble-restrictions, course restrictions, daylight hours available, and so on.

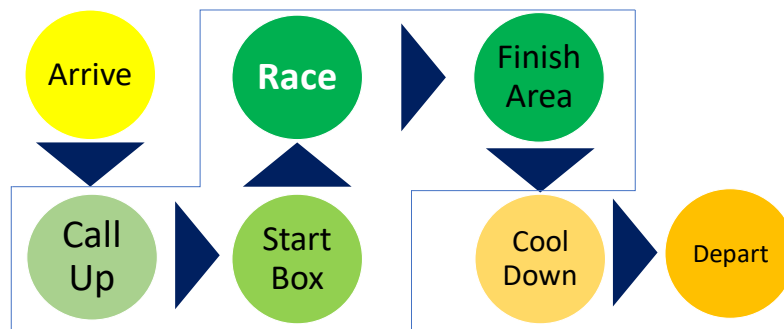
Should the event organiser anticipate the need for several start waves, the option to select a preferred wave or AM/PM session could be offered on the entry form. This will help to allocate suitable start waves/sessions for each entrant.

Declarations Procedure

It is suggested that athletes or team managers declare in advance, either through an online form or via e-mail. Start waves should be populated with athlete names and published/updated online in the lead up to the event to ensure that athletes know when to arrive for their race. A deadline should be set (such as Thursday evening prior to the Saturday race) to ensure that all details are collected in advance of the day. Only minimal changes should be made on the day, such as final notification of non-starters.

Numbered bibs could be provided by the event organiser (sent out in advance), or by the athlete themselves. If athletes are to supply their own number, instructions should be provided detailing size, style and any other requirements. This should mean that no on the day registration process is required as athletes can proceed directly to the call up point at the designated time for their race.

5. The Athlete Journey



1. Arrive

Athletes should arrive at the designated time for their bubble/wave (approx. 45 minutes before the start time), maintaining physical distancing, i.e., 2 metres apart at all times. As it will not be possible to walk the course before racing, courses must be well marked with accurate maps available in advance

2. Call Up to the Competition Bubble

Entry into the Competition Bubble should be via a formally designated / identified gazebo/gate, which should lead athletes into their Warm - Up Area prior to them being called to their Start box. Physical distancing within the Competition Bubble is not required, however athletes must not mix with other Competition Bubbles. Call up to the Competition Bubble should be around 20-30 minutes before the wave's start time, meaning there may be more than one Competition Bubble in the warm- up zone at any one time.

3. Enter Start Box

Athletes should move to the Start Box around 5 minutes before their actual wave start time. Clothing and bags should not be brought into this area but left separated by each athlete to be picked up once they have crossed the finish line and before they enter their Cool Down Area. Immediately prior to their actual wave start time, athletes should enter the start funnel and be called forward to the start line. Start officials should check off runners so an accurate record of participants is maintained.

4. Race

5. Finish Area

Once runners have crossed the finish line and had their time and number recorded, they must pick up their clothing and bags and leave the Competition Bubble for the Cool Down Area as soon as possible.

6. Cool Down Area

If a dedicated Cool Down Area can be provided athletes should enter this as soon as possible after crossing the finish line, remembering that they must begin to maintain physical distancing measures, i.e., 2 metres apart at all times.

For small venues where it may be difficult to allocate a separate Cool Down Area, then athletes must revert to maintain physical distancing measures, i.e., 2 metres apart at all times as soon as possible after crossing the finish line.

7. Depart the Cool Down Area / Venue

8. Other Considerations

Additional Hygiene Measures in respect to Covid 19

- Personal hygiene must be observed at all times, i.e. no handshakes or hugs between athletes.
- If an athlete wishes to spit, (albeit it should be avoided if possible) they should use a tissue which they should take home with them.
- Hand sanitiser stations should be provided (and clearly identified) at Arrival, Declarations, Call Up, Start Line, Finish Line, Cool Down Area, Departure and Marshall Points.

Toilets

It is unlikely that venues will have access to permanent toilet facilities during phase 3. However, if facilities are available, the venue must provide a COVID-19 protocol for their use which should be followed. When portaloos are hired, the supplier will communicate any additional expectations to be met during this phase of exiting lockdown. For a small event of up to 200 attendees, you may need 2-3 cubicles with 1-2 urinals.

Attendees should be reminded to observe physical distancing whilst queuing for toilets. Hand sanitisation stations should be provided at toilets, with hand hygiene reminder signage to sanitise hands before and after use clearly displayed.

A toilet attendant must be on duty during events to ensure that good hygiene is maintained.

Chip timing

Chip timing is a viable alternative to manual recording processes and provides an electronic method of timing wave starts and faster publication of provisional results. Considerations for employing such technology include costs, additional equipment requirements, access to start and finish areas for system providers and collection/distribution of chip technology. Whilst manual time/place recording may be simpler under current circumstances, event organisers should opt for whichever approach best-suits their requirements.