

KONG MINI MOUNTAIN MARATHON 2018 BURBAGE MOOR EVENT – ECOLOGICAL BRIEFING NOTE

Kong Events are located in Britain's greatest upland areas that often contain features of outstanding biodiversity value and importance. Occasionally, the features that provide this interest can be vulnerable to the wear and tear that may result from the passage of event competitors. The risk of ecological damage is carefully assessed during early stages in the planning process for each Kong Mini Mountain Marathon event, when every effort is made to avoid sensitive ecological interest areas that could be disturbed.

We are keen to encourage personal route selection choices by competitors on our events to further avoid the risk of local ecological disturbance. This Ecological Briefing Note has been prepared for the 2018 Burbage Moor event to identify key ecological interest features that contribute to the special character of the event area, with route selection comments to help minimise the risk of localised ecological disturbance.

The 2018 Burbage Moor event area extends across an area of South Pennines gritstone moorland and moorland fringe landscape that is characterised by a combination of blanket bog, wet and dry heaths, acid grasslands and acid Oak-Birch woodland vegetation and habitats. These combine with gritstone rock outcrops, boulder slopes, and streams to represent the full range of upland vegetation types that are characteristic of the South Pennines landscape. Habitats within the event area are also used by important upland breeding bird populations.

The distinctive upland habitats, vegetation types and associated within the 2018 Longshaw event area include two extensive areas of International nature conservation importance, and one area of National nature conservation importance. Many of the controls within the Longshaw event area can be accessed using existing hill paths, helping to avoid the risk of disturbance to sites and features of special nature conservation interest. For situations where event competitors might be required to pass through areas of land that are not crossed by hill paths this ecological briefing note should support personal route choices that will avoid the risk of significant ecological disturbance.

This ecological briefing note has also been produced to communicate some of the special upland environmental interest features of the event area to enrich the experience of participating in the Longshaw event.

- **Dry acid grassland** is a widespread vegetation type around the margins of the event area on moorland fringe areas, where centuries of livestock grazing has converted heather moorland to open grassland. These areas provide a relatively robust vegetation type that can generally withstand the trampling effects of hill running.
- Areas of dry acid grassland at higher levels on the moorland fringe can include **mosaics of other upland vegetation** types such as blanket bog, heather-dominated heath vegetation and wet acid grassland creating areas of local vulnerability to a concentration of trampling by competitors.
- **Blanket bog** is an important habitat and vegetation type that is present across extensive parts of the event area. In contrast to other blanket bog locations within the South Pennines uplands, the event area contains extensive areas that are in better condition, lacking the ecological degradation features such as eroding bare peat that is characteristic of many other South Pennines blanket peat areas. Disturbance of intact blanket bog within the event area by runners churning through wet peat has the potential to trigger peat erosion by de-stabilising the peat surface. Wherever possible, route choices in blanket peat areas should try to link strips and patches of better drained moorland vegetation. These often provide areas of relatively robust vegetation and resistant to the trampling effects of running.
- Areas of **wet acid grassland** will be encountered where impeded drainage occurs within relatively level hill grassland areas or where groundwater emerges at the surface as seepages across more steeply sloping ground. These features are likely to be present along moorland edges that characterise the margins of the event area. Some patches of wet acid grassland include groundwater seepages that provide conditions for

communities of specialised mosses, liverworts and other specialised plants. These vegetation types can be vulnerable to persistent disturbance effects of trampling and should ideally be avoided wherever possible by selecting routes that keep to dry acid grassland to by-pass wet grassland patches.

- **Wet acid grassland** at groundwater seepages on steep ground can be difficult to avoid where they cross valuable contouring lines. Avoidance of these areas could involve a significant route change and deviation from the desired contour level. Despite this, it would be ideal if damage to seepage zone vegetation could be minimised, often located within shallow gulleys, re-entrant features or associated with ground level rock outcrops that cross steep slopes.
- On sloping land along moorland edges within the event area, soil movements within **dry and wet acid grassland** areas can develop well-defined micro-terrace systems, often referred to as sheep walks or trods. These typically follow contours and can provide extremely useful running lines. Grassland vegetation at the edge of these micro-terraces is often friable and easily broken off. Care should be taken when using these features for contouring to avoid running on the edge of these terraces to minimise grassland damage.
- Upland vegetation mosaics within the event area are of interest to **nesting bird** populations of significant nature conservation value. The 2018 Longshaw event will take place outside the main bird nesting season, and this will avoid the risk of disturbance to ground nesting birds and birds nesting on crags and within scree fields.
- A variety of **rock outcrop, boulder field and scree habitats** are present at higher levels within the event area that are potentially vulnerable to disturbance. Ice-shattered boulder fields on the highest tops can support fragile montane grass-heath plant communities of extremely high nature conservation value. Existing paths through these areas should be used wherever possible to avoid disturbance of these communities. Blocky scree often supports specialised plant communities that utilise the microclimate of sheltered spaces within the scree. Sections of the Longshaw route that cross these features should use existing paths wherever possible and should always minimise disturbance of scree blocks.
- Specialised **rock ledge plant communities** are present at a number of locations within the event area. If Longshaw competitors need to negotiate low rock outcrops great care should be taken to minimise disturbance of ledge vegetation.
- Acid **Oak-Birch woodland** is present at a number of locations around the margins of the event area. In many cases, these woodlands have ground flora plant communities and microhabitat assemblages that are vulnerable to trampling disturbance. It is important that these habitats are accessed using existing paths to avoid the risk of habitat disturbance.
- The event area contains a number of **streams and rivers**, some of which are potentially vulnerable to ecological disturbance from repeated crossing by runners. Some of the rivers and streams within the event area could support internationally and nationally threatened animal species such as **otter** and **water vole**. In many cases, the nature conservation interest of these rivers and streams concerns use of the banksides by these animals. As a consequence, great care should be taken by Longshaw competitors at stream crossings, preferring the use of bridges and stepping stones to minimise bank disturbance when entering and climbing out of stream channels.