



Friends of The Heath
Looking after Knutsford Heath

Guiding Principles for Holding Events on The Heath

Introducing Knutsford Heath

The Heath is a much-loved common and nature reserve in the middle of Knutsford.

Friends of The Heath aim to protect and enhance it for the town's residents and the wildlife.

We expect any organised event held on The Heath to aim to benefit the local community and to avoid damaging The Heath's natural integrity.



Justification

The Heath is common land and a much-loved open space in the centre of Knutsford. It is an amenity area where people exercise themselves and their dogs, or simply relax and watch the world go by, and it is a sanctuary for wildlife.

From time to time it provides a venue for community gatherings or events. It has traditionally been the site of the annual crowning of the May Queen on Knutsford 'Royal' May Day and its accompanying fun fair. Circuses use the site at different times of year and it hosts a Scouts car boot sale.

These types of events are well suited to common land because they are traditional and open to all. They are welcome because they contribute to the vibrant social life of Knutsford.

However, for new, non-traditional events, careful consideration must be given to:

- The benefit to the users of The Heath, its immediate neighbours and Knutsford as a whole;
- The legalities of holding the event;
- The impact on the natural integrity of The Heath;
- The contribution to the preservation and long term improvement of The Heath.

Natural Integrity

The Heath is a small, living ecosystem in the middle of a bustling town. The character of The Heath is determined by its plant community. The plants are supported by the soil and its micro-organisms and the plants support the animals that live there. It can be considered to be a wildlife oasis, not only in the middle of our town, but also in the middle of the farmed Cheshire countryside.

If The Heath is to be maintained for our future enjoyment it must be protected from ecological damage and nurtured to promote its flora and fauna.

Large public events can cause damage to The Heath. The combination of vehicles, heavy equipment and hundreds of people together compress the soil and injure the plants. With time the soil and plants recover; though there are areas, particularly around the gates, that are scarred by past events.

Although the events held on The Heath may cause considerable damage, it appears to be largely recoverable. The biggest impacts are caused by the 'Royal' May Day and its accompanying fair, and the circuses. The impact of these events is greater because they bring heavy equipment onto The Heath and they run for several days. Smaller, single-day events, like the Scouts car boot sale cause much less damage. Events held during the spring and summer months tend to create less damage and allow The Heath to recover faster.

Guiding Principles

1. Events which significantly benefit the local community should be welcomed. Benefits may include: education, health improvement, social interaction and visitor attraction as well as income generation for the town and for its charities.
2. Events should be limited in size and duration so as to not unreasonably deprive people of their right to use The Heath. The largest event is the fair accompanying the 'Royal' May Day. This occupies about 70% of the grassland of the Large Heath for ten days. It is accepted because of its major historical significance to the Town. The local community is unlikely to tolerate another event of such scale.
3. Events must comply with all relevant laws and bye-laws. An indicative list of statutory requirements is given in [Appendix 1](#).
4. A distinction should be made between minor and major events. Typically a minor event would entail gatherings of people with few vehicles; while a major event would entail gatherings of people, accompanied by heavy equipment, temporary accommodation, power generation, fuel storage, etc.
5. Minor events cause little damage or disruption and may be held without restriction.
6. Major events cause most damage and disruption and therefore should be restricted by location and time.
7. The planning of major events should include consultation with all of The Heath's stakeholders including Tatton Estate (the landowner), Knutsford Town Council, Friends of the Heath and local neighbours. In particular, residents adjacent to The Heath in Gaskell Avenue, Northwich Road, Ladies Mile, Tabley Road and Manchester Road should be consulted. Contact details for the main organisations are provided in [Appendix 2: Contacts](#).
8. Income generated from an event should be used to repair event damage with any remainder invested in the preservation, maintenance and improvement of The Heath.
9. For major events, areas of higher ecological value should be avoided. The areas with the highest value are the nature reserve and the grassland adjacent to it.
10. For major events, remedial work must be planned, budgeted and undertaken to restore the land to its previous state.
11. For major events, each area of grassland used should be given sufficient time to recover after each event. It is recommended that each area should be used for only 10% of the time. In other words, for every day an area is used for a major event it should be left for nine days to recover and flourish. For example, after a major event lasting ten days, an area should not be used for another major event within ninety days. This recommendation may be adjusted in the future according to observation and/or seasonal factors.
12. For major events, the principle of enforced recovery time for each area allows for different areas of The Heath to be used for different events. For instance, the Small

Heath and the Large Heath provide two independent areas to support events through the year. While one area is recovering another may be used to hold a major event.

13. For all events, measures should be taken to minimise the damage caused and to restore the site to its previous state. Measures should include:
 - Laying temporary protective mesh on the ground to reduce vehicle damage;
 - Laying temporary matting to prevent ground pollution by spillage;
 - Removing litter from the whole site, not just the immediate site, as it can be distributed more widely by people and wind.
 - Removing all litter immediately. Litter, when left, gets entangled in the vegetation, becomes an unsightly and is hazardous to wildlife. Plastic fragments from firework displays are particularly hazardous;
 - Removing or treating all polluting substances, wherever they have been deposited;
 - Removing ruts, holes and other unevenness caused by the event.
14. For all events, the flora and fauna of The Heath should be treated with care.
 - Trees on The Heath are subject to Tree Preservation Orders so must not be damaged in any way.
 - The nature reserve at the western end of The Heath is vulnerable and must not be contaminated or damaged.
15. Regular surveys should be undertaken to monitor the state of the grassland and the impact of its use.

Conclusion

By adopting clear principles for holding public events on The Heath we can protect it and ensure it remains a jewel in Knutsford's crown.

Agreement

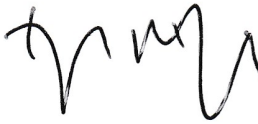
We, the undersigned, agree to follow the above guiding principles.

Tatton Estate

Printed name:

HUSHMAKFIELD

Signature:



Date:

11.7.19

Knutsford Town Clerk

On behalf of Knutsford Town Council

Printed name:

Akeppel-Green

Signature:



Date:

19.3.19.

Chairman of Friends of The Heath

Printed name:

Nick Johnson

Signature:



Date:

19.3.19

This document will be reviewed annually. We expect the principles will evolve over time. New principles should be added and existing principles refined in the light of experience.

Next review date: January 2020

Appendix 1: Statutory Requirements

Below are statutory requirements that should be considered for any event to ensure that it is compliant. The list is not necessarily exhaustive; it may be extended with time and experience.

Common Land

The Law of Common Lands is governed by The Law of Property Act 1925, the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 and the Commons Act 2006.

Under the Law of Property Act and CROW Act, restricting the rights of the public to use The Heath is unlawful. The Commons Act 2006 requires consent to be obtained from the national Planning Inspectorate for any works (including temporary fencing or structures) that will restrict access.

Licensing

The licensing Act 2003 requires premises used to supply alcohol, to provide regulated entertainment, or to provide late night refreshment to be licensed. Licenses are obtained from Cheshire East local borough council.

Markets

Knutsford Town Council enjoys the Market Rights for Knutsford as established under the Food Act 1984. A market is defined as a “concourse of buyers and sellers”. Any market in Knutsford must obtain a Market Licence from the Town Council.

Appendix 2: Contacts

Land Owner's Agent: Fisher German

Hugh Maxfield hugh.maxfield@fishergerman.co.uk

Knutsford Town Clerk

Adam Keppel-Green townclerk@knutsfordtowncouncil.gov.uk

Friends of The Heath Secretary

Graham Rigg sec.foth@gmail.com