

**KONG MINI MOUNTAIN MARATHON SERIES
2019 OGWEN EVENT
ECOLOGICAL BRIEFING NOTE**

The 2019 Kong Mini Mountain Marathon event passes through the Carneddau and Glyderau areas of the Ogwen valley region of northern Snowdonia. This is an area of national and international importance for its upland wildlife habitats, flora and fauna. Occasionally, the features that provide this interest can be vulnerable to the wear and tear that could result from the passage of Kong Mini Mountain Marathon competitors. The risk of ecological damage is carefully assessed during early stages in the planning process for the event, when every effort is made to avoid the need for competitors to cross areas of special ecological interest.

For situations where competitors might need to pass through areas of ecological sensitivity we are keen to encourage personal route selection choices that avoid the risk of local ecological disturbance. This Ecological Briefing Note has been prepared for the 2019 Kong Mini Mountain Marathon Ogwen event to identify key features that contribute to the special ecological value of the event area, with route selection comments to help minimise the risk of localised ecological disturbance.

The 2019 Kong Mini Mountain Marathon event area is located within part of the Eryri Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation, enclosing one of the most distinctive and ecologically valuable areas of upland landscape in Britain. This includes the high ridges of the Carneddau and Glyderau with their ice-shattered boulder fields that create Wales' arctic landscape.

The high ridges crossed by the event are reflected in extensive areas of montane and fell-field vegetation comprising highly specialised arctic alpine plant species. This is a post-glacial relict flora of international importance that is very slow-growing and vulnerable to damage by the disturbance effects of trampling. However, 2019 Kong Mini Mountain Marathon Ogwen event controls have been located within this area to encourage competitors to follow existing paths wherever possible, creating route opportunities through this area that will generally avoid the need to cross pristine montane vegetation and habitat.

In addition to tracts of high value upland vegetation and wildlife habitat, extensive sections of the event area include areas of dry upland grassland that are relatively robust in terms of resisting potential disturbance from trampling effects. Localised ecological interest features are present within these areas that include patches of upland blanket peat, wet heath, upland lake margins, rock outcrop ledges, boulder field and scree habitats.

- **Dry acid grassland** is an extensive vegetation type within the event area, formed 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 fell running.
- Areas of **wet acid grassland** will be encountered where impeded drainage occurs within relatively level acid grassland areas or where groundwater emerges at the surface as spring-head seepages across more steeply sloping ground. Wet acid grassland can be of special nature conservation interest, in particular where groundwater seepages provide conditions for communities of specialised mosses, liverworts and other 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 surrounding dry grassland to by-pass wet acid grassland patches.
- **Wet acid grassland** at spring-head seepages on steep ground can be difficult to avoid where they cross valuable contouring lines. Complete 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 hillsides, soil movements within **dry acid grassland** areas can develop well-defined micro-terrace systems, often called sheep walks or trods. These typically lie parallel to contours and can provide extremely useful running lines. Grassland vegetation at the edge of these micro-terraces is often friable and easily dislodged. Care should be taken when using these features for contouring to avoid running on terrace edges to minimise grassland damage. Areas of saturated ground can occur where groundwater issues into terrace formations. These locations are especially vulnerable to running damage and should be avoided where possible.
- Sub-montane vegetation within the event area includes tracts of **dry and wet heath**. Areas of dry heath are relatively robust in terms of resistance to disturbance effects of trampling, but wet heath areas can be more vulnerable. These often grade into areas of bog vegetation on deeper peat that combine to create areas of particular upland ecological interest. Wherever possible competitors should avoid crossing wet heath vegetation when choosing running routes. If crossing these areas cannot be avoided then running lines should try to link patches of drier vegetation that will be less vulnerable to disturbance effects of trampling.

- Summits and ridges within the event area have significant tracts of **montane grassland and heath** vegetation within areas of important high-level **ice-shattered boulderfield**. These areas comprise relict post-glacial vegetation that are of very high ecological interest and consist of very slow-growing grass, sedge, rush and lichen species. Disturbance of these areas by trampling typically has long-lasting impacts and can trigger erosion of adjacent vegetation areas in the harsh climate of summits and high ridges where this vegetation is found. The vegetation of these areas has often developed within periglacial patterned ground features such as stone polygons and stone stripes that are important upland geomorphological features that are vulnerable to trampling disturbance. Wherever possible competitors should follow existing paths through these areas to avoid trampling damage to pristine montane vegetation.
- The special upland ecological interest of the event area includes vegetation of **rock outcrop ledges and seepage zones**. Many of these locations are known to be important for the relict post-glacial flora that they contain, protected from significant grazing by their inaccessibility. While most of the taller outcrops will not be accessed by 2019 Kong Mini Mountain Marathon Ogwen event competitors, route selection might include crossing areas of low rock outcrop that are still of value for these uncommon upland plant communities. Where this terrain is crossed great care should be taken to minimize disturbance to fragile ledge vegetation.
- A number of **upland lakes** are present within the event area that are of special ecological interest. This is usually associated with well-developed lake margin vegetation that often includes valuable peatland and mire vegetation. Under no circumstances should any upland lake be entered by any competitors in the 2019 Kong Mini Mountain Marathon Ogwen event, and route choices should avoid running near lake margin vegetation areas.
- Areas of extensive upland grassland and sub-montane heath within the event area are known to be used by important populations of **ground nesting birds**. As the 2019 Kong Mini Mountain Marathon Ogwen event will take place outside the bird breeding season this will ensure that disturbance of nests, eggs and young birds will be avoided.